Abstract

Media landscape the world over in general and the Middle eastern region in particular has been under going a rampant change from being a tool in the hands of totalitarian regimes to being a tool of awaking the masses to the ground realtities in current digital age. Communication technologies, traditional, print, broadcast and social media have been described not only as a value of our times-echoing an ideal for social transparency and communality-but also a threat in terms of global domination. This has led to a lot of debate in the academia and other circles as to whether all forms of media were to a great extent responsible for empowering the masses to fight the authoritarian regimes during the protest/resistance movements like Hong Kong pro-democracy protests by university students, Occupy the Wall Street movement and The Arab Spring which rocked the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region.

The Arab Spring is a term which is used to explain a revolution that took place in the Arab world, especially in many parts MENA region. It started on the 18th of December 2010. It took place because people were not pleased with how the local governments operated and how there was a huge gap between the income levels of the common people as compared to the ruling class. (Javid 2012: 2). The people considered the politicians and the government officials to be corrupt. They were also angry at the increasing food prices and violations of their human rights by he authoritarian regimes. Other causes of the Arab Spring include, high rate of unemployment and rising poverty levels.

Other factors which contributed were the fact that some heads of states were authoritarian (like Egypt, Tunisia, Libya) and misused their powers to subdue their own people and quell any forms of dissent or protest. The people used different measures to show that they were not happy with the government and its officials. They organized riots and protest camps to show their dissatisfaction and frustration. The aim of the Arab Spring was to achieve democracy which will allow their voices to be heard and their human rights to be safeguarded. The masses wanted jobs to support their families. The causes of the protest movement in every Arab country were different, starting with public self-immolations (Tunisia, Egypt) and tribal loyalities (Yemen, Libya) and discrimination against minorities (Saudi Arabia ).

Protests demonstrated discontent of the people of the Arab world with rising cost of living, unemployment against the backdrop of corruption of the ruling regimes, which reached alarming level. Authoritarian regimes for a long time created the illusion of social stability and the ruling family clans, losing contact with the people, ignoring the growth of serious internal contradictions, so were not able to assess the threat and adequately respond to them.

This research paper examines how the efforts of the ordinary people in the Arab ‘street’ to move away with compliance and toleration from authoritarian regimes, also allowed them, once the opportunity arose, to invest in and use media to change politics “from below’ The media acted as a powerful accelerant facilitating the events in ways that were crucial.

Key words: Media landscape, Authoritarian regimes; Resistance Movements; Communication Technologies, Empowerment.

Introduction

In the Arab world, media and communication just not only convey the ideas and images that circulated and consumed widely in the globalized communication flow. Key thing is also relates with it that media now entered in every day for becoming part of conviviality and sociability. The internet technology is basically used to support between the protesting group and this is strategically augmented by the utilization of proper media networks that eager of supply steady supply of presentable items on the potential crises due to their ceaseless broadcasts.
Samin, (2012) analyze that, Arab upspring produced to numerous instances of regimes trying to censor and contain the images flow by pulling and plugging internet, telecommunication, monitoring and work disruption. The social capabilities movement has shown their capabilities that can be easily seen through the transition of protesting group from the reactive forces to change within the ideological paradigm towards the cultural movement that can set the agendas to seeing an ability to influence perception of public about what things happens in their surroundings.

Furthermore, the social movement campaign is now the structured all around the technologies communication world. This medium affects the message and often creates its own shape. The success or failure of movement is quite relying on the deception of media that have their own certain campaign. Rather than become perceived on any particular outcome. Attitudes of public are swayed on the images. Media is utilizing and creates transferable emotiveness all around the political event in order to create moral frame.

Web based communication have most probably used by the young generation that literates the activists across the Middle East for three major purposes: leverage, organization and exposure. Roy (2012) found earlier that Media played a democratizing role in the political run-up in the 2011 Arab upspring that looks the western democracies arguably forms an unspoken backdrop in the western entertainment and the satellite channels of news. Communication technologies help in developing relationships that surpass cultural, political, social, geographical, and racial barriers. These sites significantly affect the social interactions between communities and individuals, either globally or locally. In addition to e-mail and information search, social media sites have emerged as one of the most popular activities performed online. The affect of the social media websites are observed to by increasing number of people who are constantly joining them across the globe (Arora, 2008a, b). Across the globe, there are hundreds of social media websites that support a broad range of activities, practices, and interest. These websites also differ in the degree to which they have incorporated and integrated communication and information tools, such as blogging, video-sharing, photo-sharing, and mobile connectivity.

Problem Statement

The aim for this research is to analyze the role of all forms of media especially social media in the social uprisings. Since, social media has significantly emerged as an important communication and information sharing tool, the research also focuses on the changing media landscape from being a tool for hegemony to being a tool for awakening liberal mindsets among the masses.

Problem Definition and Significance of the Study

Today social media is not just a website; rather it has become the voice of people almost from every nation. It is playing a vital role in speeding up the distribution of news and information and thus making a difference today. The political, intellectual, and social foundations of the Middle East were shook by the events begin in Tunisia in January 2011 and spread to Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Morocco, Jordan, Syria, and beyond (Pollack, 2012). This political and social upheaval is known as ‘Arab Spring’, and the social media played an important role in its upheaval.

The tide of mass protests that cleared through the Middle East in early 2011 highlighted the distinctive part of contemporary information communication technologies (ICT) and digital social media networks and tools. The effect of these innovations was felt globally, influencing both advanced and developing countries. While the "Arab Spring" indicated a sensation of new mass types of sociopolitical objection assisted by social media as non-violent protest, especially with respect to their communication and organizational viewpoints, it should have produced some major reservations about the pertinence of any "immediate lessons" to other provincial and sociopolitical contexts as well (Stepanova, 2011).

After analyzing more than 3 million tweets, thousand of posts on the blog and gigabytes of YouTube content, a new study discovers that social media played an essential role in shaping political discussions in the Arab spring. Conversations related to revolution often preceded key events on the
ground, and social media extended inspirational stories of protest across transnational borders (Howard, Duffy, & Mazaid, 2011).

Social media and ICT had little to do with the fundamental socioeconomic and sociopolitical factors behind the movement of protest in the Arab Spring. The protests that took place on the social media worked as an alternative to violence which was kick started by a campaign on Facebook run by the opposition “April 6th Youth Movement”, which produced thousand of positive reactions and replies to the call to unite against the government policies. The consequence of this result was seen as an evidence for the first time confirming social media’s significant role in the Arab Spring (Stepanova, 2011).

Research Questions

• What role did different forms of media play in Protest Movements?
• What is the importance of media in the Arab world?
• How do media websites influence the perception of people in Arab world?
• What was the role played by social media in the Arab spring uprising in Egypt?

Literature Review

Emergence of Social Media

According Haenlin and Kaplan (2010), the concept of social media is nothing new in the area of communication technologies. The emergence of social media type networks dated back to around late 1950s, when Bruce and Susan started an early social network site with the name Open Diary, which was developed for bringing online diary writers together at one platform as a community (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It was also around this time the term "weblog" was developed, which was later shortened to the term "blog" used today (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In recent years, the concept of social networking has begun to proliferate. MySpace prominently occurred in 2003, shortly followed by Facebook in 2004 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). During the second quarter of 2008, around seventy-five percent of Internet users participated in various form of social networking, and as of January 2009 Facebook had registered more than 175 million users (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Adopting Communication Technologies

Internet has emerged as one of the widely and rapidly adopted technologies in the history of our society (Goodman et al., 1998; Rogers, 2003). According to Rogers (2003), acceptance of certain innovative media is most significantly related to the adoption of various other technologies (p.477). Different interactive mediums, like teleconferencing, e-mail, television, and now social media networks are considered to be creating a relationship as interactive communication technologies. As stated by Rogers (2003), such types of interactive information technology depict a distinctive characteristic in terms of rate of adoption which is known as critical mass. “The critical mass occurs at the point at which enough individuals in a system have adopted an innovation so that the innovation's further rate of adoption becomes self-sustaining” (Rogers, 2003, p. 343).

The very nature of interactive media creates interdependence among adopters. “An interactive innovation is of little use to an adopting individual unless other individuals with whom the adopter wishes to communicate also adopt” (Rogers, 2003, p. 343). Further, interactive communication technologies possess a reciprocal interdependence in that “the benefits from each additional adoption of an interactive innovation increase not only for future adopters, but also for each previous adopter” (Rogers, 2003, p. 344).

