

Social Media, Civil Society and its Impact on Anti-Regime Protest

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Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of the impact of social media on protest (more specifically on the ‘Arab Spring’) and the mediating function of civil society networks in affecting protest.

The role of social media tools in facilitating anti-regime protest is qualitatively analyzed through case studies of the 2011 uprisings in key protest countries. While cross-national data on internet penetration and survey data on public perceptions of the role of the new media do offer some evidence in support of social media tools as a facilitator of protest, upon a more thorough analysis, it is clear that the degree of protest in the region does not correlate strongly with internet penetration and other secondary variables need to be considered.

Drawing on social movement theory and the notion that social movements are more prone to happen in communities with ‘dense network ties,’ this study will analyze pre-existing civil society affiliation as an important mediating variable and will qualitatively outline the function of pre-existing civil society activism in facilitating the ‘Arab Spring’ protests.

The study will then quantitatively determine the individual’s decision to participate in protest both in terms of pre-existing civil society membership and social media usage. The results will reveal that social media’s influence on protest is most compelling in countries where individuals have strong pre-existing organizational ties. The study will conclude by suggesting that the merging of both an active and independent civil society with a strong social media network creates a greater capacity to facilitate protest.

Résumé

Cette thèse est une analyse de l'impact des médias sociaux sur la protestation (plus précisément le «printemps arabe») et la fonction médiatrice des réseaux de la société civile en affectant protestation.

Le rôle des médias sociaux dans la facilitation de protestation anti- régime est l'analyse qualitative à travers des études de cas sur l'édition 2011 des soulèvements dans les pays de protestation clés. Bien que les données transnationales sur la pénétration d'Internet et des données d'enquête sur les perceptions du public sur le rôle des nouveaux médias font offrir des preuves à l'appui des outils de médias sociaux comme un facilitateur de protestation , après une analyse plus approfondie , il est clair que le degré de protestation dans la région n'est pas corrélée fortement avec la pénétration d'Internet et d'autres variables secondaires doivent être pris en considération.

S'appuyant sur la théorie des mouvements sociaux et la notion que les mouvements sociaux sont plus enclins à se produire dans les communautés ayant des « liens de réseaux denses » Cette étude analysera affiliation de la société civile préexistante comme une variable médiatrice importantes et qualitativement décrire la fonction de la société civile préexistante activisme de la société en facilitant les manifestations du «printemps arabe».

L'étude permettra ensuite de déterminer quantitativement la décision de l'individu de participer à protester à la fois en termes d'adhésion pré-existante de la société civile et de l'utilisation des médias sociaux. Les résultats révèlent que les infrastructures des médias sociaux ont la plus forte influence sur la protestation dans les pays où les individus ont de forts liens organisationnels préexistants. L'étude se terminera en suggérant que la fusion à la fois d'une société civile active et indépendante avec une solide infrastructure des médias sociaux est la condition la plus favorable pour faciliter la manifestation anti- régime.

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Chapter 1: Understanding the Role of Social Media in the Arab Spring

Introduction

The Arab Spring brought about the beginnings of unprecedented change in the Middle East North African (MENA) region. Dictators were ousted in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen; uprisings broke out in Syria and Bahrain; major protests erupted in Algeria, Jordan, and Morocco; and minor protests have occurred in Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Western Sahara.

Though it be would be incorrect to fully attribute the surge of upheavals to a growing and novel social media in the Arab world, the proliferation of internet websites, satellite channels, blogs, YouTube videos, Facebook groups, and Twitter users appeared to facilitate anti-regime organization¹ by encouraging open debate about vital political and social issues. While various forms of media (most notably satellite television) were influential to the uprisings, this study will exclusively analyze internet based social media outlets.

The first quarter of 2011 definitely witnessed a significant shift of internet usage especially in the MENA region. Facebook for example boasted 677 million users as of April 2011 with the MENA region being one of the regions that contributed the highest number of new users.² People throughout the MENA region began employing social media tools for social and

¹ Brynen, Rex, Moore, W. Pete, Salloukh, F. Bassel, & Zahar, Marie-Joelle. (2013). Beyond the Arab Spring: Authoritarianism and Democratization in the Arab World, The New Arab Media. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 233.

