Chapter 103

Political Information, Political Power, and People Power:
New Media and New Social Movements in the Arab Spring

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the concept of new media in the Arab world and how politics in the information age has changed Arab politics and moved citizens to the streets. However, the evolution of new media social networks and the cause of political information in particular during the revolution is not studied alone. In fact, the evolution of the Arab Spring and the effects of new media social networks are taken into account by exploring how politics in the information age has influenced Arab citizens and allowed them to use information for the greater good and established such a new social movement. This chapter takes the Arab Spring as a case study and an empirical example to understand the transnational protests and global movements, the concept of global media and global politics in the case of the Arab Spring, new media and new politics regarding the Arab Spring, and city and street and public sphere as people power in the information age. Finally, the chapter distinguishes between the new social movements through social networks and the roles of ICTs to aim revolution and whether such a revolution will erupt without new media social networks.

ARAB SPRING AND TRANSNATIONAL PROTESTS

The so-called "Arab Spring" has ultimately introduced a new perception regarding Arab Middle Eastern politics, society and culture. It is shaping a new environment of new Arab politics and new Arab cultures in such a way as to decentralize the

hegemony of the state and shift the power to the people, empowering citizens to take matters into their own hands and make their own decisions. While the Arab Spring has primarily affected Arab politics, it has also affected society and economics. The politics in the information age reflect the politics of the street. The protests and movements of the Arab Spring uprisings have permitted citizens

to spread political information, which is something new to the Arab world. The amount of political information among citizens allows the latter to be more aware of and knowledgeable about politics. Additionally, citizens became more active via grassroots movements, sharing information and ideas and providing alternative and sometimes more credible information and sources as a form of democracy.

In the context of the Arab Spring, the world has been witness to unprecedented uprisings throughout the Arab World. Who would have imagined that a poor, young Tunisian fruit and vegetable vendor would immolate himself in order to lead the Arab world in a moment of awakening, a revolution that began in December 2010? The so-called "Arab Spring" brought about a new perception regarding media, mass communications and new media social networks, as well as the widespread of political information and how they affect societies and new forms of politics. The new media social networks play a significant role in the Arab Revolution; social networks lead societies and citizens into activism. While the debate regarding the influential aspects of new media social networks existed before the "Arab Spring," it is crucial to learn how the new media has led the recent Arab revolution. The big debate has been with regard to whether it was a Twitter and Facebook revolution or a Human revolution, and it has become necessary to evaluate these factors of the Arab Spring uprisings.

This chapter seeks to understand the concept of new media in the Arab world and how politics in the information age has changed Arab politics and moved citizens to the streets. However, the evolution of new media social networks and the cause of political information in particular during the revolution will not be studied alone. In fact, the evolution of the Arab Spring and the effects of new media social networks will be taken into account, by exploring how politics in the information age

has influenced Arab citizens and allowed them to use information for the greater good.

Moreover, these new media landscapes channeled into collective activism during the uprisings and brought people out onto the streets. The spread of political information has been permitted to increase in the age of technology. Mobile phones, for example, were used as a means of communication and played a significant role in enabling citizens to prepare for the rebellions; this made the rebellions possible and increased their strength and inclusiveness (Dalacoura, 2012). Furthermore, the Arab Spring is not only about people in the Arab world; the events of the Arab Spring represent the impact that the new global media platforms have on people's abilities to connect and communicate. It is evidence of global solidarity, global citizen activism, and civic engagement; journalists, for instance, using social media, became closer to their readers; because the journalists updated the events of the revolutions as they were happening, they enabled people to know what was happening at all times without the usual delay. We can see how journalists made some errors in their writing because they wrote on the fly without any reviewers or editors, but they played a key role in the shaping of public space for information (Schattle, 2012). The role of social media is to allow people to go out into the street; it is a grassroots organization aimed at political mobilization. Therefore, politics in the information age are not only affected through regimes' authority but also through both people and information power.

In the current uprisings, the global information infrastructure has impacted the structure of information in the Arab world and decentralized the power of information monopoly and information hegemony. Thus, in order to change Arab politics, the structure of Internet connectedness is examined by analyzing issues related to global connectedness, civil society, transnational activ-

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