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A Page and Its Politics: Situating Kullinā Khālid Saʿīd in Egypt's Ideological Landscape at the Time of Revolution'

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Abstract:

In discussions concerning the importance of social media in the 25January revolution, a central role is given to the "Kullinā Khālid Saʿīd" [We're all Khaled Said] Facebook page. Using an advanced data collection and extraction application called Netvizz, a research team consisting of Arabists and Media studies specialists has collected and analysed all of the posts and comments exchanged through the page. This data set allows for a systematic analysis of the page. This article offers an outline of the ideological nature of "Kullinā Khālid Saʿīd," with particular emphasis on the "revolutionary" period between 1 January – 11 February 2011. It argues that the page shows no evidence of political bias in the sense of explicit favoring of a political group. Rather, the page constituted a community of users who abstained from using politically factional language. Reflecting the mood and concerns of the revolution's grassroots masses, it clearly illustrates the disinclination to engage with formal politics.

Introduction

Disregarding the utopians and dystopians at the extremes of the debate concerning the Internet as a means of political change, it is safe to say that after the great uprisings of the Arab Spring, it is an established truth that the Internet can function as both a space for dissent and as a tool for activists to mobilize protests (Aouragh & Alexander 2011; Lim 2012). Especially social media such as Facebook have functioned in this manner. By far the most popular Facebook page in terms of received likes and user comments

was the much-discussed Egyptian page called "Kullinā Khālid Saʿīd" [We're all Khaled Said], named after the Egyptian youth who was beaten to death by police officers in Alexandria in June 2010. This page was established and maintained, at first anonymously, by the young Google-marketeer Wael Ghonim in June 2010, as a site where people could come together to express their anger over this injustice. Soon the page would attract tens of thousands of people and coordinate so-called silent stands (*waqfāt sāmita*) in public spaces of Cairo and Alexandria. Towards the end of 2010, with the outbreak of the Tunisian revolution, the page became more revolutionary in tone and by mid-January its calls for a massive demonstration on January 25 reached half a million Facebook users. Throughout the momentous eighteen days leading to the resignation of Mubarak on February 11 and in the following months, the page remained an important online space where news was shared and strategies were discussed.

This article intends to shed light on the question whether the Khālid Saʿīd page (looking at both posts and comments) reflected certain political tendencies or explicit favoring of a political group, other than voicing requests for justice for Khālid Saʿīd and the general demands of the revolution concerning civil liberties, state violence, and endemic corruption. Various theoreticians of the global wave of protests have claimed that these protests were characteristically outside formal politics. In his inquiry into today's networked social movements, Castells characterizes these movements as leaderless, distrustful of politics and therefore without political (ideological) programme (Castells 2012: 224-227). While acknowledging this can be a weakness, Castells points also to an advantage: "[Without a specified programme for the achievement of aims, these movements] cannot be channeled into a political action that is narrowly instrumental. Therefore, they can hardly be co-opted by political parties (..)" (Op. cit. 227). Similarly, Bennett & Segerberg stress the 'success' of protest movements in remaining free of involvement by 'conventional organizations', such as when they write of the Spanish *Indignados* movement: "One of the most remarkable aspects of this sustained protest organization was its success at keeping political parties, unions, and other powerful political organizations out: indeed, they were targeted as part of the political problem." (Bennet & Segerberg 2012: 741).

These scholarly claims were preceded by voices on the ground. It will be remembered that in Egypt, the revolutionary forces[1] at the time insisted

that they were not in fact interested in politics, meaning ideological party politics. During the demonstrations, chants and banners were coordinated to avoid partisan sloganeering. While it is significant that those speaking on behalf of the uprising tended to steer clear of declaring a particular politics, this is not proof of the absence of a dominant political persuasion among the masses in the uprising. The question is how we can investigate the political orientation (if there was one) of the Egyptian revolution at the time. One way to begin to answer this question is to study the discourse of the revolution through an analysis of the "Kullinā Khālid Saʿīd" Facebook page itself. Starting in the Autumn of 2013, a research team at the University of Amsterdam and the American University in Cairo, consisting of new media researchers and Arabists, have used Netvizz (Rieder 2013), a research application for Facebook analysis, to extract all available data from the page, covering the entire period of activity from June 2010 until July 2013.[2] This data set, containing 14,072 posts, 6.8 million comments, and 30 million likes made by 1.9 million users, offers a unique opportunity for a thorough study of the actual content of communication on the page that many consider to be the most important online space in the run-up to and during the Egyptian revolution (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011; Gerbaudo 2012; Lesch 2011; Lim 2012).

