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# The Role Of Facebook In The Syrian Uprising

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# THE ROLE OF FACEBOOK IN THE SYRIAN UPRISING

by

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A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

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Department of Mass Communication and Media Arts

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Approved by:

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

RAZAN  TOUMANI for the Master of Science in MASS COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA ARTS, presented on MAY 26, 2016 at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Title:  The Role of Facebook in the Syrian Uprising

Major professor:  Dr. Aaron Veenstra

This paper studies  the role of social media, mainly Facebook, played in  the Syrian Uprising.  social media tools were good mediums of electronic communication among protesters in Syria. Further, it was a vital medium for spreading information, such as photos, videos and documents about the revolution for national, regional and international spheres. This paper looked at the impact of Facebook on the uprising, and how  Syrian people  used social media ,technology and the nature of its role in the Syrian Uprising . The study has made a controversial argument between different views of scholars about the subject and its case.

In this study I will argue that social media played a vital role in increasing democracy and creating a new discussion platform . It also helped in organizing and publicizing the political movement. I will also discuss that in the Arab world social media channels such as Facebook have become one of the most powerful tools of the revolutions, which convey the people's demands of freedom, transparency, justice, and free-elected governments.

The purpose of this essay is to understand the role of the social media, Facebook, in the Syrian uprising.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Social media played a key role in the Syrian uprising in the way that these social media channels helped in organizing, communicating, and developing the demands and status among the protesters. The purpose of this essay is to understand the role of social media.

The Arab uprising changed , to a large extent, the way we look and deal with social media. Many scholars think that social media such as Twitter , YouTube and Facebook are not a tool that is limited to socialize or organize and talk  about a birthday party. Social media around the world are becoming a tool of change by  playing a public and political role in organizing social movement . Social media is also playing an  important role in covering and conveying the news around the world.

In the Middle East the role of social media is even more important because it is creating a discussion platform where the real one is absent.

Social media played a very crucial role in shaping the political debates in the Arab Spring. The online political conversations preceded main events on the ground. Social media helped also spreading democratic ideas across the Arab world. Social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter have become one of the most powerful tools of the revolutions, which convey the people's demands of freedom, transparency, justice, and free-elected governments. Social media had a role in the Syrian uprising in the way that these social media channels helped in organizing, communication, and developing the demands and status among the protesters.

The purpose of this essay is to understand the role of  social media, especially Internet based media such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, in the Syria uprising.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The use of social media is rapidly increasing worldwide, for example In November 2011, Facebook had more than 800 million users, 75 percent of them are outside the United States. In October 2012, Facebook was 1billion active users by the end of 2015, Facebook had 1.59 billion active users. According to a study conducted by Kristen Purcell, Lee Rainie, Amy Michell, Tom Rosensteil, and Kenny Olmested.(2010), the Internet in the united states, for instance, has surpassed newspapers and radio in popularity as a news platform and now ranks just behind television. The study shows that 59 % of Americans gets news from a combination of online and offline sources in a typical day. The study also showed that 75 % of digital news users say that they get their news through e-mail or Facebook. And 50% say that they share the news with others through the same tools. One third of cell phone owners access news through their mobile phones. Another study conducted in the same year, by Lauren Indvic 2010, founds that 43 % of news sharing occurs on social media networks, such as: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and my space, followed by Email 30 % and SMS 15 %Meanwhile, Online news consumers increasingly follow journalists and news organizations on Social networks. Journalists also post and share the news they and stories that did not make it to publications on these network. The increasingly growth of the Internet use had an impact on the society and Social media have become an important resources for the mobilization of collective action and creation, organization, and implementation of social movements around the world.