Changing Media Landscape

Social media, or preferred by some of the population as social networking sites, is at utmost today in all parts of the world due to continuous developments in new technologies, specifically computer technology as well as because of the non-stop searching and seeking activities of humans for faster and easiest means of communicating and socializing (Dellarocas, 2003, 1424). While the reasons for the recent, prodigious increase in popularity are varied, online social networking has been in
existence for as long as computers have had networking capabilities. In fact, the formation of the Internet itself has always centered on the idea of a community as the first email discussion list was created in 1975, followed by USENET bulletin board discussions that came into existence in the late 1970's. These developments have since fostered individual bulletin board systems, instant messaging, and most recently, “blogging” and online communities that incorporate a “personal ad” style, like facebook.com and myspace.com (Richard & Moore, 2004, 56).

Although the factors behind the meteoric rise in popularity of online social networks are varied, the changes in communication practices that have resulted can not be denied. In an age where TiVo and pop-up blockers have hit the advertising world hard by allowing would-be audiences an escape route from exposure to advertisements, many companies are now looking to online communities as an innovative, fresh, and “hip” way of targeting particular demographics with perfectly tailored messages (Kotler & Gerald, 2002, 554). Social media functions significantly to all countries such as Korea, which is known for the most numbered Internet users worldwide, Indonesia, the country with the second largest population in Facebook, one of the social networking sites, USA and Japan which are the competing countries in terms of technology and Arab world, which is the main concern of this paper.

Social media networking websites have become a habit and are infused in the life of people throughout the world. It is considered by a number of people as a website where people can share their personal information, ideas and views can use them as a means of communication, way to propagate globalization, participation and interaction with different people in various countries across the globe (Rich, 2002, 145). Unlike radio programs, television shows, and newspapers, social media is focused on sharing personal details, information and thoughts that connect millions of people throughout the world. Most popular social media networking tools are Twitter, YouTube, Formsspring, Facebook, Blogs and Flickr which facilitate fast paced creation and exchange of personal details and ideas more than any traditional and conventional media. The social media is explained in various forms by many researchers, one of the definitions state that any mobile based or Internet-based technology that promotes social sharing and interaction of user-generated content. This also includes blogs and microblogs, like Twitter, social networking websites like Facebook, and video sharing websites like YouTube (Al-Jassem, 2010).

In the 21st century era was filled with the advanced methods of communication enveloped with faster delivery, accessibility and reliability. People around the world communicate through the use of various techniques that are cost and time efficient. One of these methods is through the use of social media which are delivered and utilized through the Internet - the most powerful and influential tool of the new millennium. Egypt, like any other country, is not alienated from the modernized and influential tool of the social media.

Social Media Tools for Sharing

Online forums are the most comprehensive of social media tools. They typically do not limit the length of materials and current web technologies already allow users to post videos or audio clips on a forum post (Matthew, 2010, 25). Forums also enable mutual and multilateral communication. There are two kinds of forums for games: an official forum that is built and maintained by a company for a particular game or game series, and an independent forum that is established by players or third-party media covering a wider range of topics.

Twitter and YouTube are social media tools that are best used for content sharing. These tools have limited functions due to their specific formats. Twitter has a 140-character limit for tweets and YouTube is a video-only format. Because of these limitations, Twitter and YouTube can only provide incomplete information, although they have the ability to quickly and widely disperse information. Therefore, the main purpose of these tools is to quickly spread information to players and act as the gateway to lead players to destination sources.

In a study conducted by Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2007) of college age students who were users of MySpace and Facebook, the researchers found that a significant number of students used these sites daily for various social needs. This use included keeping up with old and current friends, posting and viewing pictures, making new friends, seeking out old friends, learning about events, posting
social functions, and feeling socially connected. They found an equal number of men and women partook in social networking activities, which held true for most other ethnic groups. The researchers also found that the use of social networking sites had a direct impact on individuals’ state of social well being.

Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2007) stated that online communication creates relationship building, which improves communication between users, and consistently records male and female generational differences in online communication. Moreover, Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2007) declared that further research needs to go into the areas of social networking sites in regards to the use among college students, characteristics of the typical user, as well as the personal and social needs obtained from the use of these sites.

