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INSTITUTE OF DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

**THE NEXUS BETWEEN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND CIVIL
CONFLICT: THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN NORTH AFRICA**

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to the love and friendship of my daughter Maria Tessa Otundo.

ABSTRACT

Social media, by facilitating deliberative political processes, can have a supportive role in the post-regime phase. All evidence indicates that far from being a spontaneous event catalysed by technology, the North African story is one of the agencies of a disciplined civil resistance movement through the four phases of a political revolution 'arc': preparation, ignition, escalation and post-regime. Social media made a profound difference in the preparation phase through changing the political opportunity structures for revolution. Social media had an amplifying impact at the ignition phase, by enabling the trigger to go viral. The escalation phase was the point at which social media became visible, but its role was contributory rather than central. International visibility came at this point via social media, the blogosphere leading traditional Western media coverage of events. The use of social media is likely to be a relatively important feature of future political activism across the world and has changed the communications environment for all actors. Existing research into social revolution and political mobilization has shown how ineffective methodology could precipitate occurrence and resurgence of revolutions and intrastate conflicts. This research seeks to evaluate the Nexus between science and technology and civil conflict: The impact of social media in North Africa. The research was guided by the social movement theory which entailed mutual combination of factors used by social media user and political actors and civil society in dealing with the revolution in North Africa. Data for this study was obtained from primary and secondary sources. The sample size for the study will be 50 staff in embassies of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Morocco. The data was obtained by conducting a field research, using questionnaires, and interviews. Guided by the objectives and premises of the study, the data was analysed and arranged according to the major themes highlighting the role social media played in North Africa uprising. The findings from the research will provide evidence for effective use of the abilities held by social media in achieving peace in future conflicts. The findings will provide a critical model of how social media and new media are able to ensure that peace is achieved. After the interpretation and discussion of the data, conclusions were drawn and recommendations for further research given.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	II
DEDICATION	III
ABSTRACT	IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	V
ABBREVIATIONS	VIII
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 BACKGROUND	1
1.2 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	4
1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	5
1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW	5
1.4.1 Introduction	5
1.4.2 Civil Conflict in North Africa	6
1.4.2 Popularity of Social Media in North Africa	7
1.4.3 Role of Social Media in North Africa Conflict	8
1.4.4 Factors influencing the use of social media in North Africa Revolution	11
1.5 JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH STUDY	15
1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	16
1.7 HYPOTHESES	19
1.8 METHODOLOGY	20
1.9 CHAPTER OUTLINE.....	21
CHAPTER TWO	23
SOCIAL MEDIA AND CONFLICT REVOLUTION IN NORTH AFRICA: AN OVERVIEW	23
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	23
2.2 SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLITICAL REVOLUTION: OVERVIEW.....	23
2.3 CONFLICT IN TUNISIA	24
2.3 CONFLICT IN LIBYA	27
2.5 CONFLICT IN EGYPT	28
2.6 CONFLICT IN MOROCCO	31
2.7 CONCLUSION	33
CHAPTER THREE	34
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL MOBILISATION AND REVOLUTION IN NORTH AFRICA: CRITICAL EVALUATION	34
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	34

3.2 CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL REVOLUTIONS	34
3.3 THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE REVOLUTION IN NORTH AFRICA.....	37
3.3.1 The Role of Social Media in the Uprising	38
3.3.2 Contribution of the Internet to the Uprising	40
3.3.3 Information Transmission.....	42
3.4 NETWORK FORMATION.....	45
3.5 INTERNET CENSORSHIP ACTIVITIES	47
3.6 SOCIAL MEDIA AND COLLECTIVE POLITICAL IDENTITY FORMATION	50
3.7 QUANTIFICATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLITICAL REVOLUTION	52
3.8 THE OUTCOME OF SOCIAL MEDIA NORTH AFRICA.....	55
3.9 CONCLUSION	59
CHAPTER FOUR.....	60
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE BIRTH OF THE REVOLUTION IN NORTH AFRICA.....	60
4.1 INTRODUCTION	60
4.2 THE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES OF SOCIAL MEDIA.....	60
4.3 Social Media as an Alternative Press	63
4.4 THE EFFICIENCY OF SOCIAL MEDIA CREATING POLITICAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS AWARENESS	67
4.5 IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE NORTH AFRICA POLITICAL REVOLUTION	70
4.6 THE SUCCESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN NORTH AFRICA.....	71
4.7 The Dialects of Social Media	74
4.8 CONCLUSION	77
CHAPTER FIVE	79
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	79
5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	79
5.2 CONCLUSION	81
5.3 RECOMMENDATION	85
BIBLIOGRAPHY	88
APPENDICES.....	102
APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE EMBASSIES’ STAFF IN KENYA.....	102
APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW GUIDE	104

ABBREVIATIONS

ICT	Information Communication Technology
IGO	Inter---governmental Organisation
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MENA	Middle East North Africa
NIC	National Intelligence Council

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background

As a continent, Africa has demonstrated significant levels of conflicts over the last fifty years. Common drivers of conflict include oppression, regional insecurity, global political influences and ethnic and regional differences. The revolution in North Africa began with a chain of revolutionary anti-governments demonstrations and protests starting from Tunisia and extending to other countries in North Africa and in the Middle East.¹ The revolution began in the year 2010 when a Tunisian street vegetables and fruits hawker, Mohammad Bouazizi, had his handcart confiscated by police after beating him as he was unable to pay his fine which made him set himself on fire. This act was considered to be a catalyst of not only the revolution in Tunisia, but also for the revolution in the rest of North Africa and Middle East. Consequently, the Sidi Bouzid town where Mohammad Bouazizi came from began to flood with protestors. In January 14th 2010, 10 days after the death of Mohammad Bouazizi, the Tunisian president, Ben Ali, was ousted from his position as the president. This social movement victory led to a wave of protests in Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Morocco, Jordan and Libya successively.²

The pro-Islamic party an-Nahada government which rose to power after the October elections in 2011 was seen to be controlling all the political levers and practicing the same sort of majoritarianism just like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The government was seen to have favouritism towards the Islamists sometimes violent

¹ Kürsad Özekin and Hüseyin Akkas, "An Empirical Look To The Arab Spring: Causes And Consequences," *Turkish Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 2014): 75–87.

² Alex Hofheinz, *Arab Internet Use: Popular Trends and Public Impact*, Arab Media and Political Renewal: Community, Legitimacy and Public Life (New York: IB Tauris, 2007).

protests while cracking their whip on the secular demonstrations against the government. Due to this, demonstration against the government grew especially after the assassination of two leftist politicians in 2013; opposition parties come together and formed the National Salvation Front which called for the dissolution of the National Constituent Assembly and for new elections which were held in 2014. The elections were won by a self-styled modern party known as Nidaa Tounes against the Islamic An-Nahda party. A new constitution was drafted in January 2014 and the An-Nahda accepted the results of the elections. However, the country has witnessed an unpredictable rise in Islamism activity which has partly been fuelled by the Libya civil war. This has led to increased military action in the Libya-Tunisia border and in the country.³

In Libya, civil conflict has been ongoing since the ouster of former president Moammar Gaddafi in the 2011 civil war. The country has held several elections but most of them are paralyzed by the competition between Islamist and non Islamist groups all whom are backed by militia. After the election of 2012, the General National Congress took over power. Since then, Islamist parties have controlled the assembly and also elected Nouri Abusah as president of the party in 2013. In 2013, the party also voted for the enforcement of a variant of the sharia law and also extended its 18 month old mandate to a year until the end of 2014. This caused a civil war to ensue between various groups seeking to control Libya. Hundreds of militias around the country tried to fill the void caused by the civil war by controlling various parts of the country. Many of the militia are based on ethnic allegiance while others have embraced al-Qaida inspired extremisms. The conflict in Libya is still ongoing and can simply be framed as a conflict between

³ Stepanova Ekaterina, "The Role of Information Ommunication Technologies in the 'Arab Spring,'" PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 159 (Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO); Russian Academy of Sciences, 2011).

Islamists and Arab nationals with other factors such as regional rivalries, parliaments and outside agendas under play. This civil conflict has led to over 3,000 deaths.⁴

The growth of science and technology has changed the quality of human life. Social media is one such technological development which has changed the information space around conflict. Social media obeys no boundary or jurisdiction and thus participation and contribution to any debate is a global affair. Social sites such as Facebook, Twitter and SMS have allowed citizen journalism to be a source of information during conflicts.⁵

Unlike traditional methods of communication, social media powered by the internet increases the speed at which communication and relaying of information can bypass official censorship. However, when the world sees people rising up against autocratic regimes it becomes almost natural for the people to support the opposition, when people read about the protestors experience over the internet it becomes even more difficult for the world to know if the opposing views are a representative of national sentiments as many agendas can all come together with different ideologies but with common goals such as the toppling of the current regime. In addition, the use of social media enables easy spread of propaganda in these countries fuelling the ongoing conflicts even further.

While social media tools as a means of communication has brought about the concept of digital democracy and contributed to non-violent political solutions, the same tool have been used by elites and others who are seeking power to organize protests, to

⁴ Long Danielle, "Broadcasters Take Social Networking to Heart," *New Media Age* 2 (January 31, 2008): 14–14.

⁵ Ahmed Waheed, Talha Muhammad, and Sulong Ghazali, "The Role of Modern Technology in Arab Spring," 2015, <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/234040341>.

politically recruit youths and also to fuel political violence. Social media has also been used to polarize groups and strengthen biases leading to never ending conflicts in the Northern African countries.⁶

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Although precise figures and categorization of conflict vary, it is apparent that North African countries as well as other countries in the Middle East have been experiencing conflicts for the last few decades, of which most of them are internal.⁷ In North Africa, the most affected countries were Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Some authors argue that these conflicts have resulted from the widespread use of user-generated content distributed via social network sites like Twitter, YouTube and Facebook by activists, protesters and protest supporters, as well as by individuals following the occurrences around the world.⁸ Due to their capability to share information in real-time or almost immediately, social media sites largely impact the society's relations and actions. The broadcasting of cruel occurrences frequently leads to an increase in hatred and shock and eventually an urge to take revenge. Media coverage plays a very significant role in fuelling conflicts as partial stories involving cruel activities of one party against another trigger conflict.⁹

To the contrary other authors indicated that the social media only acted catalysts in the revolution and the key factors that led to the civil conflict were political and social injustices, corruption, authoritarian regimes as well as other unresolved issues in these

⁶ Ben Bock, *The Technology of Nonviolence* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012).

⁷S Buechler, "Beyond Resource Mobilization? Emerging Trends in Social Movement Theory.," *The Sociological Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2005): 217–35.

⁸ S Buechler, "Beyond Resource Mobilization? Emerging Trends in Social Movement Theory," *The Sociological Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2005): 217–35.

⁹Ibid.

countries.¹⁰ There has therefore been mixed findings on whether science and technology play a significant role in the civil conflict in North Africa. It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate on the nexus between science and technology and civil conflict by focusing on the impact of social media in North Africa conflict.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective for this study is to establish the role of social media in political revolutions in North America. The specific objectives of the study are:

- i. To evaluate the extent to which social media influences civil conflict in North Africa
- ii. To establish the censorship challenges and inefficiency that characterized the use of social media in political revolution.
- iii. To assess the influence of institutional frameworks and policies in supporting the use social media addressed in the Arab Spring in North Africa

1.4 Literature Review

1.4.1 Introduction

This section examines the concept of the role of social media in conflict as discussed by various authors and critically analyses their views under the following sections: civil conflict in North Africa, penetration of Science and Technology in North Africa, role of social media in North Africa Conflict and factors influencing the use of social media in North Africa Revolution.

¹⁰ Mattias Smangs, "Delinquency, Social Skills and the Structure of Peer Relations: Assessing Criminological Theories by Social Network Theory," *Social Forces* 89, no. 2 (December 1, 2010): 609–31.

1.4.2 Civil Conflict in North Africa

The rebellion in Arab countries shows a radical wave of demonstrations and protests that brushed off the Arab world. Various studies have tried to explain the causes of the conflicts. A study conducted by Ncube and Anyanwu on Arab spring revolution established that the key catalysts of the revolution in North Africa countries were ambitious and extensive reforms, demands for political and economic inclusion as well as inequality in resources distribution.¹¹ Other factors established were demand for inclusion in development and growth, enforcement of discriminative laws and under-representation of various groups. These findings are further supported by Samala findings that the revolution in Tunisia and Egypt result from unequal distribution of resources among other factors. However, he also argues that after its start, the politicians took over with promises of reviewing the constitution and addressing political injustices in these countries¹². In their study on Authoritarian geopolitical of Arab spring survival, Bulet and Falck argue that the Arab revolution did not only shake the society and state dimensions in North Africa but also the authoritarian leaders power that had been in place in these countries for a long time. They also indicate that geopolitical reasoning highly influenced the authoritarian regimes to formulate new strategies for survival, which in turn led to an increase in conflict and violence in these countries.¹³

In their analysis of the Arab Spring, Korotayev and others established that the processes of political and social destabilization in the Arab Spring countries resulted from

¹¹ Mthuli Ncube and John Anyanwu, "Inequality And Arab Spring Revolutions In North Africa And The Middle East," *Africa Economic Brief* 203, no. 20 (2012): 1–24.

¹² Vivian Salam, "The Dashed Revolution.," *Newsweek Global* 161, no. 4 (2013): 1–5.

¹³ Aras Bülent and Richard Falk, "Authoritarian 'geopolitics' of Survival in the Arab Spring.," *Third World Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (February 2015): 322–36.

a range of factors. The most key factors that were found to reduce the social destabilization scale during the Arab Spring included the governments' ability to reduce tension and the presence of internal conflicts immunity. Nevertheless, these indicators were also influenced by demographical factors, structural factors and external influences.¹⁴ Similarly, a study by Özekin and Akkas found that socio-political and socio-economic factors were key in the development of the civil conflict in the Arab Countries. They argue that these factors had for a long time been rooted in the region and consequently led to the Arab uprising. They also found those regimes' responses, security forces roles, sectarian and ethnic makeup of the society can be used to explain the key causes of the Arab revolution.¹⁵

1.4.2 Popularity of Social Media in North Africa

The penetration of social media depends on ICT infrastructure, which consists of computer networks, mobile and fixed telephone networks, computing software and hardware, and telecommunication bandwidth. The internet as well as its related international connectivity are key in computer network and information revolution. According to Rennick, revolutionary process is considered cyclic and the infrastructure today is a result of Information communication and technology development efforts.¹⁶ Over the last 10 years, telecommunication has significantly improved in North African Countries, though many countries are still below the average telephone lines number, internet connectivity and international links. The increase in telephone services has

¹⁴ Audrey Korotayev, Leonid Issaev, and Sergey Maikov, "The Arab Spring: A Quantative Analysis," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 149–69.

¹⁵ Özekin and Akkas, "An Empirical Look To The Arab Spring: Causes And Consequences."

¹⁶ Sarah Rennick, "Personal Grievance Sharing, Frame Alignment, and Hybrid Organisational Structures: The Role of Social Media in North Africa's 2011 Uprisings," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 31, no. 2 (April 2013): 156–74, doi:10.1080/02589001.2013.781322.

significantly improved the continuing reduction of cost in mobile (cellular) telephone lines. Therefore, the development of mobile phones has been a key driver of increase in teledensity in most countries globally, North Africa included. However, this increased has been found to have insignificant effect on internet use diffusion.

A study conducted by Ekaterina on the role of ICT in the Arab spring indicates that fast and real-time internet based ICT tools had been relatively accessible in Egypt as well as other North Africa countries for the last one decade.¹⁷ By February 2010, Egypt had approximately 17 million users of the internet, which was 3,691 percent higher compared to 450,000 users in December the same year. As a reaction to the growing protests and increased use of technology platforms, these governments (Egypt and Tunisia) used technology to track down and arrest protestors, though this was minimal. They therefore resulted to limiting and blocking internet access in a move to reduce internet connectivity. The government of Tunisia only blocked specific routes and selected specific sites that were used in the protests, the Egyptian government first blocked Facebook and Tweeter and then ordered telecommunication companies to stop the provision of internet access. Telecommunication companies such as Vodafone, Link Egypt, Telecom Egypt, Internet Egypt and Etisalat Misr had to comply.¹⁸

1.4.3 Role of Social Media in North Africa Conflict

In their study on the influence of modern technology in Arab revolution, Waheed and others argue that social media was key in influencing the Arab Spring in North Africa as it enabled protestors to connect in the free network association, that brings

¹⁷ Ekaterina, "The Role of Information Ommunication Technologies in the 'Arab Spring.'"

¹⁸ Ibid.

together various individuals and groups trying to achieve the same goal.¹⁹ They also indicate that the role of social media in the Arab spring should not be exaggerated as it is only a tool. However, as study conducted by Nikolas shows that social media played a significant role in revolutionary movements.²⁰ In Egypt during the revolution, the estimated number of tweets per minute was between 40 and 45 while that of Syria was between 30 and 35. In addition, Facebook, a social media site, had a penetration rate of 7.66 percent in Egypt and 22.49 percent in Tunisia. Further, Tweeter in Egypt had a penetration of 0.15 percent while Tunisia showed penetration rate of 0.34 percent. Social media was used to transform ideas in the cyberspace in to reality subsequently leading to the ousting of the former presidents and more calls for reforms and change in these countries.²¹

Social media are mechanisms that assist in enhancing communal support for common reasons and in the exact circumstance where there is no powerful political leadership to substitute the current one. With social media, protestors are given a faceless form of communication that helps them to give their opinions without fear of being detained for opposing the interest of regime. Rebellion, such as the Jasmine rebellion in Tunisia, has played a major role in the politics of various nations. ²²Social media proved to be a major player in shaping political and cultural events that followed. It prejudiced social and political change in Egypt, Libya, Algeria and morocco.