Langman (2005) argues that computer activists use the Internet to initiate and organize a wide spectrum of activities, including public protests and demonstrations. Longman has pointed out that the new communication technologies, particularly social media, have been important new resource for the successful organization and implementation of social movements. Social media have been used especially in organizing and implementing collective activities, among marginalized group members,creating political spaces, establishing connections with other social movements, to gain support from the global community. The Main movements include antiwar, anti-globalization, and global justice movements. According to Langman L. (2005) activists, in the Iraqi antiwar movement, used the Internet to communicate, organize, and create awareness among widely spread networks resulted in global protests that got about 10 million activists who demonstrated in hundreds of cities around the world on February 15, 2003.

Lievrouw (2011) pointed out that the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) protest in Seattle is considered the beginning of global justice cyber movement, and new technologies became the vehicle that united the tens of thousands of protesters who confronted WTO delegates. According to Langman(2005 )The Internet had the upper hand in creating diverse democratic groups and movements, such like the World Social Forum, which mobilized global justice movements and brought together more than one hundred thousand of diverse activists in Brazil in 2003, and in Mumbai in 2004.

The Arab world has also witnessed the dramatically growth of social media. The 2010 Arab social media Report illustrates that growth in the Arab rejoin, the report shows that Facebook has over 677 million Arabic users as of April, Arabic mobile users have exceeded 250 million subscribers. Twitter users also exceeded 200 million users in the Arabic world at the end of March.

The study also shows that the number of Facebook users has risen significantly in most of the Arabic countries, but most notably in the countries where protests have happened. "The number of Facebook users increased by 30% in the first quarter of 2011, which is the beginning of the uprising" And that lead the writers to think that Facebook pages were a "factor in Mobilizing the movement" Youth drove the growth of the Facebook in the Arab world as the study shows young people (between the ages of 15 and 29) "make up around 70% of Facebook users in the Arab region, indicating a slight increase in the number of users over 30Years old since the end of 2010" (P:12).

Beyond getting information online or simply sharing or commenting on the news stories and the way people access their favorite news organizations, Internet users are contributing to the creation of News by many ways such like, Blogging, posting pictures or videos, sharing news and articles online or syndicating content. So what is the impact of this flood of information and free speech on the change in these countries?

The discussions on the power and the potential of new media in shaping society are divided between scholars  like La Jeunesse and Echikson (2013)  who look at social media as a tool for democratic openness and those like Howard and Hussain (2011)  who emphasizes the controlling role of the new media, as a new tool of repression for the dictators. Even in democratic countries, some writers believe that the new technology poses a big threat to the freedom and privacy of citizens. Other scholars carried away with the potential role of the new media in shaping politics, opening a new public platform for discussion, especially in societies where a real public discussion platform is absent. However, some writers, such like Khndker, (2011) have presented a more balanced view of the potential and the pitfalls, of the emancipatory as well as controlling role of the new media. For instance, Khndker (2011) believes that Social Media played a crucial

and vital role in organizing and publicizing social movement "Control of conventional media made the role of new media more relevant" (p.667). However, he thinks that traditional media certainly played a big role in presenting the uprising to the global community, which widely supported the transformation. He also thinks that these Middle Eastern countries that witnessed the uprising, were ready for it. He says: ' with Social network or not, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain were ready for revolutionary movements due to an assortment of politico-economic conditions. Similarly, to what extent these revolutions will be successful or not depends on several factors some known and some yet unknown, in which social networks may play a supportive role at best" (p: 678).

La Jeunesse and Echikson (2013), in the book 2013 social media guide, think that social media empowered individuals in general and increased freedom and democracy. They say "More information mean more choices, more freedom, and ultimately more power for individuals. The Internet has the potential to turn the light on regardless of where you live, who you are, howrich or poor." (p: 120)

Howard and Hussain (2011) disagree with that and think that it is premature to assert that what we are witnessing now in the Arab world is democratization. They say: "In countries where authoritarian governments have collapsed or made major concession, it is hard to know whether stable democracies will emerge. Democratization wave is measured in years, not months" (p: 47). The authors justified that in more details and bring some examples for instance, in Indonesia 1998, where the Suharto fell when students successfully used mobile phones to communicate and organize and caught his regime off guard, but it took them a decade of hard political conversations for democratic practice to take place.

