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## Facebook and Twitter as Platforms for Human Good: A Case of Egypt Uprising, 2011

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### Abstract

*Through wider and rapid dissemination of information, social media sites (Facebook and Twitter in this article) influence the psychology of the users, making them ready for the collective action. This article analyses the role played by Facebook and Twitter in bringing about political change in Egypt during the Egyptian Uprising of 2011. Drawing insights from social media studies and Foucauldian discourse of power, this article exposes the tussle between the autocratic Egyptian government led by the then president Hosni Mubarak and Egyptian citizens and scrutinizes the horizontal connectivity and dissemination of information, citizen journalism, pervasive nature of power, and multiple resistance sites. It concludes that in materializing their aspirations of right, liberation, and justice along with the economic, social, and political revamp, Egyptian civilians took recourse in digital technologies and freed themselves from thirty-years long dictatorship of Mubarak.*

**Keywords:** Social media, Egypt Uprising, power, oppression, resistance, mobilization

### Introduction: Transformation of Society via Social Platforms

This article analyzes the effects created by Facebook and Twitter during the protest movement of the Egypt Uprising, 2011. These platforms as virtual fora mediated for the intellectual, socio-political discussion and accretion of awareness among the users by uniting

stifled and ignored voices and initiated and accelerated the protest movement. Egyptian people challenged the thirty years long tyrannical rule of Hosni Mubarak, the then president of Egypt, by the unprecedented source of power through social media networks. Egyptian citizens resisted the oppression and the “institutional normalization” (Melley, 2000, p. 36) of the state through the extensive use of Facebook and Twitter.

Egypt Uprising 2011 began on January 25 and lasted through February 11; however, it had its root in Kefeya Movement of 2004. After the assassination of the then Egyptian president Anwar El Sadat in 1981, Hosni Mubarak became the fourth president of the country. He thenceforth continuously extended the emergency law in every three years which had been enacted after the 1967 Six-Day War, to “control public sphere” (Tufekci, 2014, p. 4). Under the 30-year-long repressive government of Mubarak, Egyptians faced untoward and unbearable police brutality and human rights abuses. People’s realization of state oppression over their daily lives made them intensely anxious. Consequently, they initiated non-violent civil resistance movement on 25 January, the National Police Day. Their fundamental demands were the resignation of the Minister of Interior, presidential term limits, end of emergency law and state corruption. For the demonstration in front of the office of the Interior Minister, social media was extensively used to inform and mobilize people across the country. Hence, millions of people flocked to the city streets, particularly of Cairo’s Tahrir Square, Alexandria, and Suez, to protest Mubarak’s autocratic regime. Many political movements, opposition parties, and public figures corroborated the revolution. Still, the government used excessive force and tried its best to suppress the insurgency by dispersing people from the street. It escalated into a violent clash between police and protesters, resulting into 846 deaths and 6,467 injuries (bbc.com, 2011). However, people valiantly fought against the security personnel and eventually deposed Mubarak on February 11, 2011.

The autocratic regime of Mubarak abridged the freedom of publishing houses, the press, radio, television, and civil society and manipulated them by activating different state mechanisms during the Uprising. Social media proved to be an important tool for publicizing uncensored voice and organizing people. As cited by Fischer (2013), Clay Shirky views that “Social Media improves [sic] political information cascades . . . easier and wider dissemination of information changes [this] group awareness” (p. 11). He reflects on the importance of social media that positively impacts group awareness and cooperation through uncensored information cascades. Through social networks, rapid dissemination of information is feasible due to which it spreads across the globe within a few seconds. It is mainly useful to demonstrate the government’s follies and strengthen people’s solidarity. Social media played a vital role to generate awareness, inform about the events, and gain empathy and corroboration among Egyptians by posting the captures of demonstration functioning as “organizing agents” (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012, p. 746) though they were not organizations in themselves (Shirky, 2008). The use of such media became very effective because at the time of revolution sixty percent of Egypt’s population was under 30 (Peeters, 2011) and a quarter of Egyptian youth were unemployed (Handoussa, 2010). As data disclose, at that time, 26.7 percent Egyptians had adopted the Internet, and 87.1 percent of the population had owned cellphones due to which the internet savvy youths ignited the revolution in the country (cited in Kavanaugh et al., 2012, p. 33), and more importantly, as a government report of Egypt (2011) shows, Egyptian youth of 35 years of age and under constitute 78 percent of all Internet users. On the eve of the revolution, as Birke (2011) reports, Egypt had 4.6 million Facebook users, 89 percent of whom were under 35.