In order to provide the necessary context, this article will first briefly give an overview of the Egyptian political landscape. This overview informs us on what to look for in the data: what political tendencies might one expect to be expressed? The political overview is then followed by a short exposé on Wael Ghonim, initiator of the page and its key administrator. Even though the data of the page consists only for a fraction of texts that were written by the administrators (14,072 administrator posts against 6.8 million comments), an administrator presumably has great influence over the character of a page. Only the admins could submit posts to the pages, whereas users were restricted to commenting and liking in response to these posts. Subsequently, we will provide an analysis of certain statistics that should shed light on the question at hand, employing the dataset as a reflection of the discourse of the revolution. The analysis will be focused on the period 1 January to 11 February 2011, which includes the run-up to the outbreak of massive demonstrations and the fateful eighteen days of protests that culminated in the resignation of Mubarak.

Contextualizing the page

Given the enduring authoritarian nature of the Egyptian state, it has long been difficult to see the political landscape clearly. Going back to the period immediately preceding the outbreak of the revolution, the situation could be described as dire. Opposition parties were coopted or banned, the press was seriously restricted. Labour organization was severely curtailed. The Muslim Brotherhood was commonly referred to as the main opposition movement. Despite it being officially banned, the Brotherhood succeeded in offering socio-economic help to those Egyptians who suffered from the state's economic liberalization. It also engaged in the feeble electoral process by fielding candidates with other political parties in which - depending on how much leeway they were given - they could be quite successful. In this way, the Islamist organization gradually became part of official politics. A more activist approach was only adopted by some much smaller organizations such as Kifaya and the April 6 Youth Movement, who advocated for political liberalization and worker's rights.[3]

For some time, it was reasonable to divide Egyptian politics in an Islamist, a Liberal, a Leftist and a Nationalist current (Woltering 2011; Abu-Rabi' 2004; Amīn al-ʿĀlim 1996. The Egyptian revolution however, changed the political climate and the ways in which we can discern a political map. For a short period, political freedoms increased and new voices could emerge. The emergence of a Salafi political language is a major case in point. Long held to be politically aloof by their very dogma, Egyptian Salafi leaders quickly adopted a pragmatic approach to the post-Mubarak political vacuum, and reasoned that in this particular situation it is beneficial to engage with the political process. Less surprisingly, the Muslim Brotherhood rose to become the largest political power in terms of electoral victories. On the other hand, during the early post-Mubarak period between the outbreak of the revolution until at least the parliamentary elections held in November 2011, the revolution continued to be embodied by countless revolutionary groups (including the April 6 Youth Movement as the key organization) that were referred to as 'the revolutionary forces' who claimed to be a-political and notably refused to coalesce into a political party. Since the coup d'état of July 3, 2013, led by army general ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-Sīsī, political and press freedoms have deteriorated immensely, effectively closing the window of new possibilities that was opened by the 25 January revolution. Looking

at this time span of two and a half years, it is clear that in addition to the old political currents comprising the broad labels of Islamists, Liberals, Leftists and Nationalists, it is impossible to discuss contemporary Egyptian politics without referring to Salafism and the Muslim Brotherhood as two distinct Islamist political currents, in addition to taking into account the more amorphous and currently quashed 'revolutionary forces'. From this assessment followed the search terms that we applied to the Facebook data.

Wael Ghonim

The Facebook page "Kullinā Khālid Saʿīd" was created in June 2010 by Wael Ghonim, an Egyptian computer engineer working in Dubai as the head of marketing for Google Middle East and North Africa. He attracted Abd al-Raḥmān Manṣūr and others to help in the administration of the page (Ghonim 2012: 242), but his role as primary "admin" is not in doubt. Ghonim remained anonymous until his public appearance in a television interview on February 7, 2011, a few days before President Mubarak's resignation. Until 2010, Ghonim had not been politically active. In January 2010, he became involved in the campaign for political change led by Muhammad Baradei. Notably, his involvement in this campaign mainly consisted of offering his services as an online marketing specialist. Six months later, when learning of the murder of Khālid Saʿīd, Ghonim was shocked by the brutality of Said's death, and decided to take this up as a cause to be fought for through online activism.