In the case of the Arab uprising, the debate also exists. La Jeunesse and Echikson (2013) assert that this movement is powered, at least in part, by the new technologies such as, Facebook, twitter and YouTube. They say: "Over the past few years, we've seen evidence of the power of these tools to literally bring people into the streets from Tunis to Tripoli to Cairo" (P: 120).

Some writers disagree with this idea stating that we should not overstate the potential power of new technologies and social media. Evgeny Morozov (2012) writes in his book, The Net Delusion, "More and cheaper tools in the wrong hands can result in less, not more, democracy" (P: 264).

La Jeunesse and Echikson also illustrate the censorship is one of the Internet downsides. They say: "Just as the Internet allows movements to recruit potential supporters as never before, so too does technology enable tracking and surveillance by governments" (p: 121).

Howard and Husain (2011) think that the Arab uprising has a unique narrative arc, and ask scholars of social movement to deal with it from a different prospective and admit that "several aspect of the Arab spring challenge our theories about how such protests work." (p:48). Howard et al. also assert the role of social media in the Egyptian revolution and categorize that role in three main functions: First, shaping political debates in the Arab spring. Second, "a spike in online revolutionary conversations often preceded major events on the ground" (Howard et al, P: 23) Third, social media spread democratic ideas across international borders.

C. McCarthy (2011) argues that we shouldn't call this a social media revolution, but she thinks at the same time "social media did make the revolution happen in an international public forum." And that helped the fueling the revolution. She says "The earlier uprising in Tunisia helped create early attention on Egypt and made people want to see a satisfying conclusion to what they'd been watching from the beginning" (McCarthy. p.3).

Alexander (2011) agrees with her and justifies that with two main reasons: Firstly, the fact that Internet and mobile phone blockade failed when the Egypt uprising started and president Mubark tried to stop it by shouting down the Internet and Mobile connection, but people crowded and gathered more and more in the streets. That shows that this movement is not completely based on the web. Secondly, because it is so clear that the protesters used different media channels to communicate with each other and to spread their message to the world.

Alexander, 2011,) in his book ,Brian Solis, thinks that the role of social media is critical because it helps connecting leaders and activists with ordinary citizens. He describes this process as creating the necessary "density" of connections, he says: "If unity is the effect, density is the cause." Similarly, Stowe Boyd says: "Ideas spread more rapidly in densely connected social networks. So tools that increase the density of social connection are instrumental to the changes that spread and more importantly, increased density of information flow and of the emotional density (as individuals experience others' perceptions about events, or leads to an increased likelihood of radicalization: when people decide to join the revolution instead of watching it" (Boyed, P: 18). While Devin Coldewey thinks that researchers should not overestimate the importance of social media. "Twitter and Facebook are indeed useful tools, but they are not tools of revolution, at least no more than Paul Revere's horse was" (Coldway,p3). He suggests that if the revolution had happened five years ago, we would be championing the role of mobile phones. He also thinks that the role of the social websites must be acknowledged, but stacks up unfavorably to the significance of traditional media like Al Jazeera, which documented and distributed information extremely efficiently. He says: "Older media channels enabling technology that has achieved saturation. Mobile phones and digital cameras, and more important

than any of these things, the dedication and on-the-streets action of people young and old who have been demonstrating and protesting"(Coldway, 2011, p8).

Eltantawy and Wiest (2011) assure the key role that social media played in the Egyptian revolution, especially in strengthening ties among activists and increasing the interaction among protesters and between protesters and the rest of the world, and more important is "Information about the events that led to the protests which was spread largely through social media technologies, and the encouragement and sympathy offered via social media channels inspired and boosted Egyptian protesters, who were linked, not only to each other, but also to Tunisian protesters, Egyptians abroad, and the outside world. More importantly the writers believe that social media offered the Egyptian revolution something more crucial, which is helping to draw attention to the revolution locally, regionally and globally. That otherwise "may have been shielded from public view, thereby isolating the participants" (Eltantawy and Wiest p:12).