Social media significantly have taken a constant place in our live. Majority of people consider it to be easier for them to communicate and reach their friends or family through social media and that is mostly on daily basis. This shows that people consider social media as one of the most essential part in their lives for sharing their view, communicating with family friends, and communicating ideas on mass level. Through Facebook, people tend to share pictures, interests, read status updates, and share their views about certain occasion or event. Twitter enables people to read other’s status updates which have a limitation of around 140 characters. However, all of these social media networks have their own disadvantages and advantages, but each of the community opens doors for creating an online community containing a huge number of people, which might not be possible to create offline.

According to the theory presented by George Herbert Mead: theory of symbolic interactionism, it is stated that our interactions with communities and individuals tend to shape our identities and also influence our actions and reactions.

Furthermore, online communities and social sites benefit people by offering them diversity, possibility to interact, and stability (Cartarescu, 2010, 84). The idea that online communities are accessible through the Internet and that they are portable, has created a sense of stability among users (Cartarescu, 2010, p.83). Moreover, online communities surpass geography and time zones that might emerge as obstacles in creation of diversified offline communities (Cartarescu, 2010, p.83). The possibilities that online communities provide to create and maintain relationships are almost endless (Cartarescu, 2010, p. 84). In offline communities it is easier for one to be ridiculed or rejected from communities they would like to be part of (Cartarescu, 2010, p. 84). Online, these members have the possibility to find a breadth of communities that they would be accepted into (Cartarescu, 2010, p. 84). The access social network users have to a wide array of communities provides them with opportunities to create their identity and their perception of reality based on interactions within these communities. Online communities also have enabled consumers to be more empowered, which has caused a monumental shift in the advertising world.

Enabling Interactions

Online tools enable distance and asynchronous communication which we believe will be important in bringing groups together. Shirky (2005) has described the economic framing of the group organization problem as a coordination cost issue. In a physical world it is cumbersome to bring students, faculty, and administers together as a group in the same time and place. For example, an institution had to be created to coordinate the activities of the group. Coordination costs, Shirky argued, have decreased due to the Internet. This is supported by Grudin (1994) who noted that the cost of developing, deploying, and maintaining software that supports group behaviour is increasingly less expensive. He claimed that as the cost of developing, deploying, and supporting technology decreases more people have access to these tools in order to communicate. Shirky writes that social media tools are an alternative to institutional organizing because cooperation is embedded in the infrastructure. In other words, group coordination is a by product of the system itself. Our pilot project seeks to leverage the coordination capability of the Internet to connect groups and coordinate group action that would otherwise be a burden.
Role of Media in Influencing Perceptions

With respect to the role played by media in influencing the perception and ranking of different stories and incidents, Aelst and Walgrave (2006) have analysed the political agenda setting power of media and observed that this power varies between different situations and outlets and it acts contingent on various factors, such as the political context and various inputs involved in which this power is practiced. Moreover, Coleman and Wu (2009) have argued that there is a much stronger effect of attributes reporting compared to issues reporting with regard to influencing the public agenda and the general readership. They also observed that the media's reports of the attributes of election candidates, for example, tend to have a high correlation with people's perceptions about the candidates, which reflects the strong impact of these reports.

Furthermore, Luther and Miller (2005) observed that while reporting protests, news media outlets tend to ignore or diminish the significance of those that go against the most dominant political views and those that are held by the political elites. They further stated that the usage of certain legitimizing or delegitimizing keywords in the news stories is a result of these outlets' efforts to influence the public agenda and rank the importance of different issues. Additionally, Reese and Buckalew (1995) found that the effect of agenda-setting of the media efforts tends to be amplified when the media, after influencing people's opinions in the first place, start reporting public opinion.

Number of studies investigated identifying how various influence the coverage that is provided by different platforms of media for specific event. According to the study conducted by Fang (2001) focused on the differences in the way of coverage, carried in two countries, with respect to two different events, by two ideologically opposed newspapers. Coverage done by various media is similar for one event by its is very different for another event or occasion. Fang (2001) attributed the huge divergence in the coverage of the second story to two main factors. The first factor was differences in the diplomatic relations of the reporting countries with the countries in which these events took place. He stated that as the event country had weak diplomatic relations with the country in which one of these newspapers operated, the newspaper was allowed to portray the event in an aggressive way; stronger diplomatic relations motivated the other newspaper to do the exact opposite. The second factor mentioned by Fang was the policies of the newspapers themselves, which he says can play a very important role in influencing how a newspaper will portray any event to the public (Cottle, 2008; Milne, 2005). Fang concluded that the portrayal of foreign protests is highly determined by what he called 'ideological and political opportunism, as well as the obligation to justify the policies adopted by the government' (2001: 611).