An autocratic regime often enjoys power by suppressing dissenting opinions. It silences public voices and deprives populace of individual agency and freedom of expression through different state mechanisms. As rightly argued social networking applications such as Facebook (Etudo et al., 2019) and Twitter (Oh et al., 2015) have contributed to the emergence of new forms of collective actions, they facilitate people to be organized, have been the prominent resistance site to ignite the Egyptian revolution. Michel Foucault's concept of power as horizontal and pervasive is one of the lenses for studying the Egypt Uprising, which Montrose (1992) posits as "[f]or Foucault, power is never monolithic, and power relations always imply multiple sites not only of power but also of resistance. He writes that such sites of resistance are of variable configuration, intensity, and effectiveness" (p. 403). Montrose, by taking Foucault's insight, argues that power relation contains the potentiality of resistance to check and balance the authorities; hence, power is not the sole governmental authority. Rather, it is pervasive in nature, having multiple sites of resistance. Foucault (1987) remarks "[w]here there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (p. 95). It dramatizes the vitality of cyber-activism to exert clout on political activism which as a seminal organizational infrastructure mobilize thousands of people to the street and dethrone Hosni Mubarak.

Egyptian citizens performed many demonstrations to get rights and justice and witnessed many political upheavals prior to Facebook Revolution. However, an individual incident of Khaled Said, an Egyptian blogger, who was tortured and beaten to death by police served to fuel the revolution. Police beat Said fatally to death suspecting him as an online activist. Following this brutality, 'We Are All Khaled Said,' a Facebook page had been created unanimously, and the identity of account holder was revealed later as Wael Ghoniem, a Google's executive for the Middle East and the protest organizer. He wrote on the page that he was, "an ordinary Egyptian devastated by the brutality inflicted on Khaled Said and motivated to seek justice" (Vargas, 2012, para. 12). More than 50 thousand people joined the page within a day and vowed to take part in the protest which was going to be held on National Police Day against torture, poverty, corruption, and unemployment. As Bakr (2012) informs, "Between 11<sup>th</sup> January and 10<sup>th</sup> February 2011, there were 34 million participants in the revolution on Facebook across 2313 pages, where 9815 participants got 461 thousand commentaries" (p. 68). The Egyptian revolution had no unified leadership to unite people behind and had no clear political ideology, but it was social media which organized Egyptian citizens to fight against human right abuses and social injustices caused by the poor crisis management by Mubarak's regime.

Social media platforms are useful mainly in public attention, avoiding censorship, and managing coordination or logistics (Tufekci, 2014, p. 2). Their use for mobilizing and organizing were unprecedentedly unique in Egypt Uprising 2011 owing colossal significance for the acceleration of political activism and civil rights movements. The remarkable use of them spurred the Uprising to ignite by joining and signing in Facebook pages, tweeting commitments, posting videos of protest, and awakening through blogs and informing via SMS. Social media sites have acquired power through the exposition of true face of autocratic regime being an alternative media for people as Soguk (2011) states, "Their revolutions may not have been televised initially; but they were certainly tweeted and Facebooked" (p. 596). Since both the government and the subjects of a country can execute the Internet in their favor, "it is important to see to whom the mobilization benefits the most" (Rashid, 2012, p. 25). Regarding reaping benefits of the information flow and mobilization, Rashid quotes Chadwick, who opines:

In authoritarian states the free flow of information can support democratic opposition with attacks on the regime, but it is just as possible that those use technical means such as gate keeping, site blocking and filtering the content or in extreme situations restricting access to telecommunications. (p. 25)

Chadwick argues that the use of technology and the information cascade mainly supports democratic force until it is censored and blocked. The authoritarian government of Mubarak attempts to limit and restrict internet access during the Uprising; however, Mubarak's strategy completely fails and fuels the outrage of people as anonymous internet users teaming up provided communication tools and internet service for Egyptians.

Even though social media does have negative side, this study concerns mainly with its positive face. Manuel Castells, a Spanish sociologist, disagrees that social media is an instrumental for the revolution and states, “[O]bviously communication technologies did not give birth to the insurgency. The rebellion was born of the poverty and social exclusion that afflict much of the population in this fake democracy . . .” (cited in Khondker, 2011, p. 678). Castells attempts to distinguish the real causes of revolution from the tool for which it is used. He argues that social exclusion and poverty are the causes that force people to revolt against the autocracy. Although social media is not the cause, it is potential enough to materialize the objectives of revolution by organizing stifled voices swiftly in a forum. Eltantawy and Wiest (2011) view, “Social media introduced a novel resource that provided swiftness in receiving and disseminating information; helped to build and strengthen ties among activists; and increased interaction among protesters and between protesters and the rest of the world” (p. 1218). They have acknowledged the importance of a novel resource of social media as it emphasizes swiftness in communicating, coordinating, and building solidarity among protesters and between protesters and the world.