Additionally Social media fueled the revolution by introducing a speed and unique way of interaction that were impossible in the traditional communication media. "Social media introduced speed and interactivity that were not possible through the reliance on traditional mobilization resources such as brochures, faxes, and telephones" (Eltantawy and WIEST p: 13). Meanwhile Iskandar (2011) thinks that accessing the Internet by the Egyptian is uneven because of the "economic and social gap between urban centers". Which lead the author to think that there is obviously a digital divide that limits the reach of social media. According to Iskandar this suggests that social media influence is "severely limited". But this is not everything as she also thinks that traditional media still have a role in reaching those whom the Internet does not and have an upper hand in driving public debate, therefore, It was the relationship and interaction between new and traditional that was key factor to creating the environment for the new political

activism. She says: "social media remain a tool for activists rather than being activism in and of themselves" (p:9).

Social media were not only used for communicating, organizing and spreading information about the uprising, social media has, pretty much, changed the way news are accessed and generated. Stone (2013) thinks that social media impact in at least three dimensions "as a tool for journalists to create content, as a tool to distribute and impart information and as a tool to seek, receive and access information" (p:9)

Nowadays Citizen journalism, which refers to all forms of online public reporting, is playing a key role , especially when an event is too small for larger media to take notice or the media cannot report the facts without censorship, citizen journalism may be the only source of information on what is actually occurring behind the media blackout. According to Glaser (2006) "The idea behind citizen journalism is that people without professional journalism training can use the tools of modern technology and the global distribution of the Internet to create, augment or fact-check media on their own or in collaboration with others.." Some journalists disagree with the term "citizen journalism" because they believe that only professional trained journalists can understand the ethics involved in reporting the news. And conversely, " there are many trained journalists who practice what might be considered citizen journalism by writing their own blogs or commentary online outside of the traditional journalism hierarchy." (Glaser 2006 ) Naggar (2011) assures that with the state censorship, traditional Syrian media were dependent on social media contents, especially after many media offices such as Aljazeera and BBC have been shut in Syria and their journalists were threatened. She explains: "Independent reporting is almost impossible. Foreign media such as Al Jazeera or BBC, base their coverage on videos shot by demonstrators or local residents and conduct telephone interviews with people on the

ground." This report provides strong evidence that the growth of social media in the region have played a critical role in "mobilization, empowerment, shaping opinions, and influencing change"(p: 24). The report also concludes : " A critical mass of young and active social media users in the Arab world exists today. This is coupled with a continued shift of usage trends from social into political nature across the region" (p:24).

Howard et al (2012) agree with that and think that the news coverage in Syria was very challenging for the journalists because of the tightly controlled media. However the authors think the regime's narrative has been countered and limited by the explosion of social media that focus on getting and sharing information out of and within Syria.

They also go beyond that and assume that Social media and user-generated content (UCG) played an important role in the uprising in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. However in Syria the role of media was even more important because of the tight state censorship. The authors say: "In Syria with the tight control on foreign media denying access for foreign journalists, especially in the early months of the uprising, news organizations had to rely almost exclusively on this UGC via social media and their own UGC intake platforms." (p: 4)

In covering the uprising and conflict in Syria, where the state limits media access, (UGC) become fundamental. The writers explain that in more details as the demonstrations grew into daily protests across the country, the regime shut out foreign and regional journalists, at the same time "incarcerated Syrian bloggers and journalists, waged an intense, multi- faceted propaganda campaign.  Traditional newsgathering methods were extremely limited, especially in the beginning of the uprising, forcing news organizations to rely heavily on user-generated content and information. "This content (mostly video) was either smuggled out of the country or sourced from social media sites." (P: 8)