Electronic Word of Mouth

With the Internet as an increasing locus for information sharing, users are able to gain incomparable accessibility to information, and are capable of comparing various forms of information like they never did before. It provides an opportunity to interact with people at mass level, in various ways. These interactions and information sharing can be carried through different forums, like homepages, e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms, reviews, newsgroups, video blogs, blogs, online communicates, and social networking websites. Thus, the concept of personal influences has now spread into cyberspace as electronic word of mouth or online interactions (Cheung and Thadani, 2010, 330). Electronic word of mouth can be both firm-sponsored and user-generated. The plethora of communication platforms using the Internet also suggests that the size and nature of social networks, as well as the variety and speed of feedback mechanisms, are significantly different from the offline world, where face-to-face interactions among close ties are common (Wangenheim & Bayón, 2007, 240).

Just like word of mouth, electronic word of mouth has an essential affect on the decision making of majority of the users of the Internet. In their studies, earlier researchers and authors have proved that electronic word of mouth is one of the most prominent media which significantly affect behavior and perceptions of people, including decision-making, judgments, satisfaction, and loyalty. As a result, it is vital to develop an understanding about the amount of consideration is given by the users to the electronic word of mouth and study the reason that influences the users to seek information...
from web-based communities (Wangenheim, Bayón, 2007, 239). Many researchers have started studying the motivations that lead people in getting involved with electronic word of mouth. However, there has been limited research on eWOM communication.

Although, researches show that eWOM (electronic word of mouth) is currently among the most highlighted regions for further research, yet research conducted on this topic is quite fragmented and broad (Söderlund, 2006, 88). The ability of word of mouth to influence the judgements and decisions of people has been popularly accepted by various practitioners and researchers (Matos & Rossi, 2008, 586). With the emergence of Internet, there is an increase in the options for users that are available for the collection of unbiased information from other users, regarding a concept, event, or decision. The growth and popularity of Web 2.0, has brought a new wave in the world of communication. This simultaneously provides an opportunity to the users for sharing their personal experience regarding different concept, events, occasions, products, etc, which sometimes need clarification (Hennig-Thurau, et.al, 2002, 230). Ditcher (1966) has divided and apportioned the psychology of word of mouth in two different paths. First section has addressed the factor that motivates the users for speaking about particular product or event, or occasion, or movement. Second section focuses on addressing the concerning subject that motivate an individual to listen and respond (attitude, purchasing decision making, etc) on the advice of other users.

Media landscape in Middle Eastern region

Social media networks are differentiated from other traditional media as the content generated on social networks is generally user-driven (Smith, 2009). Over the last few years the web has fundamentally shifted towards user-driven technologies such as blogs, social networks and video-sharing platforms. Combined all these social networking communication technologies have allowed a user-generated revolution in term of content that could be shared, creation of communicates globally, and publishing of people’s opinion, which is now uniformly tagged as social media (Smith, 2009, p. 559).

Along with the development of social media and user-driven technologies came the growth of personal influence via cyberspace, known as electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006). Electronic word of mouth has been defined by Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, and Chowdury (2009) as a statement made by actual users, former users, or potential users with respect to a product or company or event, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions through the Internet (p. 2170). There are five basic differences that separate online communication from traditional forms of communication:

- the range of possibilities for information exchange;
- the anonymity and confidentiality inherent to virtual communication;
- the absence of physical cues used to assess others;
- freedom from geographic limitations and time constraints; and
- the permanence of conversations and interactions online (Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006).

Jansen et al. (2009) expressed similar ideas regarding social networking and online communication: “eWOM may be less personal in that it is not face-to-face but it is more powerful because it is immediate, has a significant reach, is credible by being in print, and is accessible by others” (p. 2170).

Awareness, which in turn directly and indirectly affects users’ decisions and reactions, can be influenced by electronic word of mouth (Jansen et al., 2009). It is further reported by Jansen et al. (2009) that in a study done by Park and Lee (2009) it was observed that negative electronic word of mouth has a greater effect than positive electronic word of mouth. Collaboration is an important attribute of social media, and because social networking sites play an essential part in the dissemination of electronic word of mouth, social networking of users will have a significant impact on negative or positive reactions (Jansen et al., 2009).
Arab World and Social Media

Social Media has brought significant revolution and with the dominance of electronic communication, the Arab countries, moved from farming societies and communities, which depended on the generosity of sea and land, to the modern entities in terms of interaction and transmission of information through current and up to date means of communication.

The strict implementation and application of cultural beliefs and customs prohibit many to openly express interactions with each other. Yet, the Arab countries, particularly Egypt, Yemen and Tunisia, have been open to the use of a new and one of the most popular communication platforms, social media. Social Media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Blogs are web-based services that enable individuals inc constructing a semi-public or public profile within a restricted system, coherent a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections might differ from one site to another (Cheung & Thadani, 2010, 329–345).

Human imagination, along with continuously progressing technological developments have developed interdependent relationships and connections which results in various influences on the society. These influences on the society might be either in the form of negative effects or positive ones.

One of the most discussed topics nowadays that has relation to technology and its effects to humankind is the social media. And this statement is indeed true due to the growing and spread of the Internet through mobile phones, wireless Internet location as well as high speed Internet all over the world. In Arab World particularly, internet users have increased 19 times in the last 10 years while mobile cellular subscribers increased almost 50 times Cheung & Thadani, 2010, 329–345). This allowed the improvement of Internet devices that have now incorporated and a necessity for all people's life. With increasing support for social media, the Arab world has been able to communicate and express their feelings, views, sentiments, and perceptions in online communities that were not possible before.

Many scholars are very careful with the use of the term “revolution” in dealing with socio-technical change. According Howard, describing the effect of Information and Communications Technologies in some countries may not be a “misnomer” because in some Muslim countries, democratic would barely exist without the internet (Howard, 2010). According to media source, a “social media revolution” is occurring in Egypt. There at least ten million natives of Egypt that are online, three million have accounts on Facebook and 400% of which posts on Twitter (Amos, 2011). Moreover, the SocialBakers.Com which provides reliable social media statistics posted the massive of growth of Facebook users in the country and it was reported that Facebook penetration in Egypt is 14.36% compared to the country's population and 67.72% penetration of population online. The total number Facebook users in Egypt reached up to 11553280 and are growing by more than 2161700 since the last six months, which is a massive growth for the country.

User age distribution on Facebook in Egypt - Not Cyber activism Newbie’s

Accordingly, this is not the first time Egyptian activists have made use of these tools. Courtney Radsch, an Arab media expert, traces the birth of cyber activism in Egypt to 2004. In an Arab Media & Society journal article titled “Core to Commonplace: The evolution of Egypt's blogosphere,” Radsch pointed to the formation of a group called Kifaya in early 2004 as one of the first instances of the burgeoning Egyptian blogosphere becoming a forum for activism. Kifaya primarily sought to end the reign of Mubarak and see truly free elections take place in Egypt.

“Kifaya's manifesto called for civil disobedience and sought to break taboos and establish a right to demonstrate and talk about the country frankly,” Radsch wrote. “A natural symbiosis between Egypt's early core bloggers and the emerging protest movement helped popularize the Egyptian blogosphere as a site of protest as Kifaya grew in popularity during 2005.”

In the years that followed, the Egyptian blogosphere gradually became more influential, especially when it came to directing press attention to under-covered stories. Amir, himself a blogger since 2005, points to an incident during the 2006 celebration of the Muslim holiday of Eid il-Fitr,
when several women were assaulted on the streets of Cairo. “As expected, local media ignored such an incident, as they normally have their own priorities,” Amir said. But, the Egyptian blogosphere took the story and ran with it, making such a stir that the mainstream media noticed and began to cover the attacks.

It is clear that social media was the tool of choice for the young Egyptian activists who organized the January 25 demonstrations, but the protests certainly would not have caught on as they did if what Iskandar referred to as the “climate” for revolution was not already present. “Things were already happening at so many different levels,” he said.