² Su, Susan. (2011). Facebook Surpasses 677 Million Users – More Traffic Trends and Data at Inside Facebook Gold, May 2011 Edition. *Inside Facebook*.

civil mobilization purposes, ‘whether by citizens — to organize demonstrations (both pro- and anti-government), disseminate information within their networks, and raise awareness of ongoing events locally and globally– or by governments, in some cases to engage with citizens and encourage their participation in government processes, while in other cases to block access to websites and monitor and control information on these sites.’³

Although the internet certainly helped facilitate protest, the extent to which the new Arab media environment directly challenges authoritarian leadership is contested. There are those who argue that new media platforms allow for a more informed Arab public and that the expanding amount of information available encourages citizens to interpret and disseminate information more pluralistically.⁴ Others posit that politicians are learning the lexicon of the new media and, though there has been some success by dissenters to organize protests, in many cases leaders exercise strategies to control and manage public access to new communications technologies along lines that reflect broader patterns of authoritarian control.⁵ Virtually every Arab regime has built up extensive systems of regulation, surveillance, and coercion that considerably limit the autonomy and privacy of users.⁶

Countries within the MENA region differ in the level of availability, monitoring, and censoring of these communication tools. Even more crucially, the impact of the internet has not been the same across the board. The Gulf region, where internet penetration is relatively high,

³ Salem, Fadi, & Mourtada, Racha. (2011). Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter. *Arab Social Media Report, Dubai School of Government*, Vol. 1 No. 2, 2.

⁴ Alternman, B. Jon. (1998). New Media, New Politics? From Satellite Television to the Internet in the Arab World. *Washington, DC: Washington Institute of Near East Policy*, Policy Paper no. 48.

⁵ Heydemann, Steven. (2007). Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World. *Washington, DC: Brookings Institution*, 22-23.

⁶ Implacable Enemies: Arab Governments and the Internet. *The Initiative for an Open Arab Internet*. (2006).

did not experience significant protest activity (with the exception of Bahrain and Kuwait) while places like Yemen with negligible penetration witnessed considerable protest activity.⁷ These inconsistencies indicate that accessibility to social media platforms alone is not enough to understand what happened during the Arab Spring. It is important to consider non-internet processes and the way in which they interact with social media tools to challenge authoritarian leadership. Although, the focus of the thesis will be on social media tools and the way in which it can facilitate protest, any analysis of social media usage and its impact on political activism must continually bear in mind the political and socio-economic grievances that are at the heart of the protests. These variables are indispensable prerequisites that are the basis of this study.

This thesis will be divided in two parts. The first part will examine internet-based social media and their role as a mechanism for organizing and sustaining anti-regime protest. It will argue that these **new information and communication technologies have played an important role in facilitating anti-regime protest**, and thus have been a significant component of the so-called ‘Arab Spring.’ The second part of this thesis will argue that while internet based social media certainly helped facilitate protest activity, it is neither necessary nor sufficient for explaining protest and is heavily mediated by other variables. While there are various important political, economic, and cultural variables at play, this paper will focus on the **pre-existence of civil society as an important mediating variable**. It will establish that while social media was certainly a catalyst for protest, it had the greatest impact in countries where a foundation of civil society activism was already in place.

⁷ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Julianne, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 15.