This article briefly introduces Mubarak's autocratic regime and the Egyptian people's way of resistance to topple his reign in 2011. The following sections present the methodology utilized in this article and analyze in detail how Egyptian citizens make use of social media and fight back the state intervention in the peaceful demonstration. Finally, it concludes with the assessment of social media as a novel tool to organize, move, and resist against autocracy.

## **Methodology**

This article uses secondary sources to analyze the role of Facebook and Twitter in Egypt Uprising, 2011. Mainly, it scrutinizes the articles published in *New York Times* during the Uprising (January 25 to February 11, 2011) and draws insights from social media scholars like Tufekci (2014), Castells (2000), Shirky (2008), Gladwell (2011) among others and Foucault's (1987) discourse on power to substantiate the argument.

## **Analysis: Role of Facebook and Twitter in Egypt Uprising 2011**

Mubarak enjoyed absolutism in Egypt, activating security forces since 1981. His confiscation of people's fundamental rights, including the right to vote, and to elect delegate was unwittingly preparing people to burst out for their rights where previous order entirely got disrupted. As Earl and Kimport (2011) said, communication network becomes the organizational

form of the political action (Earl & Kimport, 2011), Egyptians got united through Facebook page, “We Are All Khaled Said” and tens of thousands of people filled the street demanding an end of nearly 30-year rule of President Mubarak on January 25, 2011.

Mubarak followed the traditional dictatorial strategy by sending security forces out to disperse the protesters, because the peaceful demonstration turned out to be violent on the first day of the Uprising. As the people were gathered by the same goal demand of the end of Mubarak’s government Fahim and El-Naggar (2011) writes, “Security forces, which normally prevent major public displays of dissent, initially struggled to suppress the demonstration, allowing them to swell” (para. 2). It confides that security forces alone could not suppress the protest as the number of protestors grew dramatically. Digital media are thought to facilitate more decentralized, dispersed, temporary, and individualized forms of political action (Kavada, 2016, p. 8).

Hundreds of thousands of protesters gathered in Tahrir Square, Cairo making it one of the largest demonstrations of the world. This is an indicative of how large-scale, fluid social networks (Castells, 2000) operated and revealed how people were waiting for the right means to converge and unite to display their dissatisfaction to the government’s brutal and inhuman treatment in many aspects of life. On January 25, the *New York Times* writes, “But early Wednesday morning, firing rubber bullets, tear gas, and concussion grenades, the police finally drove groups of demonstrators from the square. . . Plainclothes officers beat several demonstrators and protesters flipped over a police car and set it on fire” (Fahim and El-Naggar, 2011, para. 3). The peaceful demonstration got transformed into a fray between protesters and security forces as the state attempted to crush the protest. Protesters too valiantly wrestled against the security personnel deployed by the government.

As people started peaceful demonstration demanding for an end of the authoritarian government, Mubarak responded to the protest by deploying security forces, which resulted in violent clashes between security personnel and the protesters. Mubarak abused state power for stifling and snuffing out the political activism for which Egyptian police and security forces had a well-earned reputation throughout the country. The regime suppressed the Youth Movement of April 6, which had already begun using Facebook. But in the case of Khaled Said, people were so determined that they thought they had no alternative, other than revolution. As Foucault (1987) opines, the possibility of resistance can never entirely be eliminated; this state power did not become able to keep its people tacit forever by crushing political activism like the April 6 Youth Movement.

True to what Foucault said, the demonstration was organized and executed mainly using Facebook pages- We are All Khaled Said and event page and Twitter hashtags throughout the Uprising. By using these, they had informed all individuals to gather at Tahrir Square, Cairo, to protest against Mubarak’s police state and its brutality on the occasion of Police Day on January 25, 2019. Ghoniem, the page creator of the page “We are all Khaled Said” not only displayed the photograph of a bloodied and disfigured face with its jaw broken, he also appealed and requested others to join the movement stating that “Today they killed Khaled,” and considering himself as a representative he wrote, “If I don’t act for his sake, tomorrow they will kill me” (Varagas, 2012, para. 2). On Twitter, hashtags [#jan25](#), [#Egypt](#) appealed for larger crowds to fight against the tyranny of Mubarak by highlighting the connection between politics and living conditions.



An internet video posted on February 9, 2011 showed people tearing up a large portrait of Mr. Mubarak in Mahlla el-Kubra got viral. As Foucault (1987) argues, “power is everywhere” and “comes from everywhere” (p. 63), hitherto unacknowledged civilians resisted the powerful ruler Mubarak by taking cellphone photos and cheering up. The bold step taken by the protesters and their challenge to the president posted in the internet videos further galvanized the protest appealing people psychologically and emotionally.