In his memoir of the revolution, Ghonim offers a view into his background and ideals (Ghonim 2012). Ambitious, eager and pious, Ghonim developed in his youth a can-do mentality that set him apart from his peers. He lived for some years in the United States, where he 'was in awe of the quality of education, the respect for citizens' rights and the democratic process (..)' (Ghonim 2012: 17). While in the US, he also engaged in online Islamic awareness by starting up the website IslamWay.com. He might have made a future in the US but decided not to. He also did not opt for American citizenship when this became a possibility after his marriage to an American woman: 'I'm a proud Egyptian and I find no reason why I should apply for any other citizenship.'(Ghonim 2012: 5).

From the autobiographical sections of Ghonim's book, he emerges mostly as an Egyptian patriot, politically liberal but with culturally or religiously conservative values. He does not come across as a political activist, staying

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out of demonstrations and public political discussions. And although he joins the Baradei campaign, he does not identify with a specific political programme or ideology. Furthermore, it is of interest to take note of how Ghonim intended to keep "Kullinā Khālid Saʿīd" a non-political platform, emphatically avoiding that the page would be seen as an extension of one or another political campaign, party, or ideology. One might even say that Ghonim emerges as a reluctant revolutionary, if revolutionary is a description that applies at all. His political leadership consisted in organizing a form of communicational and organizational process rather than in proposing or promoting a particular political ideology. Or, more precisely, the stated ideology was, indeed, a combination of broad demands for civil liberties and an emphasis on democratic deliberation. About the language he employed in his posts, he states: 'the tone on the page was always decent and nonconfrontational' (Ghonim 2012: 66). Ghonim describes at length the difference between his page and a second page dedicated to demand justice for Khaled Said. This page, *Ismī Khālid Muḥammad Saʿīd* (My name is Khālid Muḥammad Saʿīd)[4] was a vehicle for political activism, which was reflected in its confrontational language, which Ghonim felt was 'unhelpful in making this cause a mainstream one' (Ghonim 2012: 59). Rather than seeking to promote a culture of political activism against the status quo, Ghonim wanted to create awareness: 'Engagement was the page's core concept and was certainly far more important to the page than activism.' (Ghonim 2012: 108). This broader appeal ensured that Ghonim's page gradually (but well before the outbreak of the uprising) overtook the older page in terms of likes (this may also have been the result of the fact that the other page was made inaccessible for a while for having reportedly broken Facebook regulations) (Ghonim 2012: 113).

In sum, the key figure behind the Facebook page was more a concerned citizen with broadly "liberal democratic" ideals and considerable skill in online media and marketing than a revolutionary ideologue. While one might describe him as an activist for the liberal Baradei-campaign, it must be stressed that he made an effort to prevent that the Facebook page would become intertwined with the Baradei-campaign. For instance, he would not 'share' Baradei events or posts on the Khālid Saʿīd page. The remainder of this article will show the extent to which the content of the page - consisting overwhelmingly of users' comments rather than administrator's posts- reflects this non-partisan ideal.

Analysing the data

For this research project, we have collected all data exchanged through the entire lifetime of the "Kullinā Khālid Saʿīd"page, from June 2010 until July 2013, when the last post was added to the page timeline. The data was extracted via the Netvizz application (Rieder 2013). The full data set contains 14,072 posts by the page admins, and 6.8 million comments and 30 million likes by 1.9 million users. Building on this data, we interrogated the page's political orientation from three different angles.

The first approach looks at the hyperlinks that were shared in the users' comments. As various researchers have shown, hyperlink analysis can provide a window on the organizational and ideological ecology in which online communication takes place (Foot & Schneider 2006; Poell 2014; Bennett&Segerberg 2011). By sharing links to particular sites and pages, users not only show which organizations they are connected with, but also with what content they feel affinity or want to enter into a dialogue with. Hence, through hyperlink analysis, we get a first indication of how the Facebook page was situated in the Egyptian online political landscape. Second, employing a custom-built search tool, we have collected all of the comments, shared in the period from January 1 until February 11, containing references toparticular political parties and organizations. In this manner, it was possible to gain insight in the relative importance and direction of the page's 'party-political' discourse at the height of the revolutionary period. The analysis starts at January 1, 2011, when an enormous increase in activity occurred after a Coptic church in Alexandria was bombed, killing 23 people. It ends after Mubarak stepped down. Finally, for the same period, we have collected, using the same method, terms allowing us to detect the presence of certain abstract political ideologies in the comments posted on the page.