¹⁹ Waheed, Muhammad, and Ghazali, "The Role of Modern Technology in Arab Spring."

²⁰ Nikolas Gvosdev, "Politics vs. Social Media in the Arab Uprising," *World Politics Review (Selective Content)*, March 4, 2011, 1-1.

²¹ Waheed, Muhammad, and Ghazali, "The Role of Modern Technology in Arab Spring." Ahmed Waheed, Talha Muhammad, and Sulong Ghazali, "The Role of Modern Technology in Arab Spring," 2015, <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/234040341>

²² Gvosdev, Nikolas. "Politics vs. Social Media in the Arab Uprising." *World Politics Review (Selective Content)*, March 4, 2011, 1-1

According to Buechler ²³, the rebellion influenced by social media ordered political and social changes that influenced the collapse of strongmen of the region and following killing prosecution and running away of presidents such as Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen , Zine al-Alidine Ben Ali of Tunisia , Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Muammar Gaddafi of Libya. To resolve the disputes the government used Facebook and Twitter to track down the leading protestors where they assaulted them.

The social media has a significant percentage of potential capability to alter the development of conflict. This is because quite a significant number of citizens both in developing as well as developed countries have access to the social media platforms. Other than exchanging useful ideas and meaningful information, these platforms are being used as benches for airing hate speeches and spreading false information and rumours. Consequently, this has widened the gap between different groups, races as well as language groups hence leading to conflicts. The social media development has altered the information environment surrounding the entire conflict. Information materials that are passed via this links can bring about a great influence on the sequence as well as the consequence of the conflict by affecting the whole community view as well as support locally and globally.²⁴

Although social media is capable of contributing to the nonviolent political solutions, dialogue, collective identity as well as stability in affected and delicate countries. Those in power as well as those looking for it may use these same tools to create political violence. Residents of a country can also use the information communication technology systems to create divisions among groups, create violence,

²³ Buechler, "Beyond Resource Mobilization? Emerging Trends in Social Movement Theory."

²⁴ Christian Jensen, Vicente Carmen, and Wind Rico, "User-Generated Content: The Case for Mobile Services," *Computer* 41, no. 12 (December 2008): 116–18.

and strengthen prejudice as well as to spread rumours and hate speeches which can divide the country based on races and language groups.

Danielle ²⁵ argues that the use of cell phones has made it easy to spread violent and hateful information that may led to mass violence In addition, activists can also use Google maps as well as implements operators to give information concerning violent incidents through internet links or mobile phones since quite a significant number of citizens are capable of accessing them at all times. Regardless of the alteration of the social media setting, policy makers as well as donors from all over the world have frequently talked about and formulated rules in war-affected and delicate countries founded on the old-style social media. This has generally been the issue with the assessments of social media results on initial warning, governance, state stability as well as post-war reconstruction.²⁶

Although, there is a lot of literature on social media and Arab revolution, this literature provides mixed results. Some authors argue that social media was key in the Arab revolution while others argue that social media was only used to voice out dissatisfaction with various regimes for different reasons depending with the country. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by investigating on the role of social media in civil conflict in the North Africa.

1.4.4 Factors influencing the use of social media in North Africa Revolution

Social media use has become a basic instrument of social change throughout the globe. Nevertheless, from the discussion, it is evident that the social media use is not only at

²⁵ Danielle, “Broadcasters Take Social Networking to Heart.”

²⁶ Sherif Kamel, “Egypt’s Ongoing Uprising and the Role of Social Media: Is There Development?,” *Information Technology for Development* 20, no. 1 (January 2014): 78–91, doi:10.1080/02681102.2013.840948.

national level but also at regional level. The discussion shows that the use of social media is more evident in the Middle East region as well as in North Africa region where specific countries has been discussed in relation to the use of social media. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube played a significant function in the Arab Spring, the social protests in 2010 that extended from Tunisia to Libya to Egypt to Yemen and to other states in the Middle East.

Accessibility to social media is one of the main factors that contributed to the success of the Arab revolution. Accessibility is the capability of social media to communicate information to the ordinary citizens, who can get access easily to various social media platforms and obtain all the information they require. Therefore, social media greatly helps in communicating vital information among individuals²⁷. Connectivity and universality are other two important factors that greatly contributed to the success of revolution in the Arab Spring. In this case, everyone including the ordinary citizens could get connection which is available across the world, which is not limited to a certain region, nation, and district or even to a fraction of educated individuals. This worldwide connection and the quick communication of information assisted protesters in coordinating their activities and hence executing them.²⁸

Social media platforms have some advantages, these platforms does not require a license, special affiliation or any financial contribution. Considering that social media is easily accessible, it can greatly influence the users. Political movements are clearly social phenomena and therefore governed by the laws of social networks and accelerated by social media. Besides, in Egypt a great number of traditional media are controlled by

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Taghreed Alqudsi-ghabra, "Creative Use of Social Media in the Revolutions of Tunisia, Egypt & Libya," *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences* 6, no. 6 (January 2012): 147–58.

government, so individual depend on social media for critical information from trusted individual whom they are familiar with.

According to a study by Beck and Simone²⁹ social media reduces the social gap by heavily facilitating connections therefore, enabling action. In other words, social media through relaying information among the citizens of Egypt helped these particular individuals to know that they had a massive support from other citizens and also other parts of the world. So they got encouraged and motivated to move to the street and speak out. Due to the above contribution of social media, it turned out to be important part of political and social organization. Political activist in Egypt had an opportunity to keep protestors' of the loop through Facebook and Twitter, by revealing the truth to the citizens and also by mobilizing them.

In Egypt many people believe that Wael Ghonim in spite of being the influential motivator during revolution in Egypt, he is not really symbolic to the people who suffered in the regime. He was the student at Cairo University pursuing computer engineering and has an M.B.A in marketing and also in finance from the American University in Cairo. He invented an AdWords vouchers from Google for small business firms during the period of ArabNet Conference. Furthermore, he came up with Arabic language website in order to teach and inform citizens how to search, chat and mostly to email³⁰

Wael Ghonim change and conversion into a political activist from his place of work in Dubai motivated citizens of Egypt to wake up and take actions. This chance

²⁹ Martin Beck and Hüser Simone, "Jordan and the 'Arab Spring': No Challenge, No Change?," *Middle East Critique* 24, no. 1 (March 2015): 83–97.

³⁰ Rennick, "Personal Grievance Sharing, Frame Alignment, and Hybrid Organisational Structures: The Role of Social Media in North Africa's 2011 Uprisings."

came to him when a young citizen blogger from Egypt by the name Khaled Said was beaten up by law enforcers to death after he copied a video of himself and friends sharing confiscated marijuana. This particular video was uploaded to YouTube after the unfortunate incident.³¹

Later, Facebook account was created called “We Are All Khaled Said” that created attention and attracted over two million members. The page carried all the photos of Khaled Said after the torture by law enforcers. After a success of this Facebook account which attracted huge following, Ghonim and other users of Facebook made up their minds and use Facebook pages as the way to show people of the world the torture citizens go through in detention, unlawful arrests and rampant corruption in the Egyptian police. From this experience, Egypt greatly witnessed a massive change in Facebook usage from sharing photos, a site to chat to a platform for political expression among members and political activist to arrange, plan and implement revolution against the Egyptian regime³²

According to the founder of paidcontent.org Rafat Ali, the use of both Facebook and Twitter has huge difference during revolution in Egypt. Protesters used Facebook to organize protests by suggesting the way they will meet, and at what time and what place. Twitter was widely used during the revolution and uprising by the citizens to keep other individual and the whole world updated with what is happening by sharing comments, videos and mostly news. Also video was shared by uploading them on YouTube.³³

³² Murthy Dhiraj, “Towards a Sociological Understanding of Social Media: Theorizing Twitter,” *Sociology* 46, no. 6 (December 2012): 1059–73, doi:10.1177/0038038511422553.

³³ Korotayev, Issaev, and Maikov, “The Arab Spring: A Quantative Analysis.”

Due to the huge demographic eruption in Egypt, streets increasingly became dirty and jammed by protesters. Unemployment increased rapidly than never before, and inflation made goods, service and food more expensive and hence unaffordable. More people graduating from colleges increased the number of unemployed further. Egypt is one of the countries in this continent of Africa with negative correlation between education and employment. In this particular country unemployment among the students who have graduated is about ten times that of individuals with primary education, and by estimation it is about 50% for women and 40% for men. Young individuals' unemployment is usually an urban issue resulting from increased level of friction and social problems in the major cities ³⁴

1.5 Justification of the research study

There is little scholarly literature regarding the question of role social media in mobilizing citizens. This study seeks to add more knowledge on the existing knowledge on the role of social media and digital technology in civil conflict. Specifically, this study seeks to fill various gaps identified in the literature review and establish the extent, manner and approach social media really played a major role in the Arab revolution. Policy and legal frameworks should be evidence based and hence for North Africa nations to formulate policies to prevent civil conflict they need information on the role played by social media in the civil conflict. Therefore, to the policy makers in the North Africa countries as well as other parts of the country, the study will provide information on the role played by social media in civil conflict that can be used to formulate policies to prevent civil conflict in the future. In addition, the study will outline factors that

³⁴ Imad Salamey, "Post-Arab Spring: Changes and Challenges." *Third World Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (January 2015): 111–29.

highly contribute to civil conflict in North Africa. This information can be used by policymakers to come up with policies to deal with the root of civil conflict and not just the outcome. The findings of this study can also be used to formulate policies to check, monitor and regulate the use of social media platform to curb UGC adverse effects. In addition, governments in Africa can use the findings of this study to come up with policies to regulate and govern the distribution and use of user generated content.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study will use social movement theory to address the dimensions of resource mobilization and agenda setting capabilities of social media in political revolution in North Africa. Social movements are aggregations that comprise of various organizations, less formal groups as well as non-affiliated people. Groups as well as individuals congregate together around a grievance or issue with an aim of making their demands known and showing their force to state representatives in order to bring about change. The old media worked with new media in synergy to create a stronger, resilient and better networked information system. Wider liberalising developments in the traditional media sphere were as important as social media in changing the information context within which state controls could be detoured³⁵. Depicting old and new media as rivals or competitors is inaccurate, however. It's more appropriate to reflect them as working together in synergy as a stronger, resilient and better networked information system.

Social movement theory indicates that the transformative power of social media lay in creating a lower-risk virtual political space in countries where there is no or little freedom of association or expression. The nature of political leadership is different in this

³⁵ Comor, Edward, "The Role of Communication in Global Civil Society: Forces, Processes, Prospects," *International Studies Quarterly* 45.3 (2001), 389-408.

virtual space³⁶. The role of political entrepreneurs in developing strategies for the effective use of social media is key to the successful use of these tools at the ignition and escalation phases. The importance of the preparation stage and role of political entrepreneurs in developing strategies for effective use of social media early on compounded a significant synergy that played out between new media and political revolutions in North America³⁷. Although the use of social media was most apparent in the escalation phase of the protests, its significant role was during the preparation phase in the years leading up to the events. Popular interests are usually given substance and form through a wide variety of collection action against the elite's interest.³⁸

The role of new media as a source of information in authoritative states is a trend that was recognized by the US government in June 2009, in the wake of controversial elections in Iran. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton issued a request to twitter asking that they delay their planned site maintenance, allowing Iranians to continue to communicate via the social network. For the US government, this also meant access to information from Iran, whom the US has had no official diplomatic relations with for three decades. Thus social media has played a role as an important source for not only civilians, but also governments in gaining potential diplomatic information. Besides supporting social and political movements in more conventional ways through the provision of political expression opportunities, collective actors' symbolic identification, and information exchange, the social media may serve a unique instrumental function.

³⁶ Adams, James, "Virtual Defense," *Foreign Affairs* 80.3 (2001), 98-112.

³⁷ Baird, Zoë, "Governing the Internet: Engaging Governments, Business, and Nonprofits," *Foreign Affairs* 81.6 (2002), 15-20.

³⁸ Lisa Vanhala, "Disability Rights Activists in the Supreme Court of Canada: Legal Mobilization Theory and Accommodating Social Movements.," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 42, no. 4 (2009): 981-1002.

Internet-based communication technologies offer a significant additional resource for social movements implemented by “resource poor” actors, providing a mass communication means that may have previously been restricted by temporal, financial or spatial constraints. The tenets key for social movements to be successful: supporters’ worthiness, unity of purpose, number of members and strong commitment. Social movements have various forms and types.³⁹ They range from revolutionary opposition groups to environmental movements. Often, social movements are non-violent in order to increase public support and enhance their cause legitimacy, but in case they fail to get enough support, they at times choose to use violent strategies to demonstrate their dedication to their cause. An example of such a case is the Kyrgyzstan case where a social movement group used force to reach its goals due to lack of enough support. Lack of enough support can also be used to explain the civil war eruption in Libya and Syria where even now a big percentage of the population supports the Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad.⁴⁰

Social movement groups have social power which is subject to communication, relationships, institutions and interactions. In addition, social power depends on social knowledge, political and economic interaction as well as communication. In the North Africa revolution, communication and relationships were enhanced by use of technology such as new media. Current types of offline and online media are not new social movement’s attributes, but they are channels of social power. Use media as well as other types of new media challenge a state's power by use of soft power, i.e. political ideals, country policies, culture and culture attractiveness. Digital technology and new media

³⁹ Mthuli Ncube and John Anyanwu, “Inequality And Arab Spring Revolutions In North Africa And The Middle East,” *Africa Economic Brief* 203, no. 20 (2012): 1–24.

⁴⁰ Buechler, “Beyond Resource Mobilization? Emerging Trends in Social Movement Theory.”

have made the development as well as distribution of culture and news cheaper, easier and faster.⁴¹

The proponents of social movement theory include Klandermans who argues that social movements should be organized before setting off. These organizations should acquire and then make use of resources to meet their objectives.⁴² This is also supported by Campbell who argues that the five key resources in social movements include human resources (volunteers and leaders), cultural resources (know how on collective action), social organizational resources (social networks), moral resources (solidarity) and material resources (money)⁴³.

Social movement theory developed in North America as a reaction to structural-functional models that explain social conflicts while in Europe the theory was developed as a response to Marxism structural versions. In this study, the social movement theory will be used to explain reasons behind arising of social movements, how they mobilize and act, and what can be done to prevent revolution in other countries.

1.7 Hypotheses

Ho1. Governance policies of information technology significantly influence the use of social media in political processes.

Ho2. Poor leadership and increased literacy levels significantly influence the integration of social media in expressing dissent hence political revolution

⁴¹ Mthuli Ncube and John Anyanwu, "Inequality And Arab Spring Revolutions In North Africa And The Middle East," *Africa Economic Brief* 203, no. 20 (2012): 1–24.

⁴² Bert Klandermans, "Mobilization and Participation: Social-Psychological Expansions of Resource Mobilization Theory," *American Sociological Review*. 49, no. 5 (2002): 583–600.

⁴³ Catherine Campbell, "Community Mobilisation in the 21st Century: Updating Our Theory of Social Change?," *Journal of Health Psychology* 19, no. 1 (2014): 46–59.

Ho3. The process of using the social media is affected by the political dimension of representation and resource mobilization

1.8 Methodology

1.8.1 Study Design

The study will assume a multi-method approach incorporating primary and secondary research on the role of social media in Arab Spring. A descriptive research design will be used in this study, where sets of methods, as well as procedures will be used to describe variables. A descriptive design involves the collection of data to answer research questions, or to offer solutions to an impending problem that is being studied.⁴⁴

1.8.2 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The target population of this study will be the staff working in the embassies of North Africa countries in Kenya (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Morocco). The target population of this study will therefore be 50 staff working in the Embassies of the 4 North Africa Countries.

1.8.3 Data Collection

The study will make use of both primary and secondary data. Primary data will be obtained by the use of in-depth interviews. A simple guide will be developed to capture qualitative information with regard to the objectives of the study. It will be designed to capture important information concerning the study from the key informants. Secondary data will be collected on attitudes and perception of various authors on the role of science and technology in civil conflict in North Africa. The study will rely on secondary data

⁴⁴J Creswell, *Research Design. Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage, 2006).

such as textbooks, journals, and academic papers that are to be found in the University of Nairobi and other libraries.

1.8.4 Data Analysis

Analysis of data will be done after the collection of data. Content analysis will be used to analyse qualitative data. Content analysis method is a technique that is commonly used in qualitative research and has 3 approaches that include the conventional approach, directed approach, and the summative approach. The 3 approaches are similar because they all analyse textual data. On the other hand, these approaches differ in their methods of coding, the origin of their codes, and the degree of their trustworthiness⁴⁵. In the traditional analysis of data, categories of codes are directly derived from the data in the form of text. However, a directed approach to data analysis uses a theory or any other applicable research finding to guide the initial codes. According to Kothari⁴⁶, a summative approach to content analysis makes the use of counting, as well as comparisons of the keywords or content, which is then followed by the explanation of the main context. This study will therefore use a directed approach of content analysis to analyse qualitative data. Results obtained from the qualitative data will be presented in a continuous form.

1.9 Chapter Outline

Chapter One Introduction

The chapter introduces the role of social media in political mobilization in North Africa. It begins with an introduction followed by background information, a statement of the

⁴⁵D Cooper and P Schindler, *Business Research Methods* (New Delhi: Tata McGraw Hill, 2006).

⁴⁶C Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques* (New Delhi: New Age International (P) Limited Publishers, 2004).

research problem, objectives of the study, literature review, justification of the research study, theoretical framework, hypothesis, methodology.