The government employed various ruses to outwit the demonstration. It deployed security forces to disperse protesters from the street including Tahrir Square, but as mentioned in the *New York Times*, “[I]n contrast with other recent political demonstration in Cairo, thousands of security officers seemed content at times to contain rather than engage the protesters . . .” (Fahim and El-Naggar, 2011, para. 13). Thus, “in a statement, the Interior Ministry said its policy had been ‘securing and not confronting those gatherings’” (para. 13).

It was difficult for the demonstrators to coordinate and circulate their new stratagems and demonstration programs for subsequent days (Tufekci, 2014). Despite these odds, social media users had already been informed about the ongoing protest in the country. As Fahim and El-Naggar inform, “In the days leading up to the protests, more than 90,000 people signed up on a Facebook page for the ‘Day of Revolution,’ organized by the opposition and pro-democracy group to be held on Police Day, a national holiday” (para. 17). Although the quote does not mention the name of the Facebook page in which 90,000 people signed up for the demonstration, the data suggest that many people had already been prepared for the Uprising. Furthermore, the *New York Times* in its Sunday Review writes, ‘We Are All Khaled Said’ has almost 500,000 supporters” (Wolman, 2011). It conspicuously evinces that the Facebook provided them a platform to be organized and mobilized further. Therein lies the power of social networks as it unites the voices of the voiceless against the oppressor. Since many people were ready to fight against torture, poverty, and unemployment through the extensive use of Facebook and Twitter, the demonstration grew stronger every day to regain lost agency and freedom.

Although Mubarak’s interior minister hastily blamed the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood for the unrest, it was tens of thousands of Egyptian youths who led the revolution. The *New York Times* published a news item under the headline ‘Egyptian Youths Drive the Revolt Against Mubarak’ on January 26 which reads, the revolution was led “by the emergence of an unpredictable third force, the leaderless tens of thousands of young Egyptians who turned out to demand an end to Mr. Mubarak’s 30-year rule” (Kirkpatrick and Slackman, 2011, para. 3). Additionally, Mohamad ElBaradei, an Egyptian Nobel Prize laureate, credited the revolution to internet-savvy netizen youth, saying: “[I]t was young people who took the initiative and set the date and decided to go” (Fahim and Stack, 2011, para. 13).

Discontent Egyptians were seeking the right means to vent out their resentment to battle against the oppression of the state itself. It was the brutal murder of innocent youth, Khaled Said named for Khaled Mohamed Saeed on social media (January 27, 1982 – June 6, 2010), an Egyptian businessman and a blogger, by the two policemen in front of his home dragging him out from the cybercafe, Alexandria, which outraged all the citizens leading them to the street. Mr. Hassan Mosbah, the café owner, gave the details of this murder in a video interview, which was posted online, and photos of Mr. Said appeared on social networking sites. Photos of his disfigured corpse spread throughout online communities including Facebook, and incited outrage over an allegation that he was fatally beaten and tortured to death by security personnel.

Khaled Said's heart-rendering murder is the quintessence of brutality and torture that the government has been supplying thousands of Egyptians for many years. After the first post on the Facebook page, We Are All Khaled Said, 300 members joined the page within two minutes, then, he posted this call to action on the page again; "People, we became 300 in two minutes. We want to be 100,000. We must unite against our oppressor" (Wolman, 2011, para. 4). By praising the pseudonymous organizer behind We Are All Khaled Said, Ahmad Maher, a co-founder of the April 6 Youth Movement, immediately responded and sent a mail for the ingenious method of motivating and assembling people to get involved in the social action. Maher, who was detained and tortured during the April 6 Youth Movement, began exchanging e-mail with Ghonim vowing to assist the movement briskly. Since the news about the revolution through Twitter in Tunisia got viral, Ghonim posted his overt public statement about the possible ousting of the government in We Are All Khaled Said that reads: "[J]anuary 25 is Police Day and it's a national holiday... If 100,000 take to the streets, no one can stop us... I wonder if we can?" (n. p.).

Another social network most used during this Uprising for the purpose of "organizing and gaining publicity effectively" (Tufekci, 2014, p. 1) was Twitter. One of the most prominent hashtags during the Uprising was #January25 along with #egypt. Alya El Hosseiny, a 21-year-old university student, was reading about Tunisia's toppled dictator in her laptop and happened to view a Facebook page for January 25 demonstrations, then, she decided to tweet about it. But she did not find the existing hashtags for the Egypt Uprising and resolved to create one, #January25. Later, she recalled: "I just made up something short and sweet. I thought it was temporary, until I found out everyone was using it" (n. p.), which became the eighth most popular hashtag of 2011. Mahmoud Saled, an online activist, and a protester, had tweeted that "[F]or when and where the revolution will be and other important info, go here . . ." (n. p.) by sharing the link "<http://bit.ly/January25egypt>" on January 24, a day before the Uprising began. Mohamed Abdelfattah, an Egyptian video journalist, on the evening of the first day of the revolution released a series of unsettling tweets in short succession during ongoing protests:

@mfatta7 Tear gas

@mfatta7 I'm suffocating

...