The Online Ecology

The analysis of the list of most-linked to Internet domains immediately shows that most shared links on the Facebook page referenced other pages within the Facebook domain or posts on the same page, see Table 1. This single fact reveals little concerning our research question, but underscores the centrality of the Facebook platform. The same holds for the second most-linked to domain, Youtube. Both Facebook and Youtube are channels for information that may carry any or no political message. The domains

themselves are not revealing of political persuasion. Looking at the top 35 linked-to domains (i.e. the domains that have been linked to at least 60 times), and ignoring the domains that may be dismissed as 'channels', we must conclude that this list does not show any clear orientation. The list offers a very diverse set of domains. Remarkably, there is not a single directly political website (there is for instance no link to a political party or a political campaign website). The most referenced domains beyond the major social platforms are mostly news sites, many of which are non-partisan. Among sites that do have an ideological persuasion, we find no clear bias towards any one particular trend either. This approach therefore suggests that the Facebook page functioned as a non-ideological environment, much in keeping with the admin's ambition to create a platform open to all and without (party-)political connotations. This is confirmed by an analysis of the 100 most referenced URLs. The URLs in this list that have a clear political orientation are almost without exception Facebook pages that were established some time after the initial phase of the revolution. The second highest ranking (677 references) for instance is a URL linking to a Facebook page supporting 'the return of Ahmad Shafiq', suggesting the page was established after Shafiq had left Egypt for Abu Dhabi hours after his defeat in the presidential elections of June 2012. Ranking at number twelve and thirteen are two Facebook pages, one in Arabic and one in English, declaring their opposition against presidential candidate Amr Moussa. Many other links are no longer accessible, but judging from what can be read in the URL, a great number of links are to pages that have a revolutionary character or that celebrate Egyptian patriotism (see Table 2). URLs of a political as opposed to a revolutionary character are few and almost without exception date from the period that followed 11 February.

1	facebook.com 32766	Channel
	youtube.com 6210	Channel
	youm7.com 597	Independent newspaper
	dvd4arab.maktoob.com 433	Channel
5	masrawy.com 423	Independent news site

	dostor.org 358	Independent newspaper, leftist
	alomah.4ulike.com 336	Independent newspaper, islamist-leaning
	shorouknews.com 209	Independent newspaper, liberal
	almasryalyoum.com 201	Independent newspaper, liberal
10	bit.ly 200	Channel
	mediafire.com 183	Channel
	democraticac.com 153	Channel
	ahram.org.eg 140	State newspaper
	tagesschau.de 139	German news site
15	almesryoon.com 119	Independent newspaper
	download.quranicaudio.com 114	Channel for audio of Quranic citations
	almasry-alyoum.com 113	Independent newspaper, liberal
	4shared.com 111	Channel
	on.fb.me 109	Channel
20	goo.gl 108	Channel
	apps.facebook.com 102	Channel
	100fm6.com 92	Dead link
	taghyeer.net 92	Dead link
	facebookviewprofile.weebly.com 84	Channel
25	6april.org 75	Revolutionary movement
	youtu.be 74	Channel

	alwafd.org 72	Opposition newspaper, left-liberal Wafd party
	akhbarak.net 72	News site
	aljazeera.net 70	Pan-Arab news channel
30	m.facebook.com 69	Channel
	aljazeeratalk.net 67	Pan-Arab news channel
	forums.fatakat.com 66	Forum
	spreadsheets.google.com 66	Channel
	ar.wikipedia.org 61	Wikipedia
35	opera.com 61	Channel

Table 1. Domain count.