As a result of limiting media access, media outlets have become heavily dependent on user-generated content such as, video images which were uploaded by individuals and groups onto YouTube , Facebook, and other social media networks. The writers say: "social media platforms have become just another front in the conflict" (p: 9). Media organizations around the world responded to this change in newsgathering by incorporating social media content into their output, both as a source and as as tool of newsgathering.. However  in the Arab uprising it is important to note that the increase has been major. Reports by Dubai school of governments indicate that there was 131 % increase in Facebook users in the Arab world between 2010-2011 from 12 million to almost 28 million. That led the author to state that the explosion of Social Media as a tool of organizing and as a relatively safe platform for discussions developed a strong interaction between traditional and social media described by Harkin et al as "symbiotic relationship"

Social media is helping people around the world in creating, organizing and powering social movements. Especially in the Middle East and the Arab world, where social media are used as an alternative to the old media and as a tool to achieve democratic openness and shaping politics by opening the public platform where the real public and political platforms are absent.

Social Media had the upper hand in the Syrian  uprising and the Arab uprising in general by playing  three main roles .. 1) shaping political debate and increasing the political discussion platform 2) the increase of discussions platform lead to several events on the ground .In those events social media tools were used in organizing and covering these events.
3) social media globalized  the movement and moved it from domestic to international sphere where all the international big TVs and news channels were, and still, talking about what is happing in that small part of the world called Syria.

Social media channels are playing a  political role   around the world either in organizing social movement or covering and sharing news and political opinions. Media Scholars noticed the growing role of social media and studied it from different perspectives and points of views. The debate about the importance of social media as a tool of political change is exist.  The discussion about  the role of social media in the political movement is divided between scholars who look at social media as a tool for democratic openness and those who emphasize the controlling role of the new media, as a new tool of repression for the dictators. Even in democratic countries, some writers believe that the new technology poses a big threat to the freedom and privacy of citizens. Other scholars carried away with the potential role of the new media in shaping politics, opening a new public platform for discussion, especially in societies where a real public discussion platform is absent. However, some writers have presented a more balanced view of the potential and the pitfalls of the emancipatory as well as controlling role of the new media.

The discussions on the power and the potential of new media in shaping society are divided. Some writers believe  that Social Media played a crucial role in organizing and publicizing social movements as the Control of conventional media made the role of new media more relevant, while other writers think  that those Middle Eastern countries that witnessed the uprising were ready for it.

# CHAPTER 3

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this study I will argue that social that social media played a vital role in increasing democracy and creating a new discussion platform. It also helped in organizing , publicizing and globalizing the political movement . The research questions of this study are:

- RQ1. Is Facebook  a main source of political news for the people who live inside or outside Syria?

- RQ2: Is Facebook used in Syria as a tool of sharing and discussing political news and opinions. and to increase the political freedom ?

- RQ3: did the  use of Facebook change  in Syria from social to political communication?

  RQ4: did Facebook play a key role in the Syrian uprising.

- RQ5: what role did social media play in the Syrian revolution. And how did  they achieve the revolution demands?

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY


    To study this topic I used  a quantitative and qualitative  research methods . Some of the

questions in the questionnaire were open ended questions . I used some of those answered to

better understand what Syrians  think about the role of Facebook in the Syrian Uprising.

    The data for this research will be collected online ,an online survey was conducted for the

purpose of this study . Most of the questions in this survey examine the relationship between the

Syrian people and social media (mainly Facebook) , and try to explore their opinion about the

role of Facebook  in the Syrian uprising. The survey targeted the syrian people of all ages, people

who live inside and outside Syria, speak English and use the internet and computer. I used the

Google drive to build up the survey, which allow the privacy, security and confidence needed in

that type of research. Using the online survey also allowed to do the snowball sampling

technique to get the data . I posted the survey on my Facebook page , some people shared the

survey , I also posted it on some syrian websites and Facebook groups and pages. I got back 252

responses from people who participated in the study.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The survey for this study  shows that  Facebook is very popular among the Syrians. 96.1 %
said they  use it  every day . The findings of this study  highlight  the importance of  Facebook in
their daily life. 86% use it several time a day and about 10 % use it twice a day.  The study also
shows that Facebook is a very important medium, not only because it is a daily habit but because
of the variety of benefits people take out of it. I will be exploring the role of Facebook in their
life on three main levels ; 1) Facebook as a social communication tool. 2) face book as a media
channel. 3) Facebook as a political platform .