Literature Review

Over the last decade, the proliferation of new internet communication technologies in the MENA region has created novel opportunities for a more pluralistic public sphere and added an important dimension to the new Arab media environment. By 2011, Facebook had over 21 million Arab users, more than the estimated total number of newspaper readers in the region. Both Tunisia and Egypt, where these protests began, featured especially high levels of membership.⁸

The high incidence of social media usage and protest activity over the last few years has generated a considerable amount of scholarly discourse. Marc Lynch points out that there is a ‘strong correlational and environmental case to be made that this new information environment empowered political and social activism’ given that the turn of the century ‘witnessed massive popular mobilization across the region, with waves of protests over Israel’s reoccupation of the West Bank in 2002 and the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, followed by protestors demanding domestic political reform across much of the region. In the early 2000s, a generation of Arab bloggers learned to use the internet as a vehicle for personal expression, political organization, dialogue with the West, and communication with colleagues throughout the Arab world.’⁹ Lynch notes that blogs can transform the dynamics of Arab public opinion and political activism.’¹⁰

The 2011 uprisings (collectively called the Arab Spring) drew even more scholarly attention to social media as a catalyst for protest and led to various theories on its effectiveness in facilitating social change. The two extreme views bookending this debate are generally

⁸ Salem, Fadi, & Mourtada, Racha. (2011). Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter” *Arab Social Media Report, Dubai School of Government*, Vol. 1 No. 2, 8.

⁹ Lynch, Marc. (2011). After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State. *Perspectives on Politics* 9, 2.

¹⁰ Lynch, Marc. (2007). Blogging the New Arab Public. *Arab Media and Society*, 1.

categorized into ‘Cyberenthusiasts’ and ‘Cyberskeptics.’ Enthusiasts such as Philip Howard and Muzammil Hussain argue that ‘the internet, mobile phones, and social media such as Facebook and Twitter made the difference this time. Using these technologies, people interested in democracy could build extensive networks, create social capital, and organize political action with a speed and on a scale never seen before. Thanks to these technologies, virtual networks materialized in the streets. Digital media became the tool that allowed social movements to reach once-unachievable goals.’¹¹ William J. Dobson claims ‘the world’s dictators can surrender any hope of keeping their worst deeds secret... The costs of tyranny have never been this high.’¹² Enthusiasts essentially believe that the internet ‘empowers individuals to coordinate, communicate, and circumvent state censorship to fundamentally shift the balance of social power away from authoritarian states’ by raising the cost of repression to authoritarian regimes, through documenting atrocities and increasing international attention .

Cyberskeptics such as Malcolm Gladwell on the other hand maintain that the uprisings were mostly caused by more conventional political organization. Gladwell points to the fact that protests have occurred for years without ‘being updated in real-time on Twitter’.¹³ Skeptics further contend that it is unclear whether these uprisings will have brought about fundamental transformations of any of these regimes, such as ‘robust political parties capable of mounting a sustained challenge to entrenched regimes or to transforming themselves into governing

¹¹ Howard, N. Philip, & Muzammil, M. Hussain. (2011). The Upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia: The Role of Digital Media. *Journal of Democracy*, John Hopkins University Press Division 22, no. 3, 35–36.

¹² Dobson, J. William. (2012). The Dictator’s Learning Curve: Inside the Global Battle for Democracy. *Doubleday*.

¹³ Gladwell, Malcolm. (2010). Small Change: Why the Revolutions Will Not Be Tweeted. *New Yorker*.

parties'.¹⁴ While the internet expanded the public's ability to challenge its leaders, and was, for example, an essential element in the ouster of the Egyptian and Tunisian dictators, opponents question the extent to which these tools affect regime change. They argue that even if internet tools created the necessary connections to begin popular protests, they are incapable of advancing or maintaining momentum towards long-term democratic changes.

Skeptics such as Evgeny Morozov further allege that changing individual attitudes and even increased communication and deliberation will not be translated into concrete political change.¹⁵ They point to the substantial capacities for surveillance and infiltration that Arab regimes possess, ranging from technical surveillance, designed to 'limit or shape access to the internet, to selective repression and overt intervention in online communication flows'.¹⁶ They argue that while unprecedented digital activism has upset the incontestability of authoritarian power in the MENA region, Arab states may prove able to absorb this challenge against their authority, if the uprisings result in newly-configured but essentially unchanged military or other types of repressive regimes.¹⁷

Enthusiasts retort that activists are working around government restrictions, becoming more knowledgeable and creative as the government finds new ways of restricting access. They emphasize that although the internet is certainly subject to government filtering, and in many ways the computerization of the messages makes it even easier for governments to infiltrate; internet censorship is never one hundred percent effective. Web-savvy surfers find ways around

¹⁴ Lynch, Marc. (2011). After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State. *Perspectives on Politics* 9, 2, 301-302.