@mfatta7 Help!!!

@mfatta7 Arrested

@mfatta7 Ikve [I've] been beaten a lot. (Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011, p. 1209)

Through these disturbing tweets, people who followed his account got informed about the demonstration and got a chance to plan for the next moment living anywhere but getting access to Twitter.

The face of Khaled Said whose disfigured corpse spread throughout internet community is the uniting force for Egyptian civilians against government's tyranny. However, the government deployed security forces to disband and disperse people from the streets to sustain its rule, as people began to gather under the face of Khaled Said.

The Facebook page, 'We Are All Khaled Said' helped move people following their emotions and feeling – feeling of resentment against the government. The name of the account and the content made the people feel the oppression and brutality encountered by them. The name of account is significant since it helped all the users to internalize themselves as vulnerable as Khaled Said. Living in the claustrophobic environment of the regime, everyone identifies their

selves with the self of Khaled Said, which was emblematic of tyranny experienced by the people in the country. Had power been only a governmental authority, those common people could not challenge the long-ruling tyrannical ruler, but as Foucault (1987) argues, it is shared by so-called insignificant creatures, the resistance became possible. ‘We’ of the account name ‘We are all Khaled Said’ addressed each individual living in the country who was vulnerable to be Khaled Said, thus uniting them all.

The government of Mubarak used a weapon of fear to stifle the dissenting voices; however, the absolutism of this extreme oppression cannot be sustained indefinitely. When people feel absolutism, they begin to resist, and resistance itself is power. The more pressure you give, the more it seeks the way out. Mubarak’s government, like other autocratic regimes, attempted to crush the peaceful demonstration; consequently, it took a terrible turn. The *New York Times* issued on January 26 mentions:

The Egyptian government intensified efforts to crush a fresh wave of protests on Wednesday, banning public gatherings, detaining hundreds of people and sending police officers to scatter protesters who defied the ban and demand an end to the government of President Hosni Mubarak. (Fahim and Stack, 2011, para. 1)

The Mubarak government sent riot police officers and plainclothes officers who used batons, tear gas, rubber-coated bullets to clear avenues by beating them with bamboo staves. Defying and responding to the government’s ban and its dispersal strategy, the protesters also became impatient and violent, as they could not sustain peaceful demonstration any longer due to ruthless thrashing of police. Thus, on the second day of the demonstration, the protesters set a government building on fire in Suez. In addition to it, they even threw gasoline bombs at the office of the ruling party in Suez. Though the government was using its different state mechanisms to squash the protest, the pro-democracy and anti-government force was so determined that they were not going to evacuate the street until their demands got fulfilled. “‘This is do or die’ said Mustaf Youssef, 22, a student marched from skirmish to skirmish with friends, including one nursing a rubber-bullet wound” (para. 6). Youssef, further, added that “[T]he most important thing to do is keep confronting them” (para. 6). Within two days of protests, as the government revealed, about 800 people had been detained throughout the country, while human rights activists had the statistics that there had been more than 2000 arrests.

The government also targeted the media workers as well. Mostly, during the Uprising the government of Egypt had so squeezed the freedom of press and media by incorporating social networks that they experienced many hurdles in disseminating live feeds news and information as they could incite the people and revolution. Regarding Al Jazeera, which played a vital role in an unremitting live broadcast of the Uprising, the *New York Times* presents the news on January 28:

[T]he broadcaster’s separate live channel was removed from its satellite platform by the Egyptian government on Friday morning, its Cairo bureau had its telephones cut and its main news channel also face signal interference . . . The director of the live channel issued an appeal to the Egyptian government to allow it to broadcast freely. (Worth, 2011, para. 6)

Security forces started beating anyone who happened to be standing in the way including reporters. Other broadcasters, including CNN, said their reporters had been attacked and their cameras smashed by security forces.

The government also “responded by demonizing and attacking social media” (Tufekci, 2014, p. 1). People got trouble getting access to Twitter and Cellphone networks which were



blocked in the very first day of the Uprising. But on Friday, January 28, the government almost entirely blocked social media sites including Cellphone network due to which it caused 90 % drop in data traffic to and from Egypt. Under the heading ‘Egypt Cuts Off Most Internet and Cell Service,’ the *New York Times* on January 28 writes:

[A]utocratic government often limits phone and internet access in tense times. But internet has never faced anything like what happened in Egypt on Friday, when the government of a country with 80 million people and a modernizing economy cut off nearly all access to the network and shut down cellphone service. The shutdown caused 90 percent drop in data traffic to and from Egypt, crippling an important communications tool used by antigovernment protesters to organize and to spread their message. (Richtel, 2011, para. 2).