**Facebook for social communication**: Most of the people in the survey  agree that Facebook
is a useful  tools and explain why in  more details such like "Easy to use, very cheap and fun for
all ages" . It is also important for them because it is convenient and save time " it has various
objects in one site, you can watch the news, communicate with friends, get legal consultation, get
medical advice, learn to cook and a lot more. People think Facebook is Very easy to use,
convenient and save time.  " It is a useful tool to share and discuss opinions all over the world
Whether people agree or disagree." "Informative. A lot of info for everything and you can check
it anywhere and anytime." "You can see and listen to videos"
People also like that Facebook can give them a lot of benefits with a little effort. "Make   it easy
to communicate with people you were forced to be away from" . Some people have doubts about
Facebook and don't trust it. "It is a social interactions,I don't trust videos and article especially
those with no known  resources".

The study shows that Social communication is the second reason for using Facebook . the
purpose of using Facebook by  38% of the Syrians who were surveyed is for social

communication and the main reason for using it is for getting news and information.The median is also getting news and information.

**Facebook as a media tool:** The main reason for using Facebook among Syrians is getting the news, as shown in the study, but this is only one aspect of the Facebook use as a media channel. People showed a big interest in Facebook as a media tool  because of so many reason " it helps to give news at the same moment they occur, without any delay". Meanwhile another participant in the study say he does not trust the Facebook news because it has " no credibility and most of these news are fabricated and not true."

The main advantage of the Facebook  in Syria , which makes Facebook and other social media superior to the traditional media, is the space of freedom that exists in that kind of channels. "It gives you the chance to review certain aspects of the news which is not covered in the traditional media".   That is one of the reasons why people think that Facebook is very important in sharing political news . 46.1% think that Facebook is very important for sharing political news and 42.4% think it is important . The median (very important)

People also like the way Facebook  summarizes the articles  in headlines .

They also favor "The freedom to say what you  think . It also gives us the chance to read the news not covered by traditional media" .

Credibility is debatable issue here, some think that Facebook is not  credible because it is not a traditional professional media channel, while other people think it is credible because it says what people, not politicians, want to say "Media channels are owned by people with agenda which impact on news, sometimes you hear the other side of the story which completely contradicts the story in the public media channels".

Facebook doesn't seem to be a tool of conveying the news  only, more important than that is the credibility and the trust that people had in Facebook or the media made by people. Especially in society where people don't trust their government and where all the media are controlled by the government. The main advantage of Facebook in Syria is that it say what people want to say and not what  politicians, or organization with political agenda, want to say.

In addition to that Facebook is a very convenient tool that can be read anywhere,  anytime. It is easy to use and share ideas with no fear " sometimes people are afraid to speak out loud and Facebook gave them the opportunity to explore themselves".

They also think that Facebook is very important media channel because it spreads the word about Syria and moved it from national to international level. " so many people use Facebook, so it helps if everyone knows about Syria."  Meanwhile one of a few people in the study think that Facebook had a bad impact on the Syrian uprising by spreading fake news in the time where real journalists could not get there to prove what is right and what is wrong. " all we can do now is to believe Facebook not because we trust it but because it is the only way to get news".

 **Facebook as a political platform:** Facebook is a main source of political news for the people who live inside or outside Syria. (42.4 think Facebook is important in sharing political news. 46.1% think it is very important 11.5 % think it is not important.) (Median is very important.)

Facebook is used in Syria as a tool of sharing and discussing political news and opinions and to increase the political freedom .