¹⁵ Morozov, Evgeny. (2011). *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*. New York: Public Affairs.

¹⁶ Deibert, Ronald, Palfrey, John, Rohozinski, Rafal, & Zittrain, Jonathan. (2008). *Access Denied: The Practice and Policy of Global Internet Filtering*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

¹⁷ Lynch, Marc. (2011). After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State. *Perspectives on Politics* 9, 2, 301-302.

the system in order to access pornography, antigovernment web sites, and other politically or culturally sensitive material.¹⁸ As the user base in the MENA region becomes more sophisticated, it is learning to utilize anonymous remailers, public terminals, encryption software, or a combination of all three to escape government censorship.¹⁹ Though skeptics point to the fact that most of the user base in the MENA region is unsophisticated, technological innovations have made it easier to achieve a degree of anonymity. The internet is also a classroom for the self-taught and many of the skills the MENA user base is learning are being acquired through online classes and forums. Even beyond anonymous remailers and encryption software, the sheer volume of information flowing back and forth (which is increasing exponentially) will make it more challenging for government agencies to effectively censor their populations, especially on a global basis.²⁰

Enthusiasts also point to the international impact of the new social media. Twitter, YouTube, eye witness reports, and other major internet channels and blogs enabled individuals from around the world to connect and offer support. It also offered international media outlets a more accurate and current depiction of regional events. The bridging function of the new Arab media allowed protestors to influence the way in which the international community responded to the Arab Spring.²¹ To quote a youth protester in Cairo ‘We use Facebook to schedule protests,

¹⁸ Kalathil, Shanthi, & Boas, C. Taylor. (2001). The Internet and State Control in Authoritarian Regimes: China, Cuba and the Counterrevolution. *Carnegie Endowment Information Revolution and World Politics Project*, 140.

¹⁹ Alternman, B. Jon. (1998). New Media, New Politics? From Satellite Television to the Internet in the Arab World. *Washington, DC: Washington Institute of Near East Policy*, policy paper no. 48, 75.

²⁰ Ibid., 53-54.

²¹ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Julianne, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 27.

Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world.’²²

Although ‘cyberenthusiasts’ and ‘cyberskeptics’ both make noteworthy observations, both camps also fail to look at the circumstances impartially and at times rely on preconceived notions and conclusions that can result in a flawed analyses.²³ Enthusiasts run the risk of deemphasizing the authoritarian leadership’s adaptability to the internet challenge through surveillance mechanisms and other repressive tools.²⁴ Skeptics on the other hand may end up unjustifiably dismissing any facilitating role that new media provides.²⁵ Cyberskeptics and enthusiasts both point to ways in which the internet either helps or stumps protest activity and social mobilization. However the sharp division between cyber enthusiasts and skeptics obscures the extent to which the internet effects are heavily mediated by other variables.

Melissa Lerner argues that the internet alone cannot produce long term democratization mostly because of its inability to replace ‘real-world, face-to-face communication’ which is crucial to solidarity and consensus building in social movements.²⁶ While social-media-based forms of political organization may be effective at mobilizing and confronting authoritarian states with ‘leaderless challenges’, given that they do not have the ‘usual array of party elites’ available for cooptation, these political tools are more limiting when the time comes for negotiating the terms of democratic transition.²⁷

²² Howard, N. Philip. (2011). The Arab Spring’s Cascading Effects. *Pacific Standard*.