The government tried to cripple the antigovernment force by attacking social media in a time of tense without considering the impact it would have on the modernization of the economy. The ruse to cut off access to cellphone and internet entirely by a few governments had already been observed prior to this Uprising; in Nepal and Myanmar in 2005 and 2007 respectively. Foucault (1987) puts forth his opinion regarding the source of power that:

[T]he omnipresence of power: not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. (p. 93)

The autocratic regime of Mubarak was well-prepared to snuffing out the people from the street since his coming to power in the country. For the purpose, he did have enough diligent security personnel because he mistook merely the people as the source of power to destabilize his reign. But as power is everywhere and it comes from everywhere, Mubarak failed to recognize social media as the source of power. Hence, he could not suppress the revolution by just deploying security forces.

Due to the unprecedented number of protesters in the street up to Friday, Mubarak’s regime had already begun to shake. Mubarak, on early Saturday, ordered all his ministries to resign and announced that his government would accelerate reforms soon. He would have been far more persuasive if he had lifted the communication blackout, reeled in his security forces, allowed credible candidates to vie for president the same year, and ensured a free and fair poll. Instead, he decreed the army to put Mohamed Elbaradei under arrest, a leading opposition figure and former leader of the International Atomic Energy Agency. It conspicuously dramatizes that Mubarak was not determined for the reformations and changes in the country but longed to prolong his reign by playing different cards. He struggled ardently to maintain prior political mayhem in the country, and a tenuous hold on power on Saturday since the police and the military withdrawn from the major cities allowing the demonstrators defying a curfew to call for an end to his authoritarian rule.

In Mubarak’s police state, police were arresting denizens for no reason without having warrant and torturing them unnecessarily to terrorize people and keep them under his feet. Nevertheless, his attempt to blacking out the service of internet including social media itself shows his fear psyche. He was afraid of possible public union and acceleration of revolution through a novel organizational infrastructure: digital media. Hence, the pro-democracy and anti-government force stroke on the very weak spot to depose him from the power.

The pro-democracy force regionally and internationally gave their word to assist the Egyptian people in their Uprising in different ways. Some people outside Egypt began to provide an Internet connection through the dial-up system. On Facebook and Twitter, people from different countries posted their commitment to helping Egyptians in their movement for democracy. Since the Arab world “is moving from darkness to light . . . from dictatorship to freedom” (Shadid, 2011, para. 13), people from different countries extended their helping hands; “[O]n Facebook, a group in Jerusalem pledged support for Egypt and Tunisia” (para. 13). In Tunisia where the revolution had just been concluded, “a group of Tunisian protesters gathered outside the Egyptian Embassy in solidarity. Mubarak out!” (para.18), they chanted. Similarly, a Lebanese newspaper quoted Tunisian activists offering advice to their Egyptian counterparts; “[P]rotest at night, wear plastic bags to avoid electric shocks, wash your face with Coca-Cola to fend off the effects of tear gas and try to spray black paint on the windshields of police vehicles” (para. 18). It demonstrates the deep concern of the people from different geographies, mainly, from the neighboring.

As the Uprising was getting momentum, “more than 100,000 people poured into the streets of the capital, pushing back for hours against a battalion of riot police” (Kirkpatrick & El-Naggar, 2011, para. 7). Internet-savvy young political organizers selected a small committee led by Dr ElBaradei to negotiate with the political bodies and the Egyptian military. Though the major political parties and other players supported the Uprising, both newcomers and veterans of the opposition movement says, “it is the young internet pioneers who remain at the vanguard behind the scenes” (para. 9). Ibrahim Issa, a prominent opposition intellectual and attendant of the meetings gives credit to the youth and says, “The young people are still leading this” (para. 10). To push forward the Uprising, the young internet pioneers were playing the crucial role behind the curtain.

Though the regime severed internet and the wireless services, the protesters got the alternatives to send and share their message to coordinate and forward their Uprising. They started sending their voice message via social media like Google, Twitter and SayNow by recording their voice in their cell phones. For this purpose, the protesters needed just the cell phone whereby recording their voice they could send the phone numbers provided by the aforementioned social media which later would be posted on the Internet.

The protesters started charging their Cellphones in a tangle of power bars and extension cords in Tahrir Square so that they could share their voice messages by exploiting the new service provided by Google, Twitter and SayNow. The *New York Times* on February 1 published a news item under the heading ‘New Service Lets Voice from Egypt Be Heard,’ which entails the news: [T]here is still some cellphone service, so a new Social Media link that marries Google, Twitter and SayNow, a voice-based Social Media platforms, gives Egyptians three phone numbers to call and leave a message, which is then posted on the internet as a recorded Twitter message. The messages are at [twitter.com/speak2tweet](https://twitter.com/speak2tweet) and can also be heard by telephone. (Hauser, 2011, para. 4)

Unedited, raw, anonymous, and emotional Egyptian voices were trickling out through a new service that circumvents attempts of the government to suppress the Uprising by cutting internet service. One of the protesters raised his voice to be heard on the recording as “[A]nd the number is growing” (para. 2). He intended to share the fact that the number of protesters was growing up in the streets and squares. Another caller to [speak2tweet](https://twitter.com/speak2tweet) said, “[U]rgent news. The

police have changed to serve the people. We are very happy” (para. 8).

To emphasize the role of young internet generation’s political activism, the *New York Times* published on February 2 mentioned the voice of an opposition lawmaker, Shawki al- Qadi, in Yemen, “[T]he street is not afraid of government anymore. It is the opposite. Government and their security forces are afraid of people now. The new generation, the generation of internet, is fearless” (Shadid, 2011, para. 5). The articulation is the indication of the young internet generation’s vanguard and resolution. Using the Internet, Facebook, and Twitter, they unite and mobilize more people, online and offline, calling them to the street. Nevertheless, Mubarak had been employing various schemes to crush the Uprising. Apart from the deployment of security forces, he even let his armed supporters to battle against the anti-government force. Foucault (1987), by acknowledging several loopholes of the power holders from where resistances emerge, argues that:

[J]ust as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses the strategic codification and individual and it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes a revolution somewhat similar to the way in which the state relies on the institutional integration of power relationships. (p. 96)

As Foucault theorizes the relationship of power and resistance in abovementioned lines, Mubarak relied on the power of state apparatuses, particularly security and military forces, and its institutional power where there embedded the innumerable of points of resistance. Consequently, social media and Internet proved to be the government’s weakness which the protesters strategically utilized to be unified and the revolution to succeed in Egypt. Individual resentment and indignation against the repressive government of Mubarak got united through social media which forwarded the Uprising. Though the regime of Mubarak deployed the security forces to disperse people from the streets, protesters readiness to sacrifice their lives rather step back from their demands exhibits the inheritance of resistance within power, state apparatuses. The Mubarak supporters in the street chanted which the *New York Times* issued on 3<sup>rd</sup> February mentions, “[H]e won’t go!” Responding to it, the demonstrators cheered up “[W]e won’t go!” A group of people in the street instigated by Mubarak pitched clashes that in two days as the *New York Times* writes on 3 February, “left at least seven dead and hundreds wounded, banners in Tahrir Square declared Mr. Mubarak’s “a war criminal”, and several in the crowd said that the president should be executed” (Shadid, 2011, para. 7).

Mubarak further intensifies the resentment of the protesters through his televised address to the people. He seemed adamant and annoyed while addressing the Egyptians on Thursday, the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the Uprising. At about 10:45, the crowd quieted in the square and the streets to listen to their most awaited speech, which they had assumed as resignation speech, but Mubarak sternly articulated that he would not resign but would delegate authority to Vice President Omar Suleiman. After hearing this speech, there was no bound of enraging among the protesters due to which they became violent and proceeded to the Radio and Television buildings, Parliament building, and even the Presidential palace and began to gather over there. They were cursing him as ‘donkey,’ and ‘liar’ regarding their ruler as a powerless one. Referring to Mubarak’s decision of not resigning and his remark, “[I] am addressing all of you from the heart, a speech from the father to his sons and daughters” (Kirkpatrick and Shadid, 2011, para. 37), George Ishak, a

longtime opposition leader, said: “Can this man be serious, or did he lose his mind? People will not go home, and tomorrow will be a horrible day. It is a redundant speech; it is annoying, and we heard it a thousand times before” (para. 39). The broadsheet on the same day mentions the tweet ElBaradei, “[I] ask the army to intervene immediately to save Egypt. The credibility of the army is being put to the test” (para. 40). Eventually, the next day became the day of a significant victory in the history of the Egyptian people as Vice President Omar Suleiman announced in a brief televised speech at about 6:00 p.m. that reads, “Taking into the consideration the difficult circumstances the country is going through, President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak has decided to leave the post of president of the republic and has tasked the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to manage the state’s affairs” (Kirkpatrick, 2011, para. 16). Here lies the power of social media, which improved information cascades, and brought tremendous impact to effect regime change (Shirky, 2008).