45% think it is  important for increasing political freedom . 31.5 % think it is very important and 23.2 think it is not very important. ) (median is important )

Facebook also played an important role in arranging demonstrations and political events. 30.5 think it was very important for arranging political and 47.2 %think it is just important for arranging political events like demonstrations and 22.3 think it was not important (median is important).

The use of Facebook changed in Syria from social to political communication. (77.7 % think so ). Facebook was very important for the Syrian uprising because it played a key role as media channel that conveys the news and spread the political news and opinion. About 36% think Facebook was important for sharing political news and about 58% think it was very important (median is very important)

Facebook played a key role in the Syrian uprising..  (68% say Facebook played a key role in the Syrian uprising ) and also  59 % think Facebook is important for the Syrian uprising  27.2 % think it is very important and 13.8 think it is not important. (Median is important).

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that Facebook is playing a key roles in the social and political movements. Social media in Syria, as it is around the world, is helping people in creating, organizing and implementation of social movements but the role of Facebook in Syria is more important because social media are used as an alternative to the old media and as a tool to achieve democratic openness and shaping politics by opening the public platform where the real public and political platforms are absent.

Social Media had the upper hand in the Syrian uprising and the Arab uprising in general by playing three main roles:

1) shaping political debate and increasing the political discussion platform.

2) the increase of discussions platform lead to several events on the ground. In these events social media tools were used in organizing and covering these events.

3) social media globalize the movement and moved it from domestic to international sphere, where all the international big TVs and news channels were, and still, talking about what is happing in that small part of the world called Syria.

This study emphasizes the findings of other media scholars who talked about the potential role of the new media in shaping politics, opening a new public platform for discussion, especially in societies where a real public discussion platform is absent.

Even though this study shows that Facebook played a crucial and vital role in organizing and publicizing social movement since the control of conventional media made the role of new media more relevant, but I also think that those Middle Eastern countries that witnessed the uprising were ready for it.

CHAPTER 7

LIMITATIONS


The main limitation of this study is the language , this survey was conducted in English which limited the amount and the quality of the people who have been surveyed.

The fear is still a big thing,  people still afraid of talking about politics even if they live outside Syria.

That lack of resources was a factor of the study's limitation . The topic is new and the problem is not finished yet,  the war is still there and nothing much, other than article and daily coverage, is written yet.

Future researches may also address the role of the social media, especially Facebook , after the revolution now that about half of the Syrians flee the country and  live outside, mainly in USA, Canada, Europe and some Arabic country like Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. It is important to explore the role that Facebook is playing in connecting people especially through Groups and specialized Facebook pages.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Facebook played a vital role in increasing democracy sphere and creating a new virtual, but important, discussion platforms in Syria. This platform  has addressed the gap , exists in Syria and many other countries ruled by dictatorship regimes, between the revolution in  technology and information on one hand  and the retardation the regime imposes on the society in order to rule  on the other hand.  Facebook has also played a key role as a media channel, especially when people have lost the trust in the traditional media ruled by the government.  It  also  spread the world about Syria and was a useful media channel that is transferring  the Syrian news to the national, regional and international societies. Facebook, now in Syria, is one of the most powerful tools of the revolutions, which convey the people's demands of freedom, transparency, justice, and free-elected governments.  But talking about that we should always put so much emphasis on the word tool . Facebook is a media tool to spread the news and opinion about Syria, it is a tool for social communication and a tool to create a political platform, it is a tool to organize the demonstrations and political movements, but it is just a tool . It is not the revolution per say and the revolution would have never happened  if the people were not ready for it. Facebook is a tool of communication and interaction and maybe a political tool to achieve democracy and other people demands , it can help but it does not magically solve the issues people are suffering from. Five years now since the uprising started in Syria and was faced brutally by the government, which led to all kind of violence on the ground which  turned it from a civil movement to a civil war. Most of the activists left the country but still using Facebook and other social media in their civilian movements activities. So ,in further studies, it is important to

study the role Facebook in the life of the Syrian refugee and political activists who live outside Syria and  how Facebook connect them together  around the world and inside Syria.

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