²³ Aday, Sean, Farrell, Henry, Lynch, Marc, Sides, John, Kelly, John, & Zuckerman, Ethan. (2010). Blogs and Bullets: New Media in Contentious Politics. *Peaceworks no. 65 Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press*, 4.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Lerner, Melissa. (2010) Connecting the Actual with the Virtual: The Internet and Social Movement Theory in the Muslim World—The Cases of Iran and Egypt. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, no. 4, 557.

²⁷ Lynch, Marc. (2011). After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State. *Perspectives on Politics* 9, 2, 302.

Moreover, the level of internet penetration must be considered and weighed. Revolutionary movements have grown in countries with internet penetration ranging from less than 2% (Yemen) to near 88% (Bahrain).²⁸ Though the internet enables instant diffusion of and access to information beyond national borders, such internet practices also intersect with intense face-to-face politics. Countries in the MENA region have responded in different ways to popular dissent, including capitulation, negotiation, and violent repression.

Therefore there is a need to restructure the analysis in order to better discern the effectiveness of the internet as a medium for mobilization. The 2010 United States Institute of Peace (USIP) Peaceworks report titled *Blogs and Bullets: New Media in Contentious Politics*, argues that ‘existing analyses of new media and political conflict needed more rigorous research design, more robust data, and a tighter focus on specific causal mechanisms.’²⁹

In order to offer further context to social media and its effect on mobilization it is helpful to look at social movement theories. Social movement theorists McAdam and Paulsen analyze how individuals organize to resolve collective action issues and account for differences in individual participation.³⁰ They posit that at the general level, social movements are more likely to occur in communities with ‘dense network ties’, at the individual level, those solicited to take part in a protest movement are more likely to already have other ties to those already in the movement.³¹ Although pre-existing organizational ties increase the likelihood of an individual

²⁸ Sreberny, Anabelle. (2012). New Media and the Middle East: Thinking Allowed. *University of Michigan Journal*, 3-4.

²⁹ Aday, Sean, Farrell, Henry, Lynch, Marc, Sides, John, & Freelon, Deen. (2012). Blogs and Bullets II: New Media and Conflict after the Arab Spring. *Peaceworks no.80 Washington, D.C.: United States Institute for Peace*.

³⁰ McAdam Douglas, & Paulsen, Ronnelle. (1993) Specifying the Relationship Between Social Ties and Activism. *American Journal of Sociology* 99, no. 3 ,642.

³¹ McAdam Douglas, Tarrow, Sidney, & Tilly Charles. (2008). Methods for Measuring Mechanisms of Contention. *Qualitative Sociology* 31, no. 4, 310.

being recruited to a social movement, the nature of the tie is equally important. Whether the tie is strength or weak can impact the likelihood of an individual being targeted for recruitment and accordingly whether the individual will participate.³² The number of ties an individual has is also significant, for example one can have ties with various organizations that could prove conflicting and impact the decision to participate in a protest.³³

On the whole, pre-existing affiliation is a vital structural element linked to protest movement participation. Individuals who already belong to an organization likely have increased interpersonal ties and consequently will be solicited more often than unaffiliated individuals (they will also probably be more trusting in movement organizers and participate more often than those unaffiliated).³⁴

While pre-existing organizational ties are consequential to social mobilization they are not unrelated to social media usage. In fact, social media usage and present-day civil society activists in the MENA region are highly interconnected in several ways. For one, numerous organizations were motivated to go online because secondary types of communication were unattainable. Newspaper, radio and television publicity were both unaffordable and also monitored by the state.³⁵ Given that physical domains for public communication and deliberation were off limits during times of public indignation, civil society groups that were already in place entrenched their existence by expanding to virtual domains for debate.³⁶ In the last decade or so, civil society groups have been moving online because of the changing dynamics in the MENA region. Not only has the internet expanded its user base but the cost of accessing the internet

³² Ibid., 641.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 644.

³⁵ Howard, N. Philip, & Muzammil, M. Hussain. (2013). *Democracy's Fourth Wave; Digital Media and the Arab Spring*. *Oxford University Press*. Kindle file, Introduction.