As Tufekci (2014) argues, digital infrastructure empowers protest movements in specific ways, and the uprisings of the early twentieth century and large protests around the world have provided indications of this power (p. 15). Here comes the victory of people, victory of social networks, victory of an arsenal of networking over the arsenal of baton, club, tear gas, concussion grenades, guns, and so on used by the security forces. Here comes the victory of democratic force over the tyranny led by Mubarak. But still, protesters were a bit suspicious whether the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces would hand-over the power to the people or not. But this force had already been tilting towards the protesters and showing its solidarity to the people during the Uprising. Apart from it, a few chief militants like Gen. Hassan al-Roueiini and Gen. Sami Hafez Enan appeared in Tahrir Square and were assuring that they would delegate power to people by making the announcement publicly among protesters. An army spokesman declared on state television which the *New York Times* issued on February 10 quotes that:

[I]n affirmation and support for the legitimate demands of the people, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces convened today, 10 February 2011, to consider developments to date, and decided to remain in continuous session to consider what procedures and measures that may be taken to protect the nation, and the achievements and aspiration of the great people of Egypt. (Kirkpatrick and Shadid, 2011, para. 33)

These lines unravel that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces was devoted to safeguarding the aspiration of the Egyptian people achieved through the revolution. The use of words like ‘the legitimate demands of the people’ and ‘to protect the nation,’ and the achievements and aspirations of the great people of Egypt’ show their respect for the Egyptians. Facebook and Twitter, as seen in the Egyptian History, bring unprecedented opportunities to organize masses of people in democratic actions, lower participation costs, and foster new information and action repertoires that go beyond offline communities (Kavada, 2018; Oh, Eom, & Rao, 2015).

#### **IV. Conclusion: Social Media as a Resistance Site**

Facebook and Twitter played a vital role in the mobilization of civilians in the Egypt Uprising. People in Egypt gathered and revolted against the autocratic regime and toppled down thirty years long repressive government by the extensive use of them. It demonstrates that suppression of any kind is challenged as power does not solely belong to the larger institutions rather is shared by even seemingly insignificant entities. We can utilize social media that provides a virtual forum to assemble our voice and make it audible to the authority. It not only provides a forum for intellectual, socio-political discussion and accretion of awareness, they, by uniting the stifled, ignored, and marginalized voice can initiate revolution too.

Social media networks provide a platform for the unification, participation, mobilization, and organization which acquire the resistance power to establish a new order in the society ousting the autocrat, altering the dictatorial government, and disrupting the existing social order. Social media being a prominent organizational infrastructure, disseminate the information and events at the feasible rapid speed and low cost helping coordinate people across the globe. The power of social media primarily lies in its pace as the message spreads virulent across the network in no time. Besides, it reduces expenditure heavily for the coordination and organization of people.

By driving many revolutions in the Middle East and other countries, Facebook and Twitter have acquired prominence and power. Amassing support; national and international as it transcends the national boundary with the flick of a finger, they abet to organize and mobilize people to start a campaign or revolution to bring about the change in the existing order of the society. It does not mean that social media makes the revolution necessarily possible in half or a month rather it in the long term they form the opinion and determination of people by exposing the regime's authoritarianism, grave pitfalls, and harsh brutality of the regime. Though social media is potential enough to drive different social or civil movements, its success is affected by the various factors. The number of users and accessibility play a crucial role in its success along with the demographic structures, the education system, the awareness of the protesters and their resoluteness. That's why all the movements driven by social media has not achieved the targeted goal. For instance, the campaign began in Syria failed to meet the anticipated objectives.

Although there are many examples of success of revolution through social media networks such as the ousting of Philippine President Joseph Estrada in 2001, Tunisia's revolution, the Iraqi antiwar movement, the anti-G8 protest in Genoa, and others. Malcolm Gladwell, a staff writer for *The New Yorker*, posits his reservations about the power of social media as a response to Clay Shirky's argument about the political power of social media networks. Gladwell raises an essential question, 'Do social media Make Protest Possible?' Hence, he does not find Shirky's construe of the role of social media persuasive and asks him to convince the readers that in the absence of social media, those uprisings would not have been possible. He means to say that many revolutions have succeeded before the innovation of these social media. Thus, social media, for him, is not the messiah that necessarily brings liberation. Clay Shirky, in contrast to Gladwell, opines that as the communications landscape gets denser, people become more networked. They get easy access to information, which enhanced their ability to undertake collective action. As the advent of Gutenberg's printing press in the 15<sup>th</sup> century played a vital role in the diminishing power of the medieval church and led to the Renaissance and later the Reformation and the scientific revolution, the innovation of social media spreading the live news feeds and eluding manipulation of the state proved to be a resistance site to democratize society. The role played by social media during Egypt Uprising shows that it is more than a tool that can become a site of organization in and on itself.

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