Chapter Two: Social Media and Conflict Revolution In North Africa: An Overview

Chapter two will discuss conflict in North Africa within the dimension of social media.

The chapter focuses on distinct cases in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Morocco

Chapter Three: The Role of Social Media In Political Mobilization and Revolution in North Africa: Critical Evaluation

This chapter is a case study, this chapter reviews the role of social media in political mobilization and revolution in North Africa as analysed from the interview guide, questionnaire and secondary data findings from the view of other researcher.

Chapter Four: A Critical Analysis of the Role of Social Media and the Birth of the Revolution in North Africa

The chapter sets stage in order to analyse the emerging issues in the interplay between social media and political revolutions. The discussion in the chapter correlates the constructivist theoretical principles that make clear that both the availability of resources and actors' efficacy in using them effectively are essential.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendation

This chapter provides conclusions of the study, gives recommendations and provides suggestions on areas for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL MEDIA AND CONFLICT REVOLUTION IN NORTH AFRICA: AN OVERVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter two will discuss conflict in North Africa within the dimension of social media. The chapter focuses on distinct cases in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Morocco, the North African conflict can be attributed to the level of corruption and the lack of political openness.

2.2 Social Media and Political Revolution: Overview

Research conducted in this region has indicated that there is correlation between the degree of political openness and socioeconomic indicators.⁴⁷ North African countries in general have a low quality of governance characterized by low political openness than would be expected for their level of development and income, which is often termed as the governance gap. The governance system in the region has been the major contributor to the conflicts witnessed in this region.

The Tunisian incidence, considered as the trigger, only made the citizens in other North Africa to act rather than endure the political and administrative regimes in their respective countries⁴⁸. Aided by the new media, the demonstrations in these countries were well coordinated and virtually anonymous. This made the demonstrations quite effective favouring the demonstrators rather than the regimes.

Egypt is considered the most populous, powerful and influential Arab state. Like Tunisia, in Egypt, the regime under Mubarak ruler-ship imposed secularization and

⁴⁷ Giglio, Mike "How Wael Ghonim Sparked Egypt's Uprising" - Newsweek. (2011) Retrieved from <http://www.newsweek.com/2011/02/13/the-facebook-freedom-fighter.html>

⁴⁸ Charlie Beckett. "After Tunisia and Egypt: Towards a New Typology of Media and Networked Political Change," *Polis*, (2011), <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2011/02/11/after-tunisia-and-egypt-towards-a-new-typology-of-media-and-networked-political-change/> Accessed 8 May 2014

modernization to Egyptian society by authority, but like Tunisia could not offer rudimentary services for millions of people who were suffering from poverty riddled with unemployment. This aggravated the citizens and seeing what happened in Tunisia, many decided to take matters into their own hands⁴⁹.

Deep political and social evolution that happened in North Africa and led them to collapse of old dictatorial regimes astonished social scientists, because typically these kinds of dictatorial regimes depicted high range capacity of perpetuity and insolubility. North African revolutions were very popular. These kinds of revolutions are not foreseeable, due to the success of revolutionary movement depending on governmental structures and the reaction of the army. In Tunisia and Egypt, the military did not offer support to the government. On the other hand, persistent protest consequently eroded discipline in the military.

2.3 Conflict in Tunisia

Tunisia's administration prior to the uprisings was very repressive. The individuals that suffered most are those that were at the bottom of the production chain. The administration was corrupt with the police officers unfairly beating anyone that did not offer bribes to them. These conditions led to the rise of the Jasmine Revolution.

In the year 2010, Mohammed Bouazizi set himself ablaze. This was a desperate act of defiance after his attempts to work as a street vendor to support his family were denied. The scenes of this self-immolation act was captured by passers-by and

⁴⁹ Howard, Rheingold "The Arab Uprising's Cascading Effects." *MillerMcCune*. (2011). Retrieved April 6, 2011, from <http://www.millermccune.com/politics/the-cascading-effects-of-the-arab-spring-28575/>

immediately posted on YouTube. News of this extreme act circulated in Tunisia and beyond⁵⁰.

Protests arose and on January 11th they reached the centre of the capital city Tunis. The Tunisian president Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali responded by imposing a night-time curfew. The following day, thousands took to the streets of Sfax, Tunisia's second city with intense demonstrations.⁵¹ On January 14, 2011, the president fled the country after he was ousted by a spontaneous populous uprising. Tunisia's population of 10 million people became the first people in the Arab world to take to the streets and oust a leader. This came as a surprise given that Tunisians are known for their high levels of education and civic pride within the region⁵².

Though Tunisia's government exercised some of the most repressive Internet censorship, the country's population is considered to be one of the most connected in the region outside the Gulf. Going by statistics, 33% of the population is online with 16% on Facebook and 18% using Twitter⁵³. YouTube was one of the major sites that were completely blocked during the reign of Ben Ali regime. However, the regime did not entirely block internet access. Consequently, cyber activists managed to re-post Facebook and videos content about protests from private networks' closed loops to online news portals and Twitter with greater reach. Further, the number of Facebook users in Tunisia

⁵⁰ McCafferty, Dennis. "Activism vs. slacktivism. *Communications Of The ACM*", 54(12), (2011) 17-19.

⁵¹ Jansen, Fieke. "Digital activism in the Middle East: mapping issue networks in Egypt, Iran, Syria and Tunisia." *Knowledge Management For Development Journal*, 6(1), (2010). 37-52.

⁵² Alterman, Jon. "The Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted." *Washington Quarterly*, 34(4), (2011) 103.

⁵³ McCafferty, Dennis. "Activism vs. slacktivism" *Communications of the ACM*, 54(12), (2011) 17-19.

surged by 8% during the initial weeks of the protests. Most of the users converted from being merely social to basically politics-oriented.⁵⁴

This protest bore fruits eventually as it led to the establishment of a coalition government after elections were conducted.⁵⁵ Social media can be held responsible for the Jasmine revolution though not entirely. It can be termed as the tool that many activists used during that time to organise demonstrators by disseminating vital information. The social media was an outlet of decades of underlying political and economic challenges facing them.

Demonstrations in Tunisia that started on 17th December 2013 were meant for exerting pressure on the government over unemployment. Ultimately, these protests culminated in a series of conflicts between internet activists who were against the government's censorship and the counter-attack from the government. This was termed as Operation Tunisia which aimed at activists who targeted government sites with Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks. Afterwards, there were reports of intense widespread counter-attacks which were against the Tunisian bloggers from the government. Reports revealed that these counter-attacks included the capture of their passwords and were also faced internet blockages. In some instances, the government went to the extent of taking control of the web pages and blogs they deemed 'illegal'.

The war against internet activism was taken to a whole new level. The government stiffened their controls against international news websites such as Al-Jazeera and BBC. To them, these sites were inciting the citizens against the government. The government in Tunisia went ahead to arrest five bloggers and in that group, a rapper

⁵⁴ Khoury, Machool. "Palestinian Youth and Political Activism: The Emerging Internet Culture and New Modes of Resistance." *Policy Futures In Education*, 5(1), (2007) 17-36

⁵⁵ Ibid

Hamada Ben Aoun, was also arrested for composing a song entitled President, Your People Are Dead. Three of the bloggers and the rapper were later released. The US government intervened by expressing their discontent on the Tunisian government's attacks on users of American companies such as Facebook, Google and Yahoo.

2.3 Conflict in Libya

The ousted Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi directly opposed parliamentary democracy because to him it was misrepresentation of the people. Those who broke the law in the regime were executed with the mainstream media airing the public hangings and the trials. The regime did little to distribute the wealth acquired through the oil reserve in Libya which is the seventh in the world. Some 20% of Libyan citizens were unemployed with the infrastructure being highly deficient. This was attributed to the high levels of corruption perpetrated by the political elites.⁵⁶

The internet and especially the social enabled Libyan citizens to compare their living conditions with those of other countries to realize that their government was autocratic and repressive.⁵⁷ Additionally, the internet acted as an avenue for learning for the many Libyan citizens who were ignorant of their rights and constitutional matters.

The uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt produced a domino effect in Libya. This was largely facilitated by the existence of social networks. This is because the governments in those states were already imposing restrictions on the mainstream media making it difficult to access information about the protests except through the internet. Videos posted on YouTube acted as very effective and instrumental tools that encouraged the

⁵⁶ Ham, Anthony. "The Road to Revolution." *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 88(1), (2012) 136-145.

⁵⁷ Pack, Jason. Exit Gaddafi: The Hidden History of the Libyan Revolution/Exit the Colonel: The Hidden History of the Libyan Revolution. *Middle East Journal*, 67(2), (2013) 319-322

Libyans too to take to the streets. In Libya, the protesters had more reasons to protest than in any other country due to the fact that Gaddafi had held the reins of power for 41 years and was about to appoint his son as his successor. Following suit, the Libyans hit major social networks as they propagated news about their impending protests. A Facebook page called “The Uprising of the 17th February, a Day for Rage in Libya” was started triggered by the events in Egypt. The page posted pictures of the son to Gaddafi squandering taxpayers’ money in Europe in luxurious hotels.⁵⁸

On 15th February 2011, an invitation posted on Facebook mobilized thousands of people to take to the streets of Tripoli. However, Gaddafi’s officers killed two of the protesters and several others were arrested. Consequently, Gaddafi organized a meeting of all Libyan bloggers and internet activists to warn them against going against the interests of the government. Shortly, after, a Facebook page was launched and it attracted over 82,000 followers with the name “Uprising of the 17th of February”. Through social media, the Libyan affairs received unprecedented coverage by the international media⁵⁹.

2.5 Conflict in Egypt

Egypt is the most populace country in the MENA region with an approximate population of 80 million people. Consequently, the country has almost 4 million Facebook users which is about 5% of the population.⁶⁰ Few days prior to the resignation of the president, tweets trending about the matter increased to 230,000 from 2,300 a day. Videos that depicted the protest and had political commentary went viral with nearly 5.5

⁵⁸ Hamoudi, Haider. Arab spring, “Libyan liberation and the externally imposed democratic revolution.” *Denver University Law Review*, 89(3), (2012) 699-734.

⁵⁹ Ashish Kumar Sen, “Gadhafi hits social media.” *Washington Times, The (DC)*, 1 (2011).

⁶⁰ Cambanis, Thanassis.. “Weekend: Now what? They Came Together to Topple Mubarak, but can Egypt’s Revolutionaries Agree on what Comes Next?” *The Guardian*: (2011) 26

million views of the top 23 videos.⁶¹ Further, there was dramatic increase of amount of content produced online by opposition groups through political blogs and Facebook.

Social media was used as tool that was more willing to criticize authority, and tolerate diversity, than mainstream media and public opinion. The revolution was facilitated by three main categories of people. There were the activists who were the organizers of all religious and political stripes who had come to trust each other over years of minor protests, strikes and mass arrests. Then there were the politicized people formerly afraid to challenge the regime. They brought a distinct agenda to the protests where liberal NGO [non-government organizations] workers, socialists, labour unionists and more conservative religious activists could not dare talk. Finally, there were the hundreds of thousands of apolitical and angry Egyptians tired of Mubarak's police state who were now free to express themselves.

In Egypt, social media activism played a vital role in instituting reforms in the existing repressive administration. It all began with Wael Ghonim, Google executive, copying a video taken of police officers beating to death an Egyptian businessman Khaled Said.⁶² The police had videotaped themselves taking marijuana they had confiscated earlier. The Google executive hoped to stir and capture the attention of the authorities and the general public about the corruption perpetrated by the police.⁶³ Ghonim also went a step further and created a Facebook page called 'We Are All Khaled Said.' The page featured grotesque mobile phone photos of Said's face taken from the

⁶¹ Cottle, Simon. "Media and the Arab Uprisings of: Research Notes." *Journalism* : (2011) 647-659.

⁶² Youmans, Lafi., & York, Jillian. "Social Media and the Activist Toolkit: User Agreements, Corporate Interests, and the Information Infrastructure of Modern Social Movements." *Journal Of Communication*, 62(2), (2012) 315-329.

⁶³ Rinnawi, Khalil. "Cyber Uprising: Al-Jazeera TV Channel and the Egyptian Uprising." *Language And Intercultural Communication*, 12(2), 118-132

morgue. These photos undermined the explanation given by the police about the death of Said. This particular Facebook page captured 500,000 followers within Egypt and internationally. Through this means of communication, the protesters were mobilized to assemble at the Tahrir square.⁶⁴ The military were there as well keeping a watchful eye on the crowd. The government noted the influence the internet had and attempted to thwart all internet access. They blocked Facebook and twitter severally. This was not successful as the protesters, aided by others in the world, managed to subvert the censorship. However, blocking of the internet led to untold losses incurred by many organizations that dealt in internet services. Many vital functions of the private sector and even the government were suspended following the blockage of internet access. Following 18 days of protests, President Hosni Mubarak gave in to the intense pressure and resigned.⁶⁵

Access to Twitter.com was blocked during the protests in Egypt. The move blocked Twitter users of from accessing the site through their mobile phones. However, the activists found a way to circumvent this blockade. They used hootsuite.com which was initially left open by the government. Most activists decided to post messages through hootsuite.com, a server located outside Egypt which meant that it was outside the blockade area. Then the messages would then be directed to Twitter.

This hoot suite was available to Android, Blackberry and iPhone, as it uses a different process than most websites in which the authentication is achieved directly between the hootsuite.com servers and the twitter.com servers. This meant that the

⁶⁴ Martin, Matthew. "Social media fuels online activism." *MEED: Middle East Economic Digest*, 56(45), (2012) 20-21

⁶⁵ Charlie Beckett. "After Tunisia and Egypt: Towards a New Typology of Media and Networked Political Change," *Polis*, 2011, (2011) <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2011/02/11/after-tunisia-and-egypt-towards-a-new-typology-of-media-and-networked-political-change/>

Twitter user did not have to use Twitter directly. In this way most activists managed to avoid the blockade through using the hoot suite account and accessing Twitter indirectly through this account. However, this service was not available to laptop and computer users since they used a process referred to as OAuth for authentication. It involves the use of a browser which was susceptible to the blockade.

This shows that the activists still managed to find a way to spread the information in spite of strict controls and regulations by the government. This shows the great significance that social media played in the upsurges in Egypt and the much that the activists were willing to do to be able to access these instrumental tools (social networks).

2.6 Conflict in Morocco

Spain had a weak hand in Morocco for centuries till the embarrassing losses incurred towards the end of the 19th century with the Spanish-American conflict made Morocco the last foreign Spanish territory. Even if Spanish Morocco provided little monetary gain to mainland Spain, most officials had determination to maintain it. From the initial moment these officials joined Spanish Morocco, two different groups emerged: Las Africanistas (African-ists) and Las Africanomilitaristas (African-militarists). Las Africanistas committed themselves to the study of the Moroccan citizens and set up positive association with the local people. Las Africanomilitaristas took advantage of this association with the objective of expanding trade under a clandestine plan of strengthening their conservative principles.⁶⁶

Spanish officials in Morocco set up three different troops that joined the Spanish Civil War unified by the name of El Ejército de África (Army of Africa): La Policía

⁶⁶ Boguta, Kovas. (2011, February 11). "Visualizing the New Arab Mind." *Computational History*. Retrieved April 9, 2011, from <http://www.kovasboguta.com/1/post/2011/02/first-post.html>

Indígena (Indigenous Police) which turned to be Las Regulares (The Regulars), Los Legionarios (The Legionaries), and the Mehalas Jalifianas (Halifian Troops). Ahead of the Spanish Civil War, Morocco was a cradle for fascist principles. Franco started his military job in Morocco, coming from the Rif War as a hero. Franco developed Los Legionarios and Los Regulares, promising increased salaries and help for the soldier's families. The legal Spanish government seldom supervised Spanish-Moroccan affairs, and the fascist forces influenced anti-republican reaction to raise enlistment.⁶⁷

In the real conflict, the Ejército de África played a critical function in different vital battles that result to the dictatorship of Franco. The initial group of soldiers reached in Cádiz in July 1936, and was the start of what summed 80,000 Moroccan soldiers fighting in peninsular Spain. These same soldiers were instructed to intimidate villages at the landing of the fascist forces. This was a planned decision by the fascist forces to connect the barbaric part of the war with the re-occurrence of the mythical picture of the “maligno moro” (dangerous Moor) of the re-conquest era of Spanish history. Whereas the Moroccan soldiers caused war atrocities, the fascist forces instilled fear in Spanish citizens' hearts and showed its power without affecting the reputation of the government that would come up following the war.⁶⁸

The employment of Moroccan soldiers had negative effects in the home area. It resulted to rifts in the Moroccan people themselves, separating villages into those who were for the Spanish colonizer or those who battled for Moroccan nationalism, led to

⁶⁷ Cottle, Simon. “Media and the Arab Uprisings of 2011”: Research Notes. *Journalism* : (2011) 647-659.

⁶⁸Ham, Anthony. “The Road to Revolution” *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 88(1), (2012) 136-145.

greater poverty, and separated young marriageable women who did not have a male guardian to assent to their marriage certificates.⁶⁹

2.7 Conclusion

Social Media revolution was informed by dissidence in the structure of governance.

Common drivers of conflict include oppression, regional insecurity, global political influences and ethnic and regional differences. The revolution in North Africa began with a chain of revolutionary anti-governments demonstrations and protests starting from Tunisia and extending to other countries in North Africa and in the Middle East.

⁶⁹ McCafferty, Dennis. "Activism vs. slacktivism" *Communications of the ACM*, 54(12), (2011) 17-19.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL MOBILISATION AND REVOLUTION IN NORTH AFRICA: CRITICAL EVALUATION

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is a case study, this chapter reviews the role of social media in political mobilization and revolution in North Africa as analysed from the interview guide, questionnaire and secondary data findings from the view of other researcher. The study received response from 21 embassy officials from Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Morocco as well as ministry of foreign affairs officials. This builds on the conceptual and historical aspects of social media and political revolutions captured in the previous chapter.

3.2 Critical Evaluation of the Role of Social Media in Political Revolutions

Policy makers across the Muslim world adopted widely varying strategies during the 1990s in reaction to the opportunities and risks of ICT use. While established democracies allowed free competition for ICT services, the pace of ICT development in most autocratic countries was set by state-owned telecommunication providers who held a monopoly over ICT services⁷⁰. At the same time, these bodies also monitored and regulated online content and reported directly to the government. Tunisia, Egypt and Libya were in the middle of this spectrum. In line with President Ben Ali's oft-reiterated desire to develop the Internet in Tunisia, his government invested heavily in the telecom sector from the mid-1990s on. As a result, Tunisia had one of the most highly developed telecommunications infrastructures in Northern Africa by the mid-2000s, with eleven

⁷⁰ Adams, James, "Virtual Defense," *Foreign Affairs* 80.3 (2001), 98-112.

competing Internet service providers.⁷¹ 1.7 million Of its 10.2 million inhabitants were Internet users in 2008 and nine out of ten Tunisians owned a cell phone. 84 % of the Internet users had access to the Internet at home, 75.8 % used it at work, and 24 % used public Internet cafés. Tunisians for whom personal computers remained prohibitively expensive had access to the Internet from one of 300 public Internet centres (publinets) set up by the authorities throughout the country, and the education sector reported a connectivity of 100 % for universities, research labs, secondary schools and primary schools.⁷²

Ben Ali's strategy of depicting himself as a democratizer of the Internet and a role model for the promotion of ICT in the developing world sold well internationally: In 2001, Tunisia was chosen to host the second stage of the 2005 UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). The objective of the latter was to *develop and foster a clear statement of political will and take concrete steps to establish the foundations for an Information Society for all, reflecting all the different interests at stake* {Respondent 1 from Tunisian Embassy}. In view of this, it is plausible to note that the region has experienced growing demands by the educated youths who have acquired either secondary or university degrees.⁷³ This has resulted in unemployed youths demanding their rights. Coupled with an increasing access to either regional or international media including social media by the youths, the region governments are unable to contain the increasing criticisms especially in the distribution of revenue and economic activities not

⁷¹ Baird, Zoë, "Governing the Internet: Engaging Governments, Business, and Nonprofits," *Foreign Affairs* 81.6 (2002), 15-20.

⁷² Comor, Edward, "The Role of Communication in Global Civil Society: Forces, Processes, Prospects," *International Studies Quarterly* 45.3 (2001), 389-408.

⁷³ Cukier, Kenneth Neil, "Who Will Control the Internet," *Foreign Affairs* 84.6 (2005), 7-13.

to mention mode of governance. Furthermore, science and technology development has had both positive as well as negative contributions to the civil uprising in the North Africa countries. In Tunisia, Egypt and Libya which are among the hard hit states of North Africa by civil uprisings has the growth in communication technology resulting to planning, linking and organizing demonstrations.⁷⁴ This has been enhanced through the social media.

Dominick⁷⁵ states that beyond having a considerable function of promoting socioeconomic and political arenas; science and technological growth has rapidly become a main spring of information of the occurrences in North Africa and all over the globe. Joined with the skill of being actual time, technology has a huge impact in the approach of the society's actions and relations. Normally, according to Kan⁷⁶, communication technology is anticipated to be precise and unbiased by being objective in data collection and coverage so that the customer can make appropriate resolutions.⁷⁷ Designed or undersigned media scope of cruel occurrences and broadcasting the same to the people has frequently leaded to shock and hatred or even an urge to take revenge. Expertise in media coverage is therefore very essential since a partial story particularly those that sympathize parties against the other in any type of quarrel could instead ignite the quarrel further. Since social media is rarely controlled, anything spotted by the user is spread.

⁷⁴ Eriksson, Johan, and Giampiero Giacomello, "The Information Revolution, Security, and International Relations: (IR)relevant Theory?" *International Political Science Review* 27.3 (2006), 221-244.

⁷⁵ Dominick, J.R, *The Dynamics of Mass Communication: Media in the Digital Age*, (New York, McGraw, 2005) pg 32

⁷⁶ Kan, Charlotte. Arab governments and the Social Media revolution. *Middle East* no. 437 (November 2012): 18.

⁷⁷ Ibid

3.3 The role of Social Media in the Revolution in North Africa

One of the defining features of the Egyptian uprising is the relative speed with which it occurred. Compared to the uprisings in Tunisia and Libya, which took 28 days and roughly 9 months respectively, the Egyptian activists unseated Mubarak in a mere 18 days, and again, relatively peacefully in comparison to other uprisings in the Arab Spring⁷⁸. Central to the acceleration of events was the efficient use of social media networks as a form of organizational infrastructure that began with virtual networks and was transposed to offline networks⁷⁹. Egyptian activists were able to successfully play off the strengths of the social networking capabilities of Facebook and Twitter by capitalizing on their “many-to-many” communication capabilities and the speed with which information can be transferred and spread, an inherent characteristic to any digital media⁸⁰.

The old media worked with new media in synergy to create a stronger, resilient and better networked information system. Wider liberalising developments in the traditional media sphere were as important as social media in changing the information context within which state controls could be detoured⁸¹. Depicting old and new media as rivals or competitors is inaccurate, however. It's more appropriate to reflect them as working together in synergy as a stronger, resilient and better networked information system. Wael Ghonim's Facebook group *We Are All Khaled Said* served as an organizational platform that attracted like-minded individuals to connect over a common

⁷⁸ Adams, James, “Virtual Defense,” *Foreign Affairs* 80.3 (2001), 98-112.

⁷⁹ Alden, Christopher, “Let Them Eat Cyberspace: Africa, the G8 and the Digital Divide,” *Millennium* 32.3 (2003), 457-476.

⁸⁰ Baird, Zoë, “Governing the Internet: Engaging Governments, Business, and Nonprofits,” *Foreign Affairs* 81.6 (2002), 15-20.

⁸¹ Comor, Edward, “The Role of Communication in Global Civil Society: Forces, Processes, Prospects,” *International Studies Quarterly* 45.3 (2001), 389-408.

interest to commemorate Khaled Said in Egypt⁸². This evolved into a common interest in forming an opposition to the Egyptian police force, which evolved into a movement to force Mubarak to step down. Not only did Facebook provide the organizational infrastructure, but also it provided a crucial platform for potential protesters to network with one another and share their common grievances. The page allowed different activist networks to communicate with one another.

3.3.1 The Role of Social Media in the Uprising

The transformative power of social media lay in creating a lower-risk virtual political space in countries where there is no or little freedom of association or expression. The nature of political leadership is different in this virtual space⁸³. The role of political entrepreneurs in developing strategies for the effective use of social media is key to the successful use of these tools at the ignition and escalation phases. The importance of the preparation stage and role of political entrepreneurs in developing strategies for effective use of social media early on compounded a significant synergy that played out between new media and political revolutions in North America⁸⁴. Although the use of social media was most apparent in the escalation phase of the protests, its significant role was during the preparation phase in the years leading up to the events.

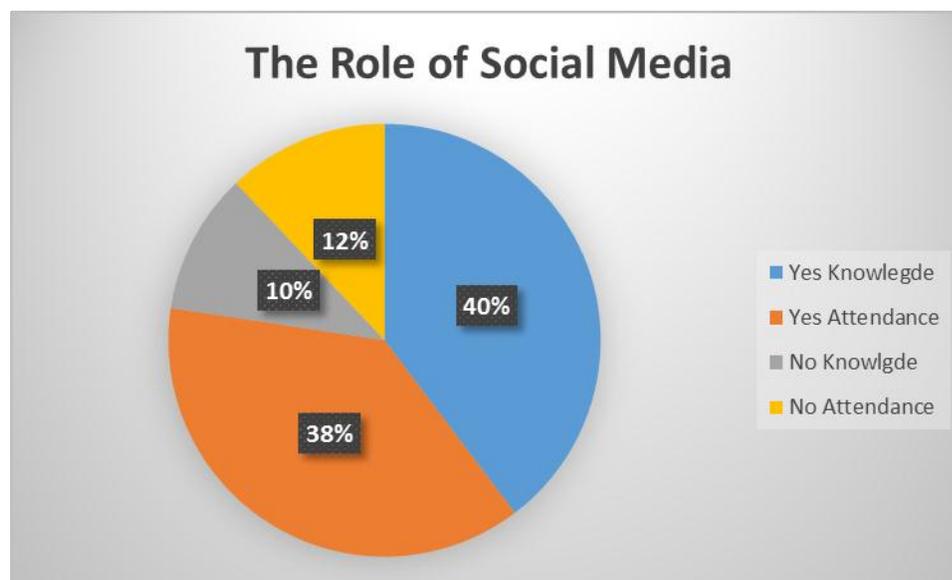
⁸² Corrales, Javier, and Frank Westhoff, "Information Technology Adoption and Political Regimes," *International Studies Quarterly* 50.4 (2006), 911-933.

⁸³ Adams, James, "Virtual Defense," *Foreign Affairs* 80.3 (2001), 98-112.

⁸⁴ Baird, Zoë, "Governing the Internet: Engaging Governments, Business, and Nonprofits," *Foreign Affairs* 81.6 (2002), 15-20.

Hall⁸⁵ argues that UGC is a powerful tool for social movements but also provides room for contestation between pro-incumbent and pro-democracy groups. UGC has been used to track down protesters and detain such individuals in North Africa regions. The governments were able to use advanced western software to block content and in some countries such as Tunisia, Libya and Egypt internet blackouts and slowdowns were established.

Figure 1. The Role of Social Media in the Uprising



Respondents indicated that Facebook and Twitter have been used by governments to locate key protesters and harass them. This is done through state surveillance. In Morocco, protests against the regime led to state surveillance on social networks. This surveillance was instituted when the protests were imminent such that when the protests happened the some protesters were promptly arrested. There were reports that most of the people participating in the pages and Facebook were in actual fact government agents. In

⁸⁵ Hall, Emma. Year after Arab Spring, digital, social media shape region's rebirth. *Advertising Age*, vol. 83, no. 24 (June 11, 2012): 10

Tunisia, the approach was more advanced as it involved theft of user-names and passwords. This was carried out through the injection of phishing scripts into these pages before being sent to the end-user. The Mubarak regime made the boldest move by virtually closing down internet access from midnight 27/28 April till 2 February 10:30 GMT. In Libya, the internet was blocked for a long time.⁸⁶

The technological advancement has of late become significant resource in collective action mobilization and the consequent social movements' creation, organization, and implementation globally. Science and technology development has created Web-fuelled social movements' opportunities, or cyber activism, to modify the collective action landscape. Cyber activism is a developing field of scholarly investigation, even though it is still not well understood, and it largely lacks a clear consistent and cohesive direction.

3.3.2 Contribution of the Internet to the Uprising

Langman⁸⁷ argues that computer-savvy activists make use of the Internet to start and plan a broad dissention activities spectrum, which includes public protests, consumer boycotts as well as demonstrations. In addition, new communication technologies especially social media such as social-networking sites, short messaging services (SMS), and blogs are collectively, a considerable new resource for social movements successful planning and implementation. Technologies related to social media have been used particularly in planning and implementing collective activities, promoting a feeling of community and collective identity amongst group members that are marginalized. In

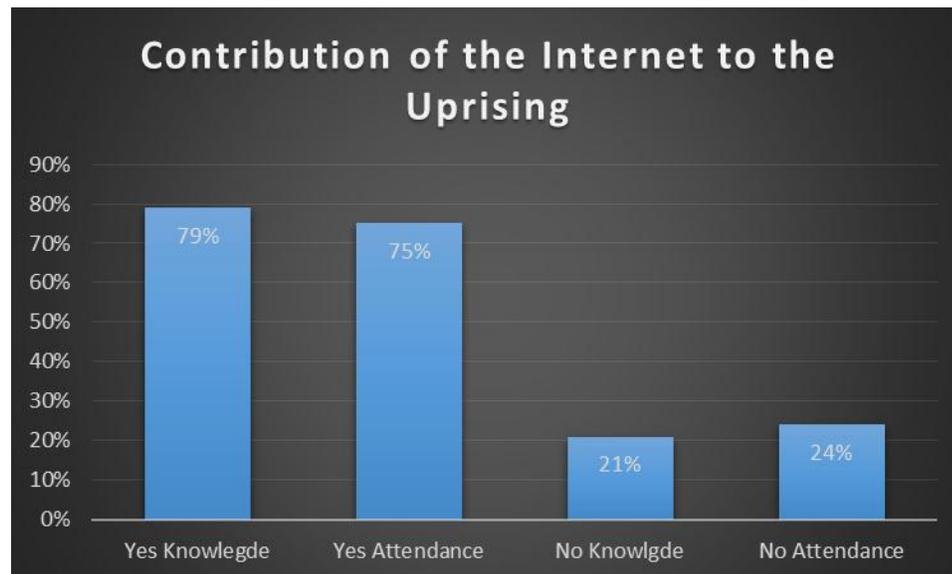
⁸⁶ Eriksson, Johan, and Giampiero Giacomello, "The Information Revolution, Security, and International Relations: (IR)relevant Theory?" *International Political Science Review* 27.3 (2006), 221-244.

⁸⁷ Langman, L. From virtual public spheres to global justice: A critical theory of interworked social movements. *Sociological Theory*, 23, no. 1 (April, 2005), 42-74.

addition, they create less-confined political spaces, establish links with other social movements, and publicize causes to obtain support from other communities worldwide.

Besides supporting social and political movements in more conventional ways through the provision of political expression opportunities, collective actors' symbolic identification, and information exchange, the social media may serve a unique instrumental function. In their study to examine of the anti-G8 protest in Genoa in the year 2001 and the European Social Forum in Florence in the year 2002, Della Porta and Mosca⁸⁸ established that Internet-based communication technologies offer a significant additional resource for social movements implemented by "resource poor" actors, providing a mass communication means that may have previously been restricted by temporal, financial or spatial constraints.

Table 2 Contribution of the Internet to the Uprising



⁸⁸ Della Porta, D., & Mosca, L. Global-net for global movements? A network of networks for a movement of movements. *Journal of Public Policy*, 25, no. 1, (May, 2005), 165–190.

The results of from the respondents show support the notion that the internet contributed to the emotional mobilization of citizens by providing information about the atrocities of the regime in response to the protests. For instance, at the end of 2010, in Tunisia's small township of Sidi Bouzid, an extremely poor grocery trader Mohammed Bouazizi, set himself ablaze in a community square at a local government bureau due constant harassment by the area law enforcers, who frequently demanded licenses and bribes resulting to seizing of his stock.⁸⁹ His final encounter with the police force, when they had destroyed his stock and tools of work and also beat him up, was his last straw. His death resulted to demonstrations in Sidi Bouzid and the whole the North Africa. Nevertheless through technology, the international TV and publishing media derailed in broadcasting the news and frequently state media around North Africa either shunned reporting, or reported incorrectly. Large volumes of internet sites such as YouTube were restricted by the internet filter in Tunisia. Facebook, which survived restriction at the time, ended up being a significant stage for spreading reports about the death of Bouazizi and the uprising in Sidi Bouzid. Twitter, even if it is rarely used in Tunisia, was also active in dispersing the news of the uprising.⁹⁰

3.3.3 Information Transmission

In the year 2011 there was a rising tide of protest led by disgruntled citizens across the North Africa against corrupt and autocratic regimes. Termed as the 'Arab Spring', this abrupt wave created some sort of a 'domino effect' with protesters in one country gaining confidence, following and supporting others in a different Arab country.

⁸⁹ Eriksson, Johan, and Giampiero Giacomello, "The Information Revolution, Security, and International Relations: (IR)relevant Theory?" *International Political Science Review* 27.3 (2006), 221-244.

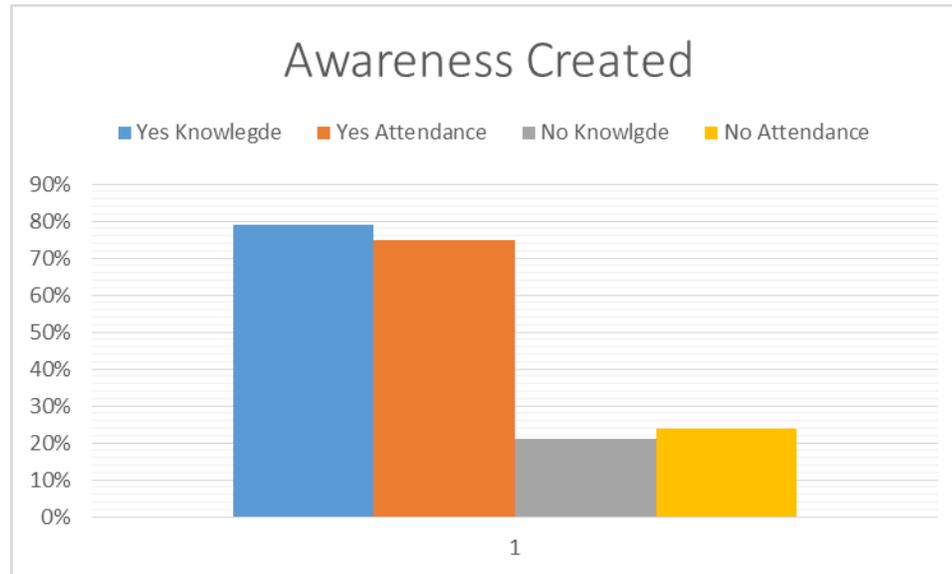
⁹⁰ Vallance, Karla. The power of social media. *Christian Science Monitor*, July 05, 2011., N.PAG

This pattern however is not unprecedented. It has been witnessed in other contexts before. The only novelty in the Arab Spring was the usage of mass of mobile phones, digital media and satellite TV. These tools facilitated the pulling together of disparate groups from Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and around for a common cause transcending borders, bypassing conventional channels of media and openly defying state control.

A few hours after the internet was turned on, security forces in Egypt made countless arrests and bloggers social media users were harassed. These arrests were made based on the criterion of those who had attended, Wael Ghonim, head of marketing of Google Middle East and North Africa. As a result, most people made for the Tahrir Square where they camped for many weeks. They vowed to stay there until Mubarak stepped down or was ousted. Most of these individuals were those who had created potentially “illegal” contents on social media and were afraid if they went home they would be arrested. This shows that surveillance and crackdowns on the internet will not hamper or disorient revolutions and may in fact stoke them. Additionally, it shows the danger that online activists face.⁹¹

⁹¹ Internet Filtering in Egypt. *Open Net Initiative.*, From <http://opennet.net/research/profiles/egypt> (2002)

Figure 3. Awareness of Upcoming Protest Events and Expected Event Turnouts



The respondent showed that Through the Internet they learnt that a protest event was going to take place in their city. They also learnt that many people planned to participate in a demonstration in their city. Social media not only showed the extent of previous demonstrations but also helped users to calculate the turnout of forthcoming protest events. Towards the end of December, activists increasingly began to use social media to organize further demonstrations. The event-planning feature of Facebook which allows users to create an event online for which other users can then sign up proved to be a particularly helpful tool for this purpose. Cambanis⁹² argues that technological advancement in social networking podiums in Egypt such as Twitter and Facebook were utilized in announcing and broadcasting the earlier demonstrations of early 2011. Facebook groupings like "We are all Khaled Said" and the Youth Movement of April 6th

⁹²Cambanis, Thanassis. "Weekend: Now what? They Came Together to Topple Mubarak, but can Egypt's Revolutionaries Agree on what Comes Next?." *The Guardian*: 26. ProQuest. Aug 13 2011. Web. 22 Feb. 2012.

initiated protests on January, 25th. The strategies and communication of the demonstrations were also spread through usual approaches such as verbal communications, printed brochures and email of a file elucidating the strategies for the demonstrations.

3.4 Network Formation

A surprising element of the Tunisian uprising was its broad, cross-class support. As has been demonstrated, the Internet and social media significantly contributed to transcend geographical and socio-economic boundaries and facilitated collaboration among the alienated intellectual elite, the rural poor, and the urban middle class⁹³. It thus helped to remove one of the central obstacles of collective action under authoritarianism, namely the lack of social interaction. The ways in which the Internet and social media contributed to intergroup collaboration confirm various aspects of the different theoretical views of protest mobilization.⁹⁴ The respondents suggest that social media helped to overcome the “free rider” problem of and to mobilize Internet user’s offline. To begin with, the majority of users in (79.0 %) were mobilized via the Internet. Equally important, many respondents (75.7 %) reported having learned through the Internet that a protest event in their hometown would be attended by a large number of fellow citizens (Figure 2). 80.5 % of the respondents simply or strongly agreed that their belief that the protest movement would bring down the governments came from what they had learned on the Internet. And although the majority simply or even strongly agreed that

⁹³ Goldman, Emily O., “Introduction: Information Resources and Military Performance,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 27.2 (2004), 195-219.

⁹⁴ Eriksson, Johan, and Giampiero Giacomello, “The Information Revolution, Security, and International Relations: (IR)relevant Theory?” *International Political Science Review* 27.3 (2006), 221-244.

participation in a protest event was a risky endeavour in terms of their personal security (81.3 %), 72.4 % participated in street protests once or repeatedly.

During the preparatory phase from 1998 to 2010 the Internet facilitated the formation of personal networks of digital activists who challenged the regime's control of the public sphere and offered an alternative discourse to the official political narrative.⁹⁵ In line with the arguments of social movement theory as a resource mobilization implicative, the Internet thus provided the resource of a partially uncontrolled space that undermined the regime's strategy of social isolation and fostered solidarity among Tunisians due to their shared feelings of repression. While the most proactive actors of this digital network typically came from the socio-economic and cultural elite, the relatively high degree of social media infrastructure development made their dissident discourse accessible to a larger portion of members of the society.

Social media allowed a digital elite of bloggers to circumvent the national media blackout by brokering information to the international mainstream media, most notably Al Jazeera.⁹⁶ The breakdown of censorship barriers enabled citizens both with and without Internet access to mobilize collective action around the material and moral grievances symbolically represented by Bouazizi's fate in the case of Tunisia. The nationwide availability of this information significantly contributed to the movement's geographical and social expansion.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Eriksson, Johan, and Giampiero Giacomello, "The Information Revolution, Security, and International Relations: (IR)relevant Theory?" *International Political Science Review* 27.3 (2006), 221-244.

⁹⁶ Corrales, Javier, and Frank Westhoff, "Information Technology Adoption and Political Regimes," *International Studies Quarterly* 50.4 (2006), 911-933.

⁹⁷ Baird, Zoë, "Governing the Internet: Engaging Governments, Business, and Nonprofits," *Foreign Affairs* 81.6 (2002), 15-20.

During the escalation phase, the Internet became increasingly important as a highway for information about the extent of the protests – which the state-controlled media tried desperately to conceal. By informing the public about the magnitude of past protest events and helping to calculate the extent of upcoming events, social media helped citizens to overcome the “barrier of fear” associated with protest under authoritarianism. The function of the Internet as an information hub in the Tunisian case thus supports arguments of both Relative Deprivation Theory and Rational Choice Theory regarding protest mobilization.⁹⁸

3.5 Internet Censorship Activities

Retrospectively, it is difficult to understand why so much international approval was showered on a government which kept tight control over the public sphere and ruthlessly cracked down on free expression.⁹⁹ The Ben Ali regime went to great lengths to dominate and protect the official political narrative, according to which the leader was the legitimate heir of Habib Bourguiba, the much-revered first president of independent Tunisia, whom Ben Ali removed in a palace coup in 1987. This narrative was complemented by a visual personality cult and was accompanied by political programmes intended to fashion regime-obedient citizens by proclaiming hypocritical messages about economic progress, liberty and plurality.¹⁰⁰

The trajectory of online censorship in Tunisia exhibits the dynamics of the government watchdogs was to initially monitor sexually explicit websites, then gradually

⁹⁸ Alden, Christopher, “Let Them Eat Cyberspace: Africa, the G8 and the Digital Divide,” *Millennium* 32.3 (2003), 457-476.

⁹⁹ Newman, Abraham L., “Building Transnational Civil Liberties: Transgovernmental Entrepreneurs and the European Data Privacy Directive,” *International Organization* 62.1 (2008), 103-130.

¹⁰⁰ Litan, Robert E., “The Internet Economy,” *Foreign Policy* 123 (2001), 16-24.

expand their activities to cover political commentary online as officials become increasingly versed in the application of control software.¹⁰¹ While this mission creep sometimes occurs slowly, it can also take an exponential leap in times of crisis that threaten national security. This occurred in Tunisia in 2008 and Egypt and Libya as a response to strikes and demonstrations against corruption and abysmal governance conditions. The protests turned violent when security forces opened fire against the protesters. Following this escalation, the protests began to attract citizen support and developed into a loosely organized social movement across the Gafsa region, with weekly protests in the town of Reddeyef.¹⁰² While the state controlled press remained silent, Internet activists began to cover the events on Facebook. In order to prevent information about the protests from spreading, *the government stepped up its censorship programme: Facebook was blocked on 18 August 2008 at the request of Ben Ali, who cited national security violations by terrorists as the reason* (Respondent 3 Tunisian Embassy). In reaction to a massive wave of online protest, the government lifted the blockade on 2 September and switched to a strategy of covert surveillance and manipulation of social networks. According to the U.S. State Department and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), the government ordered Tunisian ISP providers to intercept log-ins by Tunisian Facebook users and to relay the details, which then used them to block accounts entirely or remove undesired contents.¹⁰³ Although the government succeeded in 2008 in confining the protests regionally, its massive

¹⁰¹ Newman, Abraham L., "Building Transnational Civil Liberties: Transgovernmental Entrepreneurs and the European Data Privacy Directive," *International Organization* 62.1 (2008), 103-130.

¹⁰² Newmyer, Jacqueline, "The Revolution in Military Affairs with Chinese Characteristics," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33.4 (2010), 483-504.

¹⁰³ Reynolds, Glenn Harlan, "The Blogs of War," *National Interest* 75 (2004), 59-64.

ensorship strategy backlashed by prompting increased efforts by those who had long been campaigning for online free speech in Tunisia.

According to Onnik¹⁰⁴, internet filtering is more active in the West through software developed specifically for this especially in the North Africa region. Reports by the Open Net Initiative indicate that UAE, Egypt, Sudan, Libya and Morocco use technologies from the West to block internet content. In Tunisia, internet cafés were required by law to monitor the internet access by their customers and to have the customers provide their national identification numbers. A study of the Arab media in the year 1997 showed that despite the stringent measures by the governments to censor the internet, online activism has not been annihilated as the use of technology to coordinate and communicate has only increased over the years.¹⁰⁵ The study further indicates that there is vibrant growth of the use of UGC as well as internet activism.

The war against internet activism was taken to a whole new level. The government stiffened their controls against international news websites such as Al-Jazeera and BBC. To them, these sites were inciting the citizens against the government. The government in Tunisia went ahead to arrest five bloggers and in that group, a rapper Hamada Ben Aoun, was also arrested for composing a song entitled President, Your People Are Dead. Three of the bloggers and the rapper were later released. The US government intervened by expressing their discontent on the Tunisian government's attacks on users of American companies such as Facebook, Google and Yahoo.

¹⁰⁴ Onnik Krikorian "Azerbaijan: Blowing Up in Their Facebook" (Global Voices Advocacy, 10 March 2010) advocacy.globalvoicesonline.org/2011/03/10/azerbaijan-blowing-up-in-their-facebook/.

¹⁰⁵ Reynolds, Glenn Harlan, "The Blogs of War," *National Interest* 75 (2004), 59-64.

In Libya, the ousted leader Gaddafi directly opposed parliamentary democracy because to him it was misrepresentation of the people. Those who broke the law in the regime were executed with the mainstream media airing the public hangings and the trials. The regime did little to distribute the wealth acquired through the oil reserve in Libya which is the seventh in the world. Some 20% of Libyan citizens were unemployed with the infrastructure being highly deficient. This was attributed to the high levels of corruption perpetrated by the political elites.¹⁰⁶ The internet and especially the social media enabled Libyan citizens to compare their living conditions with those of other countries to realize that their government was autocratic and repressive.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, the internet acted as an avenue for learning for the many Libyan citizens who were ignorant of their rights and constitutional matters.

3.6 Social Media and Collective Political Identity Formation

Towards the final days of the revolution, social networking sites played an important role in politicizing the urban middle class. This supports the arguments brought forward by structural and networking accounts of collective action according to which overlapping membership in several networks leads to a spill-over of information from activist networks to networks of less engaged citizens.¹⁰⁸ It also illustrates the important function of social networks in building a collective identity supportive of protest action. By depicting the worst atrocities associated with the regime's response to the protests, social media led to the emotional mobilization of hitherto politically apathetic segments

¹⁰⁶ Ham, Anthony. "The Road to Revolution." *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 88(1), (2012) 136-145.

¹⁰⁷ Pack, Jason. Exit Gaddafi: The Hidden History of the Libyan Revolution/Exit the Colonel: The Hidden History of the Libyan Revolution. *Middle East Journal*, 67(2), (2013) 319-322

¹⁰⁸ Murphy, Emma C., "Theorizing ICTs in the Arab World: Informational Capitalism and the Public Sphere," *International Studies Quarterly* 53.4 (2009), 1131-1153.

of Tunisian society. The Internet thus helped to connect impoverished rural street protesters, socio-economically and culturally privileged and highly motivated digital activists, and the young urban middle class in the large cycle of protest that led to the final collapse of the Ben Ali regime.¹⁰⁹

During climax of the protests, the Tahrir Square occupation in Cairo Egypt, Twitter saw up to 45 ‘tweets’ per minute from Egypt alone. Most of these tweets were in English. This facilitated the capturing of global media attention and visibility. Science and technological growth through social media also gave protesters information about on how to counter the security forces, using such means as maps with locations for protest meetings along with practical advice on what to do in situations of teargas attacks. As governments frantically tried to crack down on protesters by curtailing all communication systems (Egypt), blocking internet sites that had social networks (Tunisia) or this only powered discontent eventually leading up to their demise. Access to Twitter.com was blocked during the protests in Egypt. The move blocked Twitter users of from accessing the site through their mobile phones.

However, the activists found a way to circumvent this blockade. They used hootsuite.com which was initially left open by the government. Most activists decided to post messages through hootsuite.com, a server located outside Egypt which meant that it was outside the blockade area. Then the messages would then be directed to Twitter. This hoot suite was available to Android, Blackberry and iPhone, as it uses a different process than most websites in which the authentication is achieved directly between the

¹⁰⁹ Newman, Abraham L., “Building Transnational Civil Liberties: Transgovernmental Entrepreneurs and the European Data Privacy Directive,” *International Organization* 62.1 (2008), 103-130.

hootsuite.com servers and the twitter.com servers. This meant that the Twitter user did not have to use Twitter directly. In this way most activists managed to avoid the blockade through using the hootsuite account and accessing Twitter indirectly through this account. However, this service was not available to laptop and computer users since they used a process referred to as OAuth for authentication. It involves the use of a browser which was susceptible to the blockade. This shows that the activists still managed to find a way to spread the information in spite of strict controls and regulations by the government. This shows the great significance that social media played in the upsurges in Egypt and the much that the activists were willing to do to be able to access these instrumental tools (social networks).¹¹⁰

3.7 Quantification of Social Media and Political Revolution

After analysing more than 3 million tweets, gigabytes of YouTube content and thousands of blog posts, a new study finds that social media played a central role in shaping political debates in the Arab Spring. Conversations about revolution often preceded major events, and social media has carried inspiring stories of protest across international borders. Daniel and Alexander argue that communication technology growth like social media is only instruments that may aid in galvanizing public support where a common cause exists and in the right situations.¹¹¹ Where there is lack of strong political leadership for alternatives, social media may affect the end result for authoritarian regimes, but play a lesser role in determining the powers that emerge to replace it. However, social media give ‘faceless’ forms of communication to many

¹¹⁰ Murphy, Emma C., “Theorizing ICTs in the Arab World: Informational Capitalism and the Public Sphere,” *International Studies Quarterly* 53.4 (2009), 1131-1153.

¹¹¹ Reynolds, Glenn Harlan, “The Blogs of War,” *National Interest* 75 (2004), 59-64.

individuals and even endear others to voice their opinions without worry of being apprehended for contradicting the interests of the powers that be.

Ghannam states that the influence of social media has been felt in the North African countries. Such revolutions as the Jasmine revolution in Tunisia have made such great impact in the politics of the country. These changes created a domino effect in other North Africa countries which eventually led to the Arab uprising as we know it today. Social media thus proved to be a major player in shaping political and cultural events that followed. It influenced political and social change in Libya and Egypt, Morocco.¹¹²

During the week before Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak's resignation, for example, the total rate of tweets from Egypt and around the world about political change in that country ballooned from 2,300 a day to 230,000 a day. Videos featuring protest and political commentary went viral – the top 23 videos received nearly 5.5 million views. The amount of content produced online by opposition groups, in Facebook and political blogs, increased dramatically.¹¹³ The respondents said that Twitter *offers us the clearest evidence of where individuals engaging in democratic conversations were located during the revolutions*. Twitter provides a window into the broader world of digital conversations, many of which probably involved cell phones to send text, pictures or voice messages, he said. In Tunisia, for example, less than 20 percent of the population uses social media, but almost everyone has access to a mobile phone.¹¹⁴ It can be stated that social media tools were good mediums of electronic communication among

¹¹² Reynolds, Glenn Harlan, "The Blogs of War," National Interest 75 (2004), 59-64.

¹¹³ Schmidt, Eric, and Jared Cohen, "The Digital Disruption: Connectivity and the Power of Diffusion," Foreign Affairs 89.6 (2010), 75-86.

¹¹⁴ Newman, Abraham L., "Building Transnational Civil Liberties: Transgovernmental Entrepreneurs and the European Data Privacy Directive," International Organization 62.1 (2008), 103-130.

protesters in North Africa. The usage of the social media has been useful for participants during the uprising to liberate their countries and to change the economic-political systems of their states. Further, it was a vital medium for spreading information such as photos, videos and documents about the revolution for national, regional and international spheres.

In Tunisia's administration prior to the uprisings was very repressive. The individuals that suffered most are those that were at the bottom of the production chain. The administration was corrupt with the police officers unfairly beating anyone that did not offer bribes to them. These conditions led to the rise of the Jasmine Revolution. In the year 2010, Mohammed Bouazizi set himself ablaze. This was a desperate act of defiance after his attempts to work as a street vendor to support his family were denied. The scenes of this self-immolation act was captured by passers-by and immediately posted on YouTube. News of this extreme act circulated in Tunisia and beyond¹¹⁵.

Protests arose and on January 11th they reached the centre of the capital city Tunis. The Tunisian president Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali responded by imposing a night-time curfew. The following day, thousands took to the streets of Sfax, Tunisia's second city with intense demonstrations.¹¹⁶ On January 14, 2011, the president fled the country after he was ousted by a spontaneous populous uprising. Tunisia's population of 10 million people became the first people in the Arab world to take to the streets and oust a

¹¹⁵ McCafferty, Dennis. "Activism vs. slacktivism. *Communications Of The ACM*", 54(12), (2011) 17-19.

¹¹⁶ Jansen, Fieke. "Digital activism in the Middle East: mapping issue networks in Egypt, Iran, Syria and Tunisia." *Knowledge Management For Development Journal*, 6(1), (2010). 37-52.

leader. This came as a surprise given that Tunisians are known for their high levels of education and civic pride within the region¹¹⁷.

3.8 The Outcome of Social Media North Africa

Though Tunisia's government exercised some of the most repressive Internet censorship, the country's population is considered to be one of the most connected in the region outside the Gulf. Going by statistics, 33% of the population is online with 16% on Facebook and 18% using Twitter¹¹⁸. YouTube was one of the major sites that were completely blocked during the reign of Ben Ali regime. However, the regime did not entirely block internet access. Consequently, cyber activists managed to re-post Facebook and videos content about protests from private networks' closed loops to online news portals and Twitter with greater reach. Further, the number of Facebook users in Tunisia surged by 8% during the initial weeks of the protests. Most of the users converted from being merely social to basically politics-oriented.¹¹⁹

In Egypt, social media activism played a vital role in instituting reforms in the existing repressive administration. It all began with Wael Ghonim, Google executive, copying a video taken of police officers beating to death an Egyptian businessman Khaled Said.¹²⁰ The police had videotaped themselves taking marijuana they had confiscated earlier. The Google executive hoped to stir and capture the attention of the

¹¹⁷ Alterman, Jon. "The Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted." *Washington Quarterly*, 34(4), (2011) 103.

¹¹⁸ McCafferty, Dennis. "Activism vs. slacktivism" *Communications of the ACM*, 54(12), (2011) 17-19.

¹¹⁹ Khoury, Machool. "Palestinian Youth and Political Activism: The Emerging Internet Culture and New Modes of Resistance." *Policy Futures In Education*, 5(1), (2007) 17-36

¹²⁰ Youmans, Lafi., & York, Jillian. "Social Media and the Activist Toolkit: User Agreements, Corporate Interests, and the Information Infrastructure of Modern Social Movements." *Journal Of Communication*, 62(2), (2012) 315-329.

authorities and the general public about the corruption perpetrated by the police.¹²¹ Ghonim also went a step further and created a Facebook page called ‘We Are All Khaled Said.’ The page featured grotesque mobile phone photos of Said’s face taken from the morgue. These photos undermined the explanation given by the police about the death of Said. This particular Facebook page captured 500,000 followers within Egypt and internationally. Through this means of communication, the protesters were mobilized to assemble at the Tahrir square.¹²² The military were there as well keeping a watchful eye on the crowd.

The government noted the influence the internet had and attempted to thwart all internet access. They blocked Facebook and twitter severally. This was not successful as the protesters, aided by others in the world, managed to subvert the censorship. However, blocking of the internet led to untold losses incurred by many organizations that dealt in internet services. Many vital functions of the private sector and even the government were suspended following the blockage of internet access. Following 18 days of protests, President Hosni Mubarak gave in to the intense pressure and resigned.¹²³

The uprising caused by advancement growth in communication technology demanded social and political changes that influenced the toppling of strongmen of the region and subsequent prosecution, killing, exiling and running away of Presidents such as Hosni Mubarak (Egypt), Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali (Tunisia) and Muammar Gaddafi

¹²¹ Rinnawi, Khalil. “Cyber Uprising: Al-Jazeera TV Channel and the Egyptian Uprising.” *Language And Intercultural Communication*, 12(2), 118-132

¹²² Martin, Matthew. “Social media fuels online activism.” *MEED: Middle East Economic Digest*, 56(45), (2012) 20-21

¹²³ Charlie Beckett. “After Tunisia and Egypt: Towards a New Typology of Media and Networked Political Change,” *Polis*, 2011, (2011) <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2011/02/11/after-tunisia-and-egypt-towards-a-new-typology-of-media-and-networked-political-change/>

(Libya).¹²⁴ User-generated content (UGC) is defined as internet content (images, text, sound clips and videos) created and uploaded to the internet by users typically for no definite financial gain, but rather for passion or enjoyment. UGC is usually developed by amateurs, rather than professionals. UGC includes video clips, audio clips (podcasts), blogs and comments on internet forums on social networks such as Twitter or Facebook.¹²⁵

Furthermore, UGC which is as a result of science and technology development played a significant role in the North Africa Countries uprisings and protests. The UGC developed in mobile phones was specifically important as it permitted those witnessing or involved in the protests to upload content in the time of the protests and report on live events. Mobile phones were also used by protesters to communicate with protestors and spread their message. Social network sites such as Twitter and Facebook were the principal online tools that individuals around the globe use to distribute this content. The saying that the revolution will be tweeted or streamed or live-blogged have come true with specific cases being Tunisia and Egypt where most people took to the streets with their mobile phones to spread their messages and to organize the demonstrations. The creation of UGC in the course of the protests played a vital role in the North Africa area although not necessarily a big one. Internet freedom in the North Africa region will be the starting point for investigating the usage of UGC in the Arab spring.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Ghannam, J. *Social Media in the Arab World: Leading to the Uprising*, Washington DC, Centre for International Media Assistance (2011) accessed at www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/crisiswatch-93.aspx on 6th April 2013.

¹²⁵ Pace, Michelle. An Arab 'Spring' of a Different Kind? Resilience and Freedom in the Case of an Occupied Nation. *Mediterranean Politics* 18, no. 1 (March, 2013): 42-59.

¹²⁶ Hofheinz, A. Arab Internet Use: Popular Trends and Public Impact, in Sklar, N. (ed) *Arab Media and Political Renewal: Community, Legitimacy and Public Life*, (New York, IB Tauris, 2007)p. 6

Initially, UGC helped to direct global attention towards the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia. This also influenced democratic struggles of the entire region. UGC was a means of providing news of events not covered by the media in time. Picture, video and micro-blogging became avenues where information was disseminated and consumed about the protests increasing the intensity. Views offered in UGC were very striking and inspiring such that they could never be allowed in state-run media or conventional media. In Syria for instance, international journalists were barred from reporting and thus even they depended on social media. Also, UGC was utilized to talk about the demonstrations countrywide, regionally and internationally, and to give live reporting, information and views. News was frequently circulated on Twitter, where the protesters regularly had their personal hash tags. The hash tags #Jan25, #Jan3 and #SidiBouزيد were used imply the protests in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia respectively.¹²⁷

UGC assisted in firstly guiding the world's interest to the revolt in Egypt and Tunisia, and afterward to other nations, controlling the self-governing efforts of the entire region. UGC acted as a channel for the dissemination of news around revealing issues not broadcasted by, or beyond the reach of the usual media. Micro-blogging, and photo and film sharing through mobile phones turn out to be channels to broadcast and use information about the demonstration. The phones UGC nexus offered a significant instrument for protesters to notify the external world of their expectations, the issues surrounding the genuine demonstrations and the police, armed forces and community responses' temperament. UGC frequently gave opinions and perceptions that state-run and usual media did not give, plus photos that no any media was there to witness. In areas

¹²⁷ Morozov, Evgeny, *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*, (New York, Public Affairs, 2011)

where admittance by global journalists has been nearly totally limited, for instance Syria, films on mobile phone became practically the single mode to report on demonstrations. All over North Africa, avenues like Facebook and Twitter, and image and film sharing podiums characterized chances to stream the legitimacy to power.¹²⁸

3.9 Conclusion

The chapter has reviewed interview guides, questionnaires and secondary data findings and also some of the scholarly works on the role of social media in the North Africa political revolutions. From the chapter some issues have emerged included mobilization capacities of social media, government censorship intervention and the defiance of a determined citizenry. While one cannot argue that this was an Internet revolution, social media technologies represent an important instrumental resource that contributed to the birth and sustainability of the revolution.

¹²⁸ Nunns, Alex and Idle, Nadia *Tweets from Tahrir* (New York, OR Books, 2011).

CHAPTER FOUR

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE BIRTH OF THE REVOLUTION IN NORTH AFRICA

4.1 Introduction

The chapter sets stage in order to analyse the emerging issues in the interplay between social media and political revolutions. The discussion in the chapter correlates the constructivist theoretical principles that make clear that both the availability of resources and actors' efficacy in using them effectively are essential. Besides resources such as motivated citizenry as well as transportation availability in the gathering of masses of people, social media was significant used in the Arab Spring revolution. Although one cannot argue that the Arab Spring was an Internet revolution, social media platforms and technologies represented a significant instrumental resource that played a big role in the revolution birth and sustainability.

4.2 The Organizational Capabilities of Social Media

From the interviews, one of the defining features of the Egyptian uprising is the relative speed with which it occurred in which it occurred is one of the characteristics defining the Egyptian uprising.¹²⁹ A compared to Libya and Tunisia uprisings that took 9 months and about 28 respectively, the activists in Egypt removed Mubarak from power in about 18 days. The process was relatively more peaceful as compared to other uprisings in the Arab Spring¹³⁰. Essential to events acceleration was the use of social media networks efficiently as a form of organizational infrastructure that started with virtual

¹²⁹ Interview by this researcher with Kathy Vaughan specialist and coach in international conflict management in the MENA countries on 11th of September 2015

¹³⁰ Adams, James, "Virtual Defense," *Foreign Affairs* 80.3 (2001), 98-112.

networks and was later transposed to offline networks¹³¹. Activists in Egypt were able to successfully make use of Twitter and Facebook social networking capabilities by capitalizing on their capabilities to communicate and the speed of transferring and spreading information, an important characteristic of digital media¹³².

From the interviews, both the old and the new media worked in synergy in the creation of a resilient, stronger and better networked information system.¹³³ Wider liberalising developments in the sphere of traditional media was as significant as social media in changing the information context within which state controls could be diverted¹³⁴. Therefore, portraying new and old media as competitors or rivals is inaccurate. It is more appropriate to reflect them as working together in synergy as a resilient, stronger and better networked information system. Wael Ghonim's Facebook group '*We Are All Khaled Said*' was used as an organizational platform to attract like-minded people to connect over one objective: to commemorate Khaled Said in Egypt¹³⁵. This later evolved into a common interest in the formation of an Egyptian police force opposition that later became a movement to force Mubarak to step down. Facebook, as a social media platform, provided the organizational infrastructure and a vital platform for potential protesters to connect and share their common grievances. The page allowed various activist networks to communicate with one another.

¹³¹ Alden, Christopher, "Let Them Eat Cyberspace: Africa, the G8 and the Digital Divide," *Millennium* 32.3 (2003), 457-476.

¹³² Baird, Zoë, "Governing the Internet: Engaging Governments, Business, and Nonprofits," *Foreign Affairs* 81.6 (2002), 15-20.

¹³³ Interview by this researcher with Stella Mang'era, a communication specialist with the ministry of foreign affairs in Kenya on 11th of September 2015

¹³⁴ Comor, Edward, "The Role of Communication in Global Civil Society: Forces, Processes, Prospects," *International Studies Quarterly* 45.3 (2001), 389-408.

¹³⁵ Corrales, Javier, and Frank Westhoff, "Information Technology Adoption and Political Regimes," *International Studies Quarterly* 50.4 (2006), 911-933.

The social media transformative power lay in the creation of a lower-risk virtual political space in countries where there is little or no freedom of expression or association. The political leadership nature is different in the virtual space¹³⁶. From the interviews, the role of political entrepreneurs in the development of strategies for social media effective use is vital to the successful use of these tools at the ignition and escalation phases.¹³⁷ The significance of the preparation stage and role of political entrepreneurs in development strategies for the effective use of social media created a significant synergy that played out between political revolutions and new media in North Africa¹³⁸. Even though the use of social media was most evident in the protests' escalation phase, its important role was during the preparation phase in the years leading up to the events.

Through the facilitation of deliberative political processes, social media can have a supportive role in the post-regime phase. Far from being a spontaneous event catalysed by technology, the story of North Africa is one of the agencies of a disciplined civil resistance movement through the four political revolution phases. These phases include preparation, ignition, escalation and post-regime. Social media played a significant role in the revolution preparation phase by changing the revolution political opportunity structures¹³⁹. In the ignition phase, social media had an amplifying impact by enabling the trigger to go viral. However, social media became visible in the escalation phase, but it was playing a contributory role rather than a central role. International visibility came

¹³⁶ Adams, James, "Virtual Defense," *Foreign Affairs* 80.3 (2001), 98-112.

¹³⁷ Interview by this researcher with Valerie Rugene from the ministry of foreign affairs on 21st of September 2015

¹³⁸ Baird, Zoë, "Governing the Internet: Engaging Governments, Business, and Nonprofits," *Foreign Affairs* 81.6 (2002), 15-20.

¹³⁹ Comor, Edward, "The Role of Communication in Global Civil Society: Forces, Processes, Prospects," *International Studies Quarterly* 45.3 (2001), 389-408.

at this point via social media, the blogosphere leading traditional Western media coverage of events¹⁴⁰.

The revolution in North Africa has put renewed emphasis on international internet freedom policies. From the interviews, the levers of Western governments are limited, but include: promotion of international dialogue to agree on openness standards; support for multilateral organisations in the strengthening and diversification of national telecommunications infrastructure internationally; and use of sanctions and incentives¹⁴¹. As communications bandwidth widens, the boundaries between different channels collapses. This creates challenges and opportunities for public diplomacy and strategic communications. Messages need to be tailored to the media landscape of the different countries. Conversations should refer to empowered citizens instead of 'Facebook/Twitter revolutions'. In the longer term, foreign ministries face choices: how, where and when to engage with a wider set of new civil society actors and the depth of this engagement; the extent to which ministries open up the policy process and invest resources; where they stand on the risk spectrum and level of messaging control; and the degree to which they value and invest in cultural diplomacy tools¹⁴².

4.3 Social Media as an Alternative Press

One of the major social media advantages in the Egyptian revolution was its capacity to enable people to swiftly exchange and disseminate information to millions of individuals inside and outside of Egypt. For example, as Egyptians were watching events

¹⁴⁰ Alden, Christopher, "Let Them Eat Cyberspace: Africa, the G8 and the Digital Divide," *Millennium* 32.3 (2003), 457-476.

¹⁴¹ Interview by this researcher with Wilfred Komu, an African Union representative in Liberia on 16th of September 2015.

¹⁴² Corrales, Javier, and Frank Westhoff, "Information Technology Adoption and Political Regimes," *International Studies Quarterly* 50.4 (2006), 911-933.

unfold in Tunisia, they were also planning their own movement. Activists from both countries, Egypt and Tunisia, were exchanging ideas, information and words of encouragement online.¹⁴³ During the Tunisian revolution, bloggers in Egypt were on their personal blogs, Facebook and Twitter posting Tunisian protests updates in form of videos and images. On January 17, 2011, female blogger and activist in Egypt by the name Nawara Negm posted a video from an Egyptian actress with words of encouragement for Tunisia activists. Negm also posted cell phone numbers urging Egyptians to send text messages to encourage Tunisia activists during the protests.¹⁴⁴

Other social media accounts that illustrate speed and high interactivity in mobilization include multiple Facebook pages like “ElBaradei for Presidency” and “We are all Khaled Said” pages. These provided platforms for information exchange, interaction, and encouragement among the activists.¹⁴⁵ In January 16, three teenagers in Egypt created another Facebook page that was known as “*January 25: The day of revolution over torture, poverty, corruption & unemployment*”. The three teenagers posted a video clip introducing themselves to the Egyptians and explaining their feelings of encouragement after the victory achieved in Tunisia.¹⁴⁶ Thus, Facebook pages made it possible for activists to address millions of users from various walks of life, as well as from various regions across Egypt, all at once. From the interviews, the social media interactivity and speed not only united activists and protesters, but also offered them the means for sending out vital safety information at the time of the revolution and also acted

¹⁴³ Adams, James, “Virtual Defense,” *Foreign Affairs* 80.3 (2001), 98-112.

¹⁴⁴ Clarke, Richard, “War from Cyberspace,” *National Interest* 104 (2009), 31-36.

¹⁴⁵ Dartnell, Michael, “Weapons of Mass Instruction: Web Activism and the Transformation of Global Security,” *Millennium* 32.3 (2003), 477-499.

¹⁴⁶ Baird, Zoë, “Governing the Internet: Engaging Governments, Business, and Nonprofits,” *Foreign Affairs* 81.6 (2002), 15-20.

as an outlet for seeking help when in danger.¹⁴⁷ When the Egyptian revolution began on January 25, activists posted messages on their Facebook and blogs pages from protestors in Tunisia that comprised of words of encouragement, along with comprehensive instructions and suggestions based on lessons learned. One of the messages from the Tunisian protesters advised the Egyptians to protest during the night to avoid arrests, use social media to convey their message to the outside world, to spray-paint the security forces armoured cars black to cover the windshield, and to use Coca-Cola to wash their faces in an effort to reduce the impact of tear gas.¹⁴⁸

When the Egyptian government understood the speed and power of social media technologies and their capacity to facilitate organization among protestors and activists, it stopped Internet and cellular phone communication all over Egypt on January 28. Once the activists recognized the plan of the Mubarak regime, they turned to Twitter, blogs and Facebook to notify the outside world. One Facebook user posted this message on ElBaradei's page.¹⁴⁹

Starting tomorrow morning, all the foreigners in Egypt won't be able to communicate with their countries back home (facing issues or having troubles), because the Egyptian president gave his orders to cut and stop all kind of communications (Mobile + Internet), he doesn't want the whole world to see what he will be doing to his own nation, what kind of president is this? Please spread the word. (Facebook page: Mohamed ElBaradei)

Even though, the Internet was interrupted for about five days, some protestors and activists were still able to communicate through social media. These combined efforts

¹⁴⁷ Interview by this researcher with Richard Musungu, an assistant officer in international relations press and communication evaluation in the Algeria Embassy in Nairobi on 21st of September 2015. from the ministry of foreign affairs on 16st of September 2015

¹⁴⁸ Alden, Christopher, "Let Them Eat Cyberspace: Africa, the G8 and the Digital Divide," *Millennium* 32.3 (2003), 457-476.

¹⁴⁹ Comor, Edward, "The Role of Communication in Global Civil Society: Forces, Processes, Prospects," *International Studies Quarterly* 45.3 (2001), 389-408.

enabled a continued information flow while at the same time maintaining interactivity and speed. However, social media was not the only driving force in the revolution.¹⁵⁰ This became evident, especially, when government attempts to weaken the efforts of the activists and protestors by interrupting mass communication appeared to strengthen the determination of the protesters and increase the numbers of people joining the protest. By then, social media was not as critical to the protestors, given that the most of them were already out on the streets and able to utilize other available resources. At that time, the social media was replaced by an analogue Twitter equivalent: handheld signs held aloft at demonstrations indicating when and where people should gather the following day.¹⁵¹ This implies the revolution was nurtured online, but it was never reserved to a single communication medium. In addition, social media played a significant role in the planning and organization phases of the revolution, although other means of communication also contributed made a significant contribution.¹⁵²

From the interviews, one of the negative impacts of the communication blackout was the inability to make calls requesting for urgent care for people injured at the time of the protest.¹⁵³ During this time, most bloggers expressed feelings of helplessness and anger. Written messages, video clips and images circulating on Facebook, blogs and Twitter strengthened the collective Egyptians identity worldwide¹⁵⁴. After the start of the revolution, multiple Facebook pages were created to incorporate Egyptians living abroad.

¹⁵⁰ Clarke, Richard, "War from Cyberspace," *National Interest* 104 (2009), 31-36.

¹⁵¹ Cukier, Kenneth Neil, "Who Will Control the Internet," *Foreign Affairs* 84.6 (2005), 7-13.

¹⁵² Dartnell, Michael, "Weapons of Mass Instruction: Web Activism and the Transformation of Global Security," *Millennium* 32.3 (2003), 477-499.

¹⁵³ Interview by this researcher with Boris Matous, an international humanitarian affairs officer at Medecen Sans Frontiers on 21st of September 2015.

¹⁵⁴ Eriksson, Johan, and Giampiero Giacomello, "The Information Revolution, Security, and International Relations: (IR)relevant Theory" *International Political Science Review* 27.3 (2006), 221-244.

These Facebook pages comprised of “Voice of Egypt Abroad,” “Egyptians Abroad in Support of Egypt,” and “New United Arab States.” Other social media related initiatives that played a role in the revolution include virtual protests that supported the Egyptian protests, such as the Facebook-organized February 1 event that invited users to a virtual “March of Millions” in solidarity with Egyptian activists and protesters. The event administrators explained on the page: “As one million march on the streets of Egypt, our goal is to reach one million voices in support of their march”.¹⁵⁵

4.4 The Efficiency of Social Media Creating Political and Human Rights Awareness

A lot of attention has been paid to the role of the internet in the creation of awareness of the Arab Spring both internationally and in the Middle East. This is another example of how the revolutions started online were transposed to offline movements where they gained momentum and attention. From the interviews, the majority of Facebook users polled agreed that Facebook was used most effectively to raise awareness of the causes of the movements within the country.¹⁵⁶ Perhaps the best example of this is the creation of the Facebook group We Are All Khaled Said by Google executive Wael Ghonim. Created to commemorate the brutal murder of the young Egyptian blogger who died at the hands of police, the Facebook group quickly attracted over 500,000 members who spread the graphic photographs of Said’s disfigured corpse around the Internet. In this way, Ghonim exploited the networking capabilities of Facebook to engage in an effective cyber activism campaign against the repressive and corrupt Egyptian state. This paper will use Howard’s definition of cyber activism as “the act of using the Internet to

¹⁵⁵ Funabashi, Yoichi, “Asia’s Digital Challenge,” *Survival* 44.1 (2002), 135-144.

¹⁵⁶ Interview by this researcher with Richard Musungu, an assistant officer in international relations press and communication evaluation in the Algeria Embassy in Nairobi on 21st of September 2015.

advance a political cause that is difficult to advance offline...the goal of such activism is often to create intellectually and emotionally compelling digital artefacts that tell stories of injustice, interpret history, and advocate for particular political outcomes.¹⁵⁷

Ghonim's Facebook group did indeed have political outcomes, as it was used as an organisational tool for spreading word about the stages of the revolutions. Ghonim's use of Facebook for political ends sparked a new consciousness in the region of the political implications and networking capabilities of Facebook. A research study conducted by Zach Brisson of consultancy firm 'The Reboot' indicates that although the penetration of Facebook is still relatively low and uneven among the Tunisians, Egyptians and Libyans, those who admit to not making use of it still vouch for its role as a platform for free political will expression.¹⁵⁸

It is the feeling of oppression by the tyrannical leaders and the need for more credible leaders that led to the revolution. From the interviews, the governments in these states were engaged in extreme suppression of political and religious ideas of the people arguing that the reason behind this was to ensure that the national security was not at risk.¹⁵⁹ For the same reason, they used the national security agencies in frustrating the citizens' efforts to gain some political and religious freedom. Human rights of the people were fatally bruised and citizens were seemingly becoming the property of the state and anyone who tried to object the violations was imprisoned with no judicial trial or through judgments made in kangaroo courts and many lost their lives. A cruel example of the oppression and suppression was in Algeria where the army was used to kill some

¹⁵⁷ Cukier, Kenneth Neil, "Who Will Control the Internet," *Foreign Affairs* 84.6 (2005), 7-13.

¹⁵⁸ Funabashi, Yoichi, "Asia's Digital Challenge," *Survival* 44.1 (2002), 135-144.

¹⁵⁹ Interview by this researcher with Richard Musungu, an assistant officer in international relations press and communication evaluation in the Algeria Embassy in Nairobi on 21st of September 2015.

suspected Islamists and this led to a civil uprising which included use of violence which left more than 200,000 Algerians dead.¹⁶⁰

To totally eliminate the participation or the contribution of the citizens on political matters, some governments had improvised mechanisms to make sure that the citizens do not receive information which can corrupt their minds by becoming aware of the existing negativity in the government.¹⁶¹ For example, the Saudi Arabian government cleans up the information in the internet under the pretence of protecting the citizens from corrupt and immoral information.¹⁶² However, it is known that the government does this to make sure that the people do not learn about the ineffectiveness and the corruption existing in it.¹⁶³ From the interviews, the social networking websites such as the Twitter and Facebook are also not allowed in the country for the same reason but any wise person knows that this is an act by the government aimed at restricting the people from exposure on how governments should operate.¹⁶⁴ Access to these websites is also aimed at making sure that the citizens have no access to a myriad of criticisms on their government which is found in these sites. The use of social media is also regulated and people spreading anti-government information are severely punished. However, we have seen that the same social media which is regulated has played a very great role in the Arab Spring especially in the making people come together for demonstrations.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Dartnell, Michael, "Weapons of Mass Instruction: Web Activism and the Transformation of Global Security," *Millennium* 32.3 (2003), 477-499.

¹⁶¹ Cukier, Kenneth Neil, "Who Will Control the Internet," *Foreign Affairs* 84.6 (2005), 7-13.

¹⁶² Funabashi, Yoichi, "Asia's Digital Challenge," *Survival* 44.1 (2002), 135-144.

¹⁶³ Eriksson, Johan, and Giampiero Giacomello, "The Information Revolution, Security, and International Relations: (IR)relevant Theory" *International Political Science Review* 27.3 (2006), 221-244.

¹⁶⁴ Interview by this researcher with Wilfred Komu, an African Union representative in Liberia on 16th of September 2015.

¹⁶⁵ Funabashi, Yoichi, "Asia's Digital Challenge," *Survival* 44.1 (2002), 135-144.

4.5 Impact of Social Media on the North Africa Political Revolution

The impact of the social media on these social movements that caused major social and political changes in the involved countries, has been as a result of the capability of the social media tools to bring people together in an effective manner to fight for a similar course. From the interviews, the recent protests, during the revolution, have been organized and carried out in the social media.¹⁶⁶ Such protests also garner support from a wider circle via the use of the social media. Mobilization of masses is becoming faster with the use of the social media, than was possible in the past.¹⁶⁷ Among successful social movements, a common theme is the use of communication technologies. It is from this perspective that a major interest in the social media in the revolutions has come up.¹⁶⁸

Various scholars and academicians have assessed the way that the social media is involved in motivating as well as assisting to fasten the recent political uprisings.¹⁶⁹ Their findings have revealed that the social media played a major role in initiating as well as facilitating the social movements and the changes that resulted. The social media played a crucial role in the kicking off of the protests and making it easier for the protectors to air as well as share their opinions and views, and making it possible for them to coordinate protests and pass information along. Thus, it can be suggested that social media had a major impact on social movements. The wave of political anger's that took the form of

¹⁶⁶ Interview by this researcher with Valerie Rugene from the ministry of foreign affairs on 16th of September 2015

¹⁶⁷ Goldman, Emily O., "Introduction: Information Resources and Military Performance," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 27.2 (2004), 195-219.

¹⁶⁸ Hachigian, Nina, "The Internet and Power in One-Party East Asian States," *Washington Quarterly* 25.3 (2002), 41-58.

¹⁶⁹ Hachigian, Nina, "The Internet and Power in One-Party East Asian States," *Washington Quarterly* 25.3 (2002), 41-58.

protest, spread quickly from Egypt, Tunisia and Libya due to the impact of the social media.¹⁷⁰

4.6 The Success of Social Media in North Africa

Social media could be viewed as part of a wider change in social consciousness amongst those Egyptians who took part in the uprisings. The online forums enabled the general public to challenge the monopolies of power in the country.¹⁷¹ From the interviews, the technological advancement has of late become significant resource in collective action mobilization and the consequent social movements' creation, organization, and implementation globally.¹⁷² Science and technology development has created Web-fuelled social movements' opportunities, or cyber activism, to modify the collective action landscape. Cyber activism is a developing field of scholarly investigation, even though it is still not well understood, and it largely lacks a clear consistent and cohesive direction.¹⁷³ There was a definite change in attitude towards authorities and it has been argued that this was a collective shift that was propelled by the use of digital media. This implies a "copy and paste" trend can in fact have political consequences. The news that they read, what they like, what they discuss, and what they think is significantly informed by the links forwarded to them by their friends on Twitter and Facebook.¹⁷⁴ Social media played a significant role in the formulation this collective

¹⁷⁰ Goldman, Emily O., "Introduction: Information Resources and Military Performance," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 27.2 (2004), 195-219.

¹⁷¹ Lessig, Lawrence, "The Internet Under Siege," *Foreign Policy* 127 (2001), 56-65.

¹⁷² Interview by this researcher with Stella Mang'era, a communication specialist with the ministry of foreign affairs in Kenya on 11th of September 2015

¹⁷³ Interview by this researcher with Kathy Vaughan specialist and coach in international conflict management in the MENA countries on 11th of September 2015

¹⁷⁴ Goldman, Emily O., "Introduction: Information Resources and Military Performance," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 27.2 (2004), 195-219.

change in social consciousness. According to Slim Amamou, a Tunisian blogger and former State for Youth and Sport Secretary” collective consciousness developed from the Internet because the Internet is immediate.”

According to Langman¹⁷⁵ computer-savvy activists make use of the Internet to start and plan broad dissent activities spectrums that include public protests as well as demonstrations. Further, communication technologies particularly social media like short messaging services (SMS), social-networking sites as well as blogs are collectively, significant new resources for social movements effective planning and execution. Social media related technologies have been used specifically in planning and executing collective activities, in the promotion of a feeling of collective and community identity among marginalized group members. Further, they develop less-restrained political spaces, create links with other social movements, and receive support from other communities worldwide.¹⁷⁶ Cyber activists have the capability to exploit the accelerating social networking effect online to create a social movement that could be changed to an offline community. A Thirty-one year old known as Ahmed Harara explained how before 25 January, he was not specifically politically active, and his dissent did not extend beyond discussions with friends about how dissatisfied they were with the Mubarak regime.¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, a significant change took place after Harara realized that through Facebook that this dissatisfaction was made known to the Egyptian people. Said Harara,

¹⁷⁵ Langman, L. From virtual public spheres to global justice: A critical theory of interworked social movements. *Sociological Theory*, 23, no. 1 (April, 2005), 42–74.

¹⁷⁶ Hachigian, Nina, “The Internet and Power in One-Party East Asian States,” *Washington Quarterly* 25.3 (2002), 41-58.

¹⁷⁷ Lessig, Lawrence, “The Internet Under Siege,” *Foreign Policy* 127 (2001), 56-65.

“But when I saw on Facebook the words ‘The people want the fall of the regime,’ I went down there on the 26th.¹⁷⁸

The new media role as a source of information in developed states is a trend that was identified by the United States government in the year 2009, in the wake of controversial elections in Iran. The then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, issued a request to twitter requesting that they delay their scheduled site maintenance, to allow Iranians to continue their communication through the social site. According to the United States government, this would lead to an increase in access to information from Iran, whom the United States had no official diplomatic relations with for more than 30 years.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, social media plays a significant role as a source of information to civilians. From the interviews, social media also helps governments to gain potential diplomatic information.¹⁸⁰ The social media provided political and social movements in more traditional ways by providing political expression opportunities, collective actors’ symbolic identification, and information exchange.¹⁸¹ A study conducted by Della Porta and Mosca¹⁸² found that that Internet-based communication technologies provide a considerable additional resource for social movements planned and executed by “resource poor” actors, providing a mass communication means that may have previously been restricted by financial, spatial and temporal constraints.

¹⁷⁸ Schmidt, Eric, and Jared Cohen, “The Digital Disruption: Connectivity and the Power of Diffusion,” *Foreign Affairs* 89.6 (2010), 75-86.

¹⁷⁹ Newmyer, Jacqueline, “The Revolution in Military Affairs with Chinese Characteristics,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33.4 (2010), 483-504.

¹⁸⁰ Interview by this researcher with Kathy Vaughan specialist and coach in international conflict management in the MENA countries on 11th of September 2015

¹⁸¹ Litan, Robert E., “The Internet Economy,” *Foreign Policy* 123 (2001), 16-24.

¹⁸² Della Porta, D., & Mosca, L. Global-net for global movements? A network of networks for a movement of movements. *Journal of Public Policy*, 25, no. 1, (May, 2005), 165–190.

A final element to address is the ways in which social media, whether intentionally or unintentionally raised awareness of the ongoing revolution in Egypt in the international community. The significant role played by social networking tools for the continuation of political mobilization was evident when Google and Twitter came together to provide “Speak2Tweet” services after Mubarak regime shut down Internet access in Egypt.¹⁸³ A Lebanese technology entrepreneur, Habib Haddad, teamed up with Twitter and Google and organised about 1,000 translators to translate tweets that were in Arabic language into English, German and French.¹⁸⁴ What is significant here is the inclusion of developed powerful non-state, transnational actors in Egypt domestic politics. By this time, no Western state had intervened in the revolution, but the activists continued with their plans against the state by use of the instrumental digital media corporations.

4.7 The Dialects of Social Media

Just like globalization influences various actors in different ways, the internet too influences various actors in different ways. From the interviews, the ultimate mistake made by cyber-idealists is to assume that the internet is a one-directional force for either global oppression or liberation, for xenophobia or cosmopolitanism, when actually the Internet can allow all these forces to succeed online.¹⁸⁵ When the internet is used as a pro-democracy tool in democratic nations, it is paramount to consider that there are no two states that can react to the Internet in the same way. Although all un-free societies are

¹⁸³ Lessig, Lawrence, “The Internet Under Siege,” *Foreign Policy* 127 (2001), 56-65.

¹⁸⁴ Schmidt, Eric, and Jared Cohen, “The Digital Disruption: Connectivity and the Power of Diffusion,” *Foreign Affairs* 89.6 (2010), 75-86.

¹⁸⁵ Interview by this researcher with Stella Mang’era, a communication specialist with the ministry of foreign affairs in Kenya on 11th of September 2015

similar, each un-free society is considered un-free in its own way.¹⁸⁶ In the North Africa Revolutions, it was evident that although activists in Tunisia and Egypt were apparently able to make use of the social networking benefits. In other Arab nations like Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, activists who tried to duplicate strategies used by the Egyptian activists were quickly stopped by state security forces.

The Tunisian and Egyptian examples illustrate the extent to which social networking is utilized in voicing political dissent. In the year 2009, Twitter was used as a platform for protest in Iran after the controversial President Ahmadinejad election.¹⁸⁷ The United States government praised the Green Movement for its extensive use of social media sites in spreading democratic sentiment that fit nicely with Western policies and motives. Nevertheless, few months after the election, the Green Movement lost its course. This clearly shows the difficulty of maintaining an online activism and changing it into an offline platform.¹⁸⁸

In the year 2011, the social media networking capabilities were used in the riots in London. Actually, the riots in London are similar to the Egyptian uprising besides the use of social media. Both, the riots in London and the uprising in Egypt, were started by the unjustified death of young men. In Egypt, the Khaled Said murder by the police in Egypt led to the development of a Facebook page "*We Are All Khaled Said*" that later became crucial in the organization of the protests.¹⁸⁹ In London, Mark Duggan shooting by the

¹⁸⁶ Schmidt, Eric, and Jared Cohen, "The Digital Disruption: Connectivity and the Power of Diffusion," *Foreign Affairs* 89.6 (2010), 75-86.

¹⁸⁷ Newmyer, Jacqueline, "The Revolution in Military Affairs with Chinese Characteristics," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33.4 (2010), 483-504.

¹⁸⁸ Litan, Robert E., "The Internet Economy," *Foreign Policy* 123 (2001), 16-24.

¹⁸⁹ Newman, Abraham L., "Building Transnational Civil Liberties: Trans governmental Entrepreneurs and the European Data Privacy Directive," *International Organization* 62.1 (2008), 103-130.

police led to riots that eventually developed into looting. In addition, in both cases the governments responded by attempting to shut down access to these social media sites. In Egypt, this led to a nationwide Internet blackout that did very little to suppress protesters.¹⁹⁰ In London, David Cameron indicated that he was ready to use whatever means to stop the unrest. This included banning the use of social media sites like Twitter and Facebook.¹⁹¹ This comparison shows the significance of context when judging the potential of social media and the internet as a force for good. In this example, the social networking tools that were earlier considered as forces for entrenching and promoting democracy by Western countries governments were treated as forces of fuelling civil unrest in London.

Another wrong assumption made by cyber-idealists is the treatment of the Internet as a worldwide remedy for all political problems, particularly when it comes to authoritarian regimes. This portrays the Internet as a tool lacking a handle, for even though it is seen to have enormous liberating potential, it is utilizing this potential and translating it into political reality that proves to be far harder to accomplish.¹⁹² Therefore, in such situations context must be considered. However, different contexts portray different problems and hence are in need of custom-made strategies and solutions.¹⁹³ In the Egyptian uprisings context, social media played a role in the organization of the protests and bringing to the attention of the outside world voices that had earlier not been

¹⁹⁰ Litan, Robert E., "The Internet Economy," *Foreign Policy* 123 (2001), 16-24.

¹⁹¹ Newman, Abraham L., "Building Transnational Civil Liberties: Trans governmental Entrepreneurs and the European Data Privacy Directive," *International Organization* 62.1 (2008), 103-130.

¹⁹² Luttwak, Edward N., "Power Relations in the New Economy," *Survival* 44.2 (2002), 7-17.

¹⁹³ Persaud, Avinash, "The Knowledge Gap," *Foreign Affairs* 80.2 (2001), 107-117.

given a dissent platform.¹⁹⁴ Nevertheless, several years after the revolution, protests continue and the activists were in the streets years ago are still unsatisfied. Most of the Western countries efforts to enhance the use of the internet in the fight against authoritarian regimes could best be considered as trying to use a poor and wrong cure in the treatment of a disease.¹⁹⁵ From the interviews, the problems in Egypt that have led to civil unrest are deep-seated economic and political issues that cannot be solved alone by the use of the Internet and social sites, though they play a role in the strengthening of pro-democracy movements.¹⁹⁶

4.8 Conclusion

The chapter has analysed the factors, dynamics and mechanisms of social media as a significant tool in mobilizing political actors within the context of the North Africa's revolution. In addition to resources like a motivated citizenry and the availability of transportation to gather in mass, a significant resource for the Arab Spring revolution that was utilized effectively was social media. While one cannot argue that this was an Internet revolution, social media technologies represent an important instrumental resource that contributed to the birth and sustainability of the revolution. Revolution dimensions and governments response demonstrate the opportunities provided by social media for mobilizing, organizing and implementing social movements in large scale. In addition, the social media use assisted in drawing local and international attention to activities that otherwise would have been shielded from public. Digital media can change

¹⁹⁴ Reynolds, Glenn Harlan, "The Blogs of War," *National Interest* 75 (2004), 59-64.

¹⁹⁵ Murphy, Emma C., "Theorizing ICTs in the Arab World: Informational Capitalism and the Public Sphere," *International Studies Quarterly* 53.4 (2009), 1131-1153.

¹⁹⁶ Interview by this researcher with Valerie Rugene from the ministry of foreign affairs on 16th of September 2015

the social environments by getting rid of the boundaries between public and private sphere, which leads to new and different social conceptions. It also undermines the traditional relationship between social situation and physical setting. Social media could bring the diffusion between private and public to yet another level by not only presenting an opinion but also enabling for direct interaction. The next chapter contains the summary, key findings and recommendation of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusion as well as suggested recommendations addressing the role of new media within the citizenry participation in governance. Social media played an important role in the revolutions that have struck the North African countries since December 2010. In Egypt, activists and protestors had been engaged since the year 2009 in online debates and discussions on socio-political conditions that eventually became a full-force revolution. The planning, debating, planning and organizing of the revolution was not in itself, but the communication means used to communicate and execute the revolution represents a significant new resource for collective action. Social media presented an important resource that offered swiftness in the receiving and dissemination of information; helped in the building and strengthening ties among activists and increased communication and interaction among protestors and between the protestors and the outside world.¹⁹⁷ Information on the events that led to the protests was spread through social media sites. In addition, sympathy and encouragement provided through social media sites boosted and inspired Egyptian protestors, who were linked not only to each other, but also to the Tunisian protestors, the outside world and Egyptians abroad.

The North African revolution, therefore, demonstrates the opportunities provided by social media for mobilizing, organizing and implementing social movements in large-scale. In addition, the use of social media helped the protestors in drawing both

¹⁹⁷ Newman, Abraham L., "Building Transnational Civil Liberties: Transgovernmental Entrepreneurs and the European Data Privacy Directive," *International Organization* 62.1 (2008), 103-130.

international and local attention to activities that otherwise would have been shielded from public. Social media improved interactivity and speed of communication that was not possible with the reliance on traditional mobilization resources like telephones, brochures and faxes.¹⁹⁸ As indicated by one of the Tunisian protesters, social media use in the extension of a movement's reach is a powerful way of gaining outside validation and counter a movements pressure. After paying attention to the Tunisia's activists who had succeeded in ousting their president, Egyptian activists were able to distribute a continuous stream of information like, videos, images and short messages from the revolution streets directly to millions of people through social media sites, and indirectly via republication of this information in news networks like CNN and Al Jazeera.¹⁹⁹

The political theory and the principles of intentional relations can help in the understanding of the Egyptian revolution and other social and political and movements in terms of resources and influential contexts. Mostly due to ubiquity and the potential for disseminating messages to massive global audiences, social media sites may be considered as important, instrumental resources for social change and collective action.²⁰⁰ It is important to consider the powerful impact of external factors, specifically the social, historical and political contexts of the movement and the interplay and availability of resources like social media, and the efficacy of actors in the utilization of available resources to meet their goals.

Even though some scholars believe that resource mobilization theory is past its prime, and even though research on the utilization of social media in social movements is

¹⁹⁸ Luttwak, Edward N., "Power Relations in the New Economy," *Survival* 44.2 (2002), 7-17.

¹⁹⁹ Luttwak, Edward N., "Power Relations in the New Economy," *Survival* 44.2 (2002), 7-17.

²⁰⁰ Persaud, Avinash, "The Knowledge Gap," *Foreign Affairs* 80.2 (2001), 107-117.

still in its infancy, their combined use would draw on the endurance and strength of the theory while updating it for contemporary times.

5.2 Conclusion

Political developments in the recent past in North Africa that started in 17th December 2010 in Tunisia, caught Europe and the United States unaware. In some ways we continue to search for exceptional reasons to explain the unexpected. Consequently, there has been a lot of focus on one distinguishing feature of these political movements, namely the prominent use of social media in organising and broadcasting the protests. However overblown claims and corresponding scepticism surround discussions around social media's role and actual impact. These were not 'Facebook or Twitter revolutions' and it is deeply unhelpful to frame them either analytically or discursively as such. This can be considered to be a reflection of an Orientalist view that the region was in slumber and woken up by Western technology. This is considered as a political, disingenuous and ex post facto re-configuring a positive role for the Western countries in a region where the Western countries has historically supported the regimes that the activists were fighting against. In addition, the use of social media tools is a problem to those seeking an understanding of how social media changes the authoritarian countries politics. One of the most important things is how people operationalized these new social media tools in their environment. It is by evaluating the wider context of each of the countries, the preconditions, wider media sphere and in specifically how activists used the virtual world in the creation of a new political space, that we can really understand the impact of social media. North AFRICA Developments offer the first real-world case-study to examine the much-hypothesised role of social media in the change of politics.

The agenda-setting effect of the modern news media is specifically strong in democracies where political leaders and governments are competing for potential re-election and public approval. This, however, does not mean that authoritarian states are immune to negative publicity. In contrast, even though the public might have less to say about a state's foreign policy or any other policy matter, authoritarian rulers are mostly dependent on the loyalty of a section of their population. These types of nations also rely on the support of foreign powers in order to survive political boycotts, economic sanctions or other measures taken by the international community. However, even the Western countries and other large powers cannot support a regime associated with the commitment if extreme atrocities in the international media. Therefore, this leads to the use of state propaganda extensively, news manipulation as well as continuous attempts to control the flow of information out of the nation in authoritarian.

The events in the North Africa revolution have promoted a budding dialogue on the role played by social media and networking in political mobilization for pro-democracy movements and regime change. Some authors and politicians have accepted social media as a great undeniable force, indicating that democracy is barely a tweet away.²⁰¹ In the Arab revolution, the Internet was considered an effective tool of the weak against their authoritarian regimes and leaders.

The use of new media in the revolution of North Africa demonstrates how social networking characteristics can be enhanced to achieve collective political actions goals, while also considering the importance of historical and cultural context. The findings emphasize the essential dialectic nature of the Internet and social media, aiming to avoid a technologically deterministic perspective that describes the Internet as a force strictly

²⁰¹ Persaud, Avinash, "The Knowledge Gap," *Foreign Affairs* 80.2 (2001), 107-117.

for either oppression or liberation. Even though there were some underlying historical factors and socio-economic issues that played a vital role in fuelling the 2011 revolutions, they cannot be fully appreciated or understood without looking at the unprecedented role of social networking in both the facilitation of the actual events of the uprisings and bringing them to international attention in real time. Even though, it is correct to say that revolutions will take place despite technology and internet existence.

The social media played a very significant role in the initiation of the revolution. Many people in the North Africa countries were making use of social networking sites. This implies that the revolution initiators had audience who had subscribed to these sites. From social media responses most of the citizens in the North Africa countries like Egypt and Tunisia were not happy with the current regimes. Egypt, Morocco, Libya and Morocco have been under authoritarian regimes for a very long time but the public could not express their opinions of fight for democracy.

By use of the social media, the protestors and activists in these countries had a chance of expressing their dissatisfaction with the authoritarian rule. Through privacy and anonymity provided by use of social media, individuals were capable of expressing their views and opinions and proceed with human rights fights. One of the major roles of social media sites that became evident during the revolution is the ability to use social media a tool for advocating for change, expressing opinions and views and fighting for human rights. These roles were enabled by the fact that most of social media tools content is user-generated.

The facilitation of the revolution is another major role played by social media in the recent political revolutions. This is clear in the dubbing of new-borns “Facebook” in

Egypt due to the way the social networking sites helped in the facilitation of the protests in the Jan25 revolution. The mobilization social media impact is also evident in many other North Africa countries that experienced the revolution. The demonstrations in Tunisia were organized by the utilization of the social media (mostly Facebook). The demonstrations and protests in North Africa were motivated by use of Facebook campaigns that were driven by the resistance of the youth named “April 6 Youth Movement”. The campaign led to thousands of responses calling for opposition against the government policies.

Information concerning the protests was spread fast through the media. This caused the message of the revolution to be spread not only in the Arab World but in other parts of the world. This implies that citizens from all over the world can possibly offer support or participate. There is evidence showing that social media disseminated a lot of messages about democracy and freedom across the Middle East and North Africa, and helped in raising expectations for the political uprising success. Although mass unrest’s political contexts in most of parts of the North Africa have significant nation and macro-regional particulars, the social tools and net-based technologies impact surpasses that region and will continue to impacting developed and developing nations in the same way. As a result of the use of social media, the revolution was felt the world over.

The media made it possible for people from different parts of the world to take part in the revolution virtually. Because of the use of the social media, the revolution spread in a manner that was not thought as being possible before. Besides playing a role in initiating the revolution, dissemination of information regarding it was a greater influence. The media had an active role in broadcasting the demands of the protestors all

over the world. The media played an important role in social and political change, not only in the societies which had the protests, but in many other countries around the world. This generally means that the media is a powerful and strong force for social and political transformation.

In nations such as Egypt and Tunisia, governments put a lot of efforts to throttle the efforts of the protestors. The governments tried to block the use of the internet, censor the internet, and introduce malware among other efforts to discourage the revolution. The nature of the social media hindered their efforts. Even the efforts by the government were made known to the people through the use of the media. Slogans used in mocking the efforts of the government included “Free From 404.” This is an internet language for ‘file not found.’ Creation of such awareness made the protests worse.

5.3 Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were be made:

There is need to appreciate, strengthen and adopt a transformative methods of governance and political structure. The preconditions for political change, including societal support, were much broader than the demographic picture of highly educated youth depicted in Western media. What is counterintuitive is that even though the events were portrayed as being initiated and driven by young as well as educated citizens, there was a much greater support base for political change in Tunisia and Egypt from most of unemployed less educated and older citizens. Social media, in strengthening the voice of small categories of the population, possibly skewed greater media representations in the West that was protesting in North Africa.

There should be a synergy between the old media and the new media in the creation of a resilient, better connected and stronger information system for a wider liberalization of socio-economic and political developments. This is important because the traditional media was as important as the social media in changing the flow of information.

Portraying both the old and new media as competitors or rivals is not accurate. It is more suitable to depict them as working in synergy as a resilient, better networked and stronger information system.

It is essential to appreciate the significance of the stage of preparation and the role played by political entrepreneurs in the development of strategies to ensure social media effective use. Even though social media use was mostly visible in the protests' escalation phase, its crucial role was at the preparation phase, years before the revolution. The social media transformative power creates a low-risk virtual political space in nations characterized by little or no freedom of expression or association. The political leadership nature is different in the virtual space. The role played by political entrepreneurs in the development of strategies for social media effective use is paramount in the successful utilization of these tools at the initiation and escalation phases of a revolution.

Governments need to revise and update their communication methods and analytical frameworks and be involved with a wider set of civil society actors. Even though these events emphasize the limited western influence's nature and affected region's levers, they outline the necessity for a collaborative western policy in a revised Africa and authoritarian regimes understanding.

Through the facilitation of deliberative political processes, social media can play a supportive role in the post-regime phase. There is evidence that far from being a natural event fuelled by technology, the story of North Africa countries is one of the disciplined civil resistance movement's agencies through preparation, ignition, escalation and post-regime. Social media played a great in the preparation phase by changing the political opportunity revolution structures. Social media had a strengthening impact during the ignition phase, by enabling the trigger to go viral. The use of social media is likely to be a relatively important feature of future political activism across the world and has changed the communications environment for all actors.

North Africa events have put renewed emphasis on international internet freedom policies. The levers of western government are limited, but include the promotion of international dialogue to openness agree standards; supporting multilateral organisations to diversify and strengthen the infrastructure national telecommunications internationally; and use of sanctions and incentives. The understanding and response of Western governments to the political change process will need to reflect developments in the power balance between citizens and authoritarian regimes. Western foreign policy implications comprise of risk monitoring, analytical frameworks revision and updating; engagement in a wider set of civil society actors that require a policy toolkit and modern diplomatic skillset for effective intervention in the four phases of political revolutions; and more closely engagement with Diasporas and other interested domestic-based groups.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Questionnaire for the Embassies' Staff in Kenya

Please give answers in the spaces provided and tick (✓) the box that matches your response to the questions where applicable.

Section I: GENERAL INFORMATION

1) Gender (tick as appropriate)

a) Female () b) Male ()

2) What is your age bracket? (tick as appropriate)

Under 20 years [] 21 – 30 years [] 31 – 40 years [] 41 – 50 years []

Over 50 years []

3) Length of time working in the embassy? (tick as appropriate)

Less than one year [] 2-5 years [] 6-10 years [] Over 10 years []

4) Country of origin

Tunisia []

Egypt []

Libya []

Morocco []

Other country [] please specify.....

5) Which of the following best describes your position?

Clerk [] Diplomat [] Government Official [] Other

(Please State) _____

Section II: Role of Social Media in the Revolution

6. Do you support the assertion that social media contributed to Arab spring?

Yes [] No []

7. To what extent do you believe social media affected the government of the day?

Very great extent [] Great extent [] Moderate extent []

Low extent [] No extent []

8. According to you which social media platform was widely used in the uprising in your country?

.....
.....
.....

9. To what extent did the leadership of your country limit the use of social media by internet black out?

Very great extent [] Great extent [] Moderate extent []

Low extent [] No extent []

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND PARTICIPATION

Appendix II: Interview Guide

1. Kindly state you job category

Ministry officials []

Government representative []

Immigration personnel []

2. Country of origin

Tunisia []

Egypt []

Libya []

Morocco []

Other country [] please specify.....

3. How do you understand the role of social media in political revolution process?

.....
.....
.....

4. How did your government enact policies to counter social media revolution?

.....
.....
.....

5. Kindly describe the challenges faced during the revolution.

.....
.....
.....

6. Briefly describe the complimentary approaches effective in collaborating the media and social media in governance

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.....
.....