URL	#	Desription
http://www.facebook.com/3shan.Masr	1325	revolutionary Facebook page
http://www.facebook.com/pages/ مليونيه–لعودة–احمد–شفيق/169547939762153	677	post-revolution partisan (Ahmad Shafiq)
http://www.facebook.com/pages/asbw-altthyr/195112030517484	525	post-revolution anti-corruption
http://www.facebook.com/ElShaheeed	415	*Kullinā Khālid Saʿīd* Facebook page
http://dvd4arab.maktoob.com/showthread.php?t=2788738	395	Yahoo blog for sharing movies
http://www.facebook.com/pages/fkhwr-banny-msry-Proud-to-be-Egyptian/150471521678294	376	Egyptian patriottic

URL	#	Desription
http://alomah.4ulike.com/t17635-topic	336	article in obscure tabloid slandering Khaled Said
http://www.facebook.com/pages/nkt-msryt/117261791675285	335	unavailable
http://www.facebook.com/ATOZeg	209	Egyptian youth page with commercial connotations
http://www.facebook.com/pages/la-lmrw-mwsy-No-for-Amr-Mousa/137133456352028	201	unavailable, but URL indicates page is against Amr Mousa (presumably from the period of post-revolution era presidential elections)
http://www.facebook.com/NoFor.Amr.Mousa	194	unavailable, but URL indicates page is against Amr Mousa (presumably from the period of post-revolution era presidential elections)
http://www.facebook.com/RNN.NEWS	192	inaccessible
http://www.facebook.com/pages/Geo-lenses-dsat-jyw-alkwryt/142281635836699	179	commercial
http://www.facebook.com/pages/shbab-msr-alahrar/193735153979756?sk=wall	171	revolutionary youth page, currently anti-MB
http://www.facebook.com/democraticac	156	democratic studies (academic)
http://www.democraticac.com/	153	democratic studies (academic)
http://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_168789863168690&ap=1	149	unavailable

URL	#	Desription
http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=10150141634365046	146	unavailable
http://www.facebook.com/pages/%D9%85%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AF%D9%89-%D8%B4%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A9-25-%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%B1/151028674953627?sk=wall شاهد	144	inaccessible
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-pJU_xZVZ4	143	removed
http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/wulffrede112.html	134	unavailable, speech by German president Wulff
http://www.facebook.com/pages/Youth-after-the-revolution-shbab-ma-bd-althwrt/129141437156388?sk=wall	124	democratic revolutionary youth group from Damanhur
http://www.facebook.com/pages/nsb-tdhkary-ltkrym-shhda-25-ynayr/189769594377593	121	group to commemorate the martyrs
http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=188502704517326	120	post-revolution call for improving university education
http://www.facebook.com/pages/msh-hmshy-mn-althryr/149940441730521	108	est. 7 February, revolutionary page "I won't leave Tahrir"
http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=185782164794026	107	event 4 March calling for trial of Mubarak
http://www.facebook.com/pages/%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A7-%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%85-%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%88%D9%85%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%83%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D8%B5%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%81/205235419488005	104	postrevolutionary page in support of interim PM Esam Sharaf

URL	#	Desription
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHQi99yEZ3A	100	unavailable
http://www.facebook.com/mshawky1#!/photo.php?pid=259086&id=106795829350329مهم	100	unavailable

Table 2. Most referenced URLs (URLs that were referenced at least 100 times).
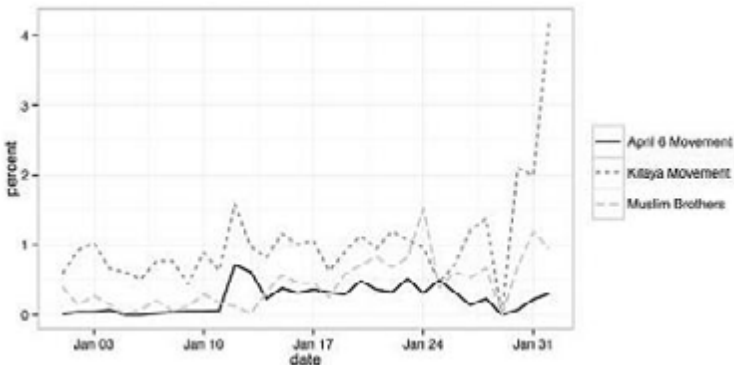
Political organizations

Key political organizations in Egypt were (and are) not many. Official opposition parties have generally lost their relevance a long time ago, since their credibility sank every time they agreed to participate in rigged elections or otherwise allowed cooptation by the regime. The ruling National Democratic Party was not so much a political party as much as it was a front for a system infused with corruption and concerned with maintaining the status quo. It is not promising to research the ways in which the NDP is discussed on the page, since we already know that the NDP was regarded as the central enemy of the page's community and seen as the symbol of Egypt's many problems (Ghonim 2012). As to opposition parties or movements, we know that the page publicly associated with the April 6 Movement (incidentally, April 6 would always deny that it was a political organization). Also Kifaya (i.e. the Egyptian Movement for Change) was an organization which one would expect to feature positively in the comments. More of a question mark is the way in which Egypt's largest opposition movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, featured on the page.

For this second approach a search string was employed with the words Kifaya [kifāya], April [abrīl] and Brothers/Brotherhood [al-ikhwān].[5] The search was restricted to the period 1 January-1 February 2011. The search string is not ideal, since the word kifāya can also simply mean 'enough' rather than being a reference to the movement which is so called. The search yields around 10,000 comments in total, which is only a small percentage of the total number of comments produced in this period. Of the three search terms, kifāya feautures in ca. 1% of all comments, the term al-ikhwān is found in around 0.5% of all comments, and abrīl is the least mentioned, in a

negligible percentage of comments. As Line graph 1 shows, the distribution is fairly even, except for a collective dip on January 29, which was caused by the Internet blackout Mubarak's regime orchestrated.

Qualitative analysis of this data would be too time consuming if it involves reading these thousands of comments. It would also be unnecessary: rather than reading everything that anyone has written on the page in January 2010 using one of the search terms, we let the Facebook page's community of users make a selection for us, by only looking at the comments that have received a minimum of 'likes'. This ensures that we are looking at those comments that users themselves have deemed important. For this article we have analyzed only those comments that were given at least 5 likes, which reduced the number of comments to a few hundred. The ensuing data thus reduced showed firstly that in the majority of cases where the word kifāya was used, its use was not connected to the movement but rather intended to convey the literal meaning. References to kifāya are thus comparable to references to 'April', which means to say references to it are very limited. On the other hand, the comments containing the term al-ikhwān nearly all speak indeed of the Muslim Brotherhood. Remarkably, the content of these comments varies rather evenly from negative to positive appraisals of the MB; there is no clear tendency in this regard. Many of the comments do not take a position with regard to the MB, but only mention them as part of the socio-political spectrum. Again, the data indicates that - at least in the period under study here - "Kullinā Khālid Saʿīd" was not a politicized page in the sense that it tended to one or another political persuasion.

Line graph 1.

Social and political concepts

It is possible that the users of the page were disinclined to discuss specific political organizations, but were more open to discussing broader political labels such as Islamism, nationalism, Salafism etc. Applying the search string [līberālī, qawmī, islāmī, salafī, yasārī]6 for the period 1 January 2011 until 1 February 2011, yields all comments that contained one or more of the words liberal/liberalism, (Arab) nationalist/nationalism, Islamist/Islamism, Salafi/Salafism and leftist/left wing. The datashows that these terms are used in 0.0 to 1.5 % percent of all comments (see Line graph 2). The use of the terms 'liberal' and 'leftist' is negligible, the use of the term (Arab) nationalist hovers around 0.2% (but note that qawmī can also mean 'national' or 'domestic' as in e.g. gross domestic product), the term Salafi peaks twice above 1% but remains otherwise a very modestly employed term. The term Islamic/Islamist is more stable at around 0.5%. This may however have much to do with the fact that this term is ambiguous in that it can refer both to the political ideology of political Islam as well as to the simple adjective 'Islamic', as in 'Islamic values', 'Islamic countries' etc. An additional search with the same string for the ensuing period of February 1-11 shows that the term 'nationalist' and after that 'Islamic/Islamist' are most often used, at around 0.1-0.3% of comments (that means for this period that between 50 and 100 comments per day contain the term, shooting up to beyond 150 on the momentous last day of February 11). The use of the other terms is negligible. These data underscore once again that the page was not intensively used for politics other than the immediate concerns of the uprising.

Line graph 2.

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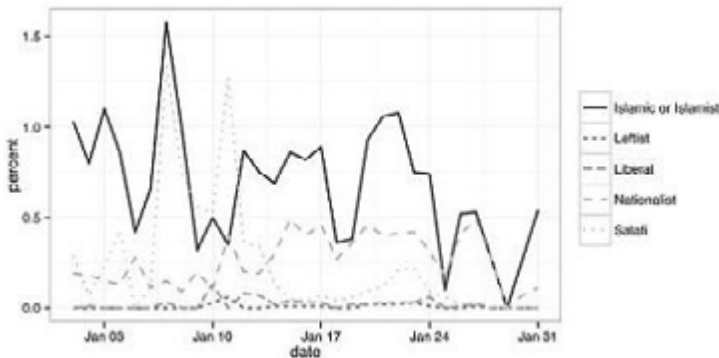
Conclusion

At the outset of this research, the expectation was that the data would show that despite the oft-declared assurances that the Facebook page - as the revolution as a whole - was a supra-political affair, one could point out clear political biases or at least continuous referencing of explicit political groups and ideologies. All approaches employed here, however, point in the same direction, namely that - at least for the period studied here - Ghonim's intention to create a page that served as a supra-political non-ideological platform with a broad, civil-rights oriented outlook, was successful. The period studied here is the most active period of the page's life span, on some days receiving over hundred thousand comments. It was the period in which it would have been very time-consuming and at times impossible for the administrator(s) to weed out unwanted comments and block unwanted users. Apparently, the page did not need strict policing by an administrator, but actually constituted a community of users who generally abstained from using politically factional language. It may be seen as a testament to the Egyptian revolution's unity of purpose, but it may as well be seen as an illustration of the revolution's Achilles' heel. In so far as the Facebook page of "Kullinā Khālid Saʿīd" is a reflection of the mood and concerns of the revolution's grassroots masses, it clearly shows the disinclination to engage with formal politics on the part of the revolutionary forces. While general requests for civil rights and democratic governance served to galvanize an ideologically scattered public in relation to a common cause, the task of assembling an actual government and concrete policies could no longer circumvent established actors and their ideologically more explicit ideas.

The data set that enabled the research presented here offers a window on three years of contentious politics in Egypt. Taken together, the 14,000 posts and nearly seven million comments form a huge document of 'history from below' that is uniquely researchable by using digital methods. Systematic queries for particular keywords allow for tracing how particular issues came to the fore and again disappeared from public attention. The research team responsible for the present article has also used the data set to study the page's leadership dynamics and the way in which the page admins displayed what is best termed 'connective leadership'. (Poell et al. 2015) A more detailed approach is taken in our group's investigation of the way in which the page's polls were used as a form of direct democracy.[7] For Arabists

the data also forms a treasure trove that allows for research in the field of sociolinguistics: what type of content is conveyed in what variety of the Arabic language?8 Since social media services enjoy continuing popularity in the Arab world and beyond, applications like Netvizz provide the opportunity to study these and other aspects both from quantitative and qualitative perspectives. While the mass of data can be a blessing, it also confronts researchers with problems concerning logistics, reliability, and analytical technique that we have addressed in detail in a separate publication (Rieder et al. forthcoming). It is up to social science and humanities researchers to continuously assess how the technical possibilities can be made meaningful in relation to actual research questions. This paper indicates a possible direction for analysis, but only further research will be able to confirm long term usefulness and viability.

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Notes

[1] E.g. April 6 Youth Movement, National Association for Change, Coalition of the Youth of the Revolution etc.

[2] Although the data concerned is public information, for reasons of privacy the data was anonymized before being submitted to analysis.

[3] See El-Ghobashy (2011) for how these trends merged in the course of the Egyptian revolution.

[4] See: https://www.facebook.com/esmy.khaled.sa3eed

[5] Three spelling variations were taken into account for *al-ikhwān*, because of the often careless spelling on social media: الاخوان|الأخوان | الإخوان

[6] The search allowed for spelling variations such as the use of *alif maqṣūra*: ليبرالي|ال
البرالي|البرالى ,قومي|قومى ,اسلامي|اسلامى|إسلامي|إسلامى ,سلفي|سلفى ,يساري|يسارى

[7] See the forthcoming article by Rasha Abdulla et al. "Facebook Polls as Proto-Democratic Instruments in the Egyptian Revolution: The 'We Are All Khaled Said' Facebook Page".

[8] See the forthcoming article by E.W.A. Zack et al. "Language choice and identity on Facebook: the case of 'We are all Khaled Said'".