Iskandar, who is of Egyptian heritage, was paying particular attention to the country's increasingly unstable political climate. He writes a weekly column for the English version of Al-Masry Al-Youm, one of the country's leading independent newspapers, and had often written about the turmoil in Egypt in the months leading up the revolution. From his point of view, it was important not to get too caught up in the social media angle of the story and overlook the reasons Egyptians were so dissatisfied with their government.

**Findings - Reason for Protests in 2011**

One of the major reasons for these grievances has been the long growing economic gap between the poor and rich people of the country. According to the report presented by World Bank, during 2005 the wealthiest families comprising of ten percent of Egyptians were holding around twenty-eight percent of the total national household income, and the chasm between the classes showed no signs of closing or reducing in the recent years. Despite of consistent growth in the GDP of Egypt from 2004 onwards, approximately eighteen percent of the population of Egypt has been living on less than $2 per day. Another transitory class, accounting of 20 percent, has moved in and out of poverty since the last ten years, which according to the World Bank represented a sense of social insecurity and vulnerability. The economic conditions were more or less the same for the people with proper jobs. Before the revolution, the minimum wage of Egypt, which did not change since 1984, was around 35 Egyptian pounds per month, which is less than six US dollars in April 2011. As the rate of inflation rate was more than 10 percent for each, at least three years, even salaries that were above the minimum wage and were considered to be good, were no longer enough to sustain for many families.

Another reason that created discontent between the Egyptian government and the people of Egypt was the rising prices of food. In January 2011, the global prices of food reached to their highest level, since the United Nations have started measuring them in 1990. High poverty rates in Egypt, combined with the fact that the United Nations lists it as the largest importer of wheat in the world, mean spikes in global food prices have hit the country really hard. After a similar spike in prices in 2008 led to riots, the Egyptian government increased the number of people eligible for subsidized food from 40 million to 63 million, according to a World Bank report.

**Methodology**

**Research Design**

This research focused on the collection of secondary data. The extraction of data has been done from a number of sources like articles, journals, internet publications and books. Secondary research aims at gathering information through different mediums like broadcast media, literature, publications and other kinds of sources that are categorized as non-human. This particular genre of research doesn’t involve any kind of human subjects.

**Secondary Data**

The analysis of secondary data plays a vital role in many fields of study, including the social sciences. The definition of secondary versus primary data is not based on specific qualities of the data itself but on its history and relationship to a specific analysis. A simple definition is that primary data are collected by a research group for the specific analysis in question, whereas secondary data are collected by someone else for some other purpose. So if a researcher conducts a survey and analyzes the results for his or her analysis, the data from the survey are primary data. If the researcher deposits
the data in an archive and someone else unrelated to the original research team analyzes it 20 years later, then the results for that analysis the data are now secondary data. (Bulmer, 2006)

One reason analysis of secondary data is becoming more popular in the social sciences is the availability of large data sets collected and processed by the government and made available for researchers to analyze. It would be beyond the capability of most if not all research teams to collect data on this scale, but the data from these projects are available for anyone with a connection to the Internet to download for free.

Qualitative research can be defined as a process of inquiry that builds a complex and holistic picture of a particular phenomenon of interest by using a natural setting. Thus, qualitative research involves the analysis of words, pictures, videos, or objects in the context in which they occur.

**Literature Search**

The relevance of the research topic and the publication year has been the criteria for the selection of appropriate literature. The usage of public, private and the online libraries has been made for the collection of the most valid available information. A few online databases for the gathering of data accessed are: Questia, Proquest, Pheonix, Ebsco and so on.

**Conclusion**

When people log into the social media, the thought of creating and starting a revolution is far from from their minds. But in the Arab world, the social media has become an important platform for dissent and outlet for political and economic frustration. However, it would be wrong, to characterize the uprisings as ‘revolutions ‘ of the social media.

Nothing could have happened if there were no people willing to be physically present in the streets, ready to put their own life at risk in order to fulfill their demands and achieve their goals. The growth and use of social media in the Arab region however, did play a critical role in mobilization and change. For it was the social media, not formal institutions or political parties, that provided the effective tool for activating the public, for allowing the loose network of activists and protesters to mobilize, communicate and collaborate. The social media provided an alternate space for reviving a dormant public consciousness into a sentient, dynamic social discourse. There is the demand to make the in-depth analysis further in this research.

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