³⁶ Ibid.

dropped considerably.³⁷ Leaders of civil society organizations started using the internet to ‘reach out to foreign and domestic publics, build linkages with likeminded groups, raise funds from group membership, activate support in times of crisis...provide social services’,... and criticize government injustices and offer policy alternatives’.³⁸ As a result, civil society groups whether they are policy driven, service oriented, or religious based have been able to reach new audiences and communicate more expansively as a result of the increase in information technologies in the region.³⁹

Methodology and Analytical Framework

In the first section, case study process-tracing of anti-regime protests in Egypt, Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen will be used to demonstrate the ways in which new information and communication technologies played a significant role in mobilizing the public. This section is not intended to be all-inclusive and sufficient, rather it is meant to lay the foundation for understanding the way in which social media tools can relate to the traditional protest framework and how it can facilitate protest activity overall. By selecting countries that witnessed large scale protests, that way in which social media relates to the conventional protest framework is more easily discernible.

The second section begins by presenting cross-national data on internet penetration followed by subsequent research on public perceptions of the role of new media in order to reaffirm the facilitating role of social media tools in the uprisings. This section will also present cross national data that point to the second part of the puzzle examined by this thesis: namely, that the degree of protest in the region does not correlate strongly with internet penetration and

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

other secondary variables need to be considered. More specifically, while social media can help facilitate protest it is shown to be neither necessary nor sufficient for protest activity to occur. Although there are numerous important social, economic, political and cultural variables that affect protest, the study will focus on pre-existing civil society activism as an important mediating variable that creates a greater ‘opportunity structure’ for social mobilization and protest.⁴⁰

This will lead to the third section which qualitatively outlines the role that pre-existing patterns of civil society played in facilitating the uprisings. The concept of civil society will first be defined and applied to the MENA region. Subsequently, a qualitative analysis of pre-existing civil society movements in: Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Yemen and Syria will be presented. By studying high protest countries, the role of pre-existing civil society activism in shaping large-scale protest is more directly assessable.

The final section will will present micro-level survey data from the First Wave of the Arab Barometer and a Stanford University study based on the Arab Barometer data (titled ‘The impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring’) to determine whether an individuals’ participation in protest activity is rooted in pre-existing civil society activism and/or digital media usage, controlling for various general socioeconomic features. Based on data from the Arab Barometer, the Stanford study employs a binomial logistic regression model as well as an interaction variable for civil society membership and internet use in order to determine the significance of internet use and civil society membership as well as to quantify the effect of

⁴⁰ Howard, N. Philip, & Muzammil, M. Hussain. (2012). Democracy’s Fourth Wave? Information Technologies and the Fuzzy Causes of the Arab Spring. *Paper prepared for presentation at the International Studies Association April 1-4, San Diego, 5.*

concurrent civil society membership with internet usage on protest activity.⁴¹ While the study determines that internet usage and civil society membership are both statistically significant in explaining protest, it also indicates that internet usage is a more effective variable in predicting protest participation when members of civil society use it.⁴²

⁴¹ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Juliane, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 37.

⁴² Ibid.

Chapter 2: Social Media and Protest

Country-by-Country Case Studies

The first part of the analysis examines the role of social media in social unrest in terms of country level case studies.⁴³

In each of the following qualitative case studies, the following questions are considered:

- 1) How did protest organizers employ social media?
- 2) How did regimes utilize social media in response to the protest movements?

The case studies were selected based on countries that endured high scale protest activity lasting several weeks and with a minimum of a few thousand protestors: Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, Bahrain, Syria, Tunisia, and Morocco

Before beginning the qualitative analysis, it is important to have a general concept of the protests that occurred as a basis for further analysis. Table 1 provides a brief overview of when protests began in each country, the largest protest, and the principal organizers.

⁴³ The country level case studies are adapted from: Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Juliane, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 15-25.

Table 1: Overview of the Protests in Seven Countries

Country	First Large-scale, Organized Protest	Largest Protest	Date of Largest	City	Principal organizers
Tunisia	Monday, Dec 27	1,000s	Tuesday, Jan 11	Tunis	Trade union activists
Egypt	Tuesday, Jan 25	100,000s	Tuesday, Feb 8	Cairo	Muslim Brotherhood
Yemen	Thursday, Jan 27	20,000	Friday, Mar 18	Sana'a	al-Islah (MB)
Jordan	Friday, Jan 28	7,000-10,000	Friday, Feb 25	Amman	Islamic Action Front (MB)
Bahrain	Monday, Feb 14	10,000s	Tuesday, Feb 22	Manama	al-Wefaq, al-Waad
Syria	Thursday, Feb 17	10,000s	Friday, April 22	Damascus	Syrian Revolution activists
Morocco	Sunday, Feb 20	10,000	Sunday, March 20	Casablanca	Feb 20 Movement

Source: Taylor Dewey, Julianekaden, Miriam Marks, Shun Matsushima, Beijing Zhu. "The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring" Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency (March 2012)

Tunisia

Tunisian protests started in December 2010 and signified the start of the ArabSpring. Mohammed Bouazizi committed suicide on December 17 in protest of the mounting unemployment rates and corruption among the authoritarian leaders⁴⁴ and sparked an outpour of protest in Tunisia. Facebook, YouTube and other social media sites were highly instrumental in rallying the youth and educated public. As one protester put it, 'Protestors took to the streets with a rock in one hand, a cell phone in the other.'⁴⁵ More specifically, online videos of Bouazizi setting himself on fire provoked the earlier protests. Soon after footage of police conflicts with

⁴⁴ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Julianekaden, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 16.

⁴⁵ Ryan, Yasmine. (2011). How Tunisia's Revolution Began. *Al Jazeera English*.

protestors amplified public outrage and increased protest momentum.⁴⁶ Although previous riots have not been able to gain momentum because of strict state control over the media, the influx of online protest footage enabled global news agencies (such as Al Jazeera) to source newsfeeds, and was ultimately broadcasted internationally.⁴⁷ By disseminating a continuous flow of information and videos, footage eventually reached YouTube, Twitter and other universal websites and ultimately was banned by Tunisian authorities.⁴⁸ Many Tunisians did not play an aggressive role in Facebook 'liking' or Twitter sharing until Ben Ali stepped down, for fear of Ben Ali's 'repression structure'.⁴⁹ Even so, with internet penetration rates hovering at about 30% these people were still following the news that was being supplied by 'a solid core of activists'⁵⁰ which included blogger Ben Mhenni, whose blog was called 'A Tunisian Girl'⁵¹ and Messou T7Essou.⁵²

Tunisian authorities' efforts to halt access to social media sites were generally ineffective. That said, the government did arrest some significant social media activists and hacked into email and Facebook accounts.⁵³ Tunisian authorities' phishing efforts were unsuccessful as activists became aware of it and in response came up with slogans to counter

⁴⁶ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Juliane, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 16.

⁴⁷ Miladi, Nouredine. (2011). Tunisia: A Media Revolution? *Al Jazeera*.

⁴⁸ Madrigal, Alexis. (2011). The Inside Story of how Facebook Responded to Tunisian Hacks. *The Atlantic*.

⁴⁹ Panel Discussion: The Role of Citizen Journalism and Social Media in the Middle East and North America. (2011). *National Democratic Institute*.

⁵⁰ Ryan, Yasmine. (2011). How Tunisia's Revolution Began. *Al Jazeera English*.

⁵¹ Lister, Tim. (2011). Tunisian Protests Fueled by Social Media Sites. *CNN News*.

⁵² Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Juliane, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 16.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 17

government efforts. By mid- January, Bin Ali fled to Saudi Arabia and ended his twenty years in power.⁵⁴

Egypt

On June 6, 2010 police beat Khaled Saeed to death in response to his spreading footage of police using the contents of a drug bust.⁵⁵ Although the police alleged that Saeed choked to death, photos and footage of Khaled's beat marks circulated online and fueled public outrage against police brutality and corruption.⁵⁶ It also motivated Wael Ghonim (a social media activist and Google administrator)⁵⁷ to found the 'We Are All Khaled Saeed' Facebook group, which by 2011 had over 400,000 members.⁵⁸ The Facebook page expanded to include other analogous abuses by Egyptian authorities' including but not limited to corruption, violence and unjust arrests.⁵⁹ On January 18, 2011, a week earlier than the mass protests in Tahrir Square, Asmaa Mahfouz, a 26-year-old business graduate of Cairo University, posted a video of herself on YouTube and Facebook where she petitioned all Egyptians to demonstrate against the Egyptian government in Tahrir Square.⁶⁰ When she got there (with some other people) security forces removed them from the area and she posted another video online, broadcasting the following

⁵⁴ Kirkpatrick, David. (2011). Tunisia Leader Flees and Prime Minister Claims Power. *The New York Times*.

⁵⁵ We Are All Khaled Saeed. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. (2011).

⁵⁶ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Juliane, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 17.

⁵⁷ We Are All Khaled Saeed" *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. (2011).

⁵⁸ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Juliane, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 17.

⁵⁹ Crovitz, Gordon. (2011). Egypt's Revolution by Social Media. *The Wall Street Journal Online*.

⁶⁰ Wall, Melissa, & El Zahed, Sahar. (2011). I'll be Waiting for you Guys: A YouTube Call to Action in the Egyptian Revolution. *International Journal of Communication*, 1333.

message: ‘If you think yourself a man, come with me on 25 January. Whoever says women shouldn’t go to protests because they will get beaten, let him have some honour and manhood and come with me on 25 January. Whoever says it is not worth it because there will only be a handful of people, I want to tell him, you are the reason behind this, and you are a traitor, just like the president or any security cop who beats us in the streets’.⁶¹ This prompted the April 6th youth movement to contact Wael Ghonim for ‘marketing help’ with a protest campaign for the Egyptian uprising.⁶² Online tools allowed the April 6th movement and the ‘We Are All Khaled Saeed’ group to merge and in that respect social media was highly consequential to the protests.

Communication infrastructures developed into an integral means of coordinating protest activities and spreading up to date information. Throughout the protests, Ghonim posted on his Twitter account (with over 200,000 followers) detailed reports of the demonstrations.⁶³ Social media was also used to plant false leads of protest locations online in order to fool police and actually protest at a secondary location.⁶⁴ The government responded by blocking internet access, but Google Inc (Ghonim’s employer) retaliated by producing an application that enabled Twitter users to post voice messages called ‘Speak2Tweet’.⁶⁵ Ghonim was arrested not too long after the January 25th uprising and was imprisoned for two weeks, during which authorities grilled him about his Facebook campaign which they assumed was supported by international

⁶¹ Asmaa Mahfouz. *Sakharov Prize Network, European Parliament*. (2011).

⁶² Kirkpatrick, David. “Wired and Shrewd, Young Egyptians Guide Revolt.” *The New York Times*.

⁶³ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Julianne, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). *The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 18.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Kirkpatrick, David. (2011) *Wired and Shrewd, Young Egyptians Guide Revolt. The New York Times*.

backers.⁶⁶ Ghonim's use of social media not only made him an international icon but also gave him standing with his fellow Egyptians, to quote a protestor, 'the moment I saw Ghonim (online) last night I knew I had to get down to Tahrir and stand with the Egyptian people'.⁶⁷

Yemen

In January 2011, there was a Yemini uprising (largely coordinated by university students) in Sana'a against Yemen's economic circumstances, rampant unemployment and constitutional changes.⁶⁸ Protestors demanded the toppling of President Ali Abdullah Saleh's regime, Tawakel Karman in particular organized a 'day of rage'.⁶⁹ In February, the leader of the Baqil tribe and of the Hashid-oriented National Solidarity Council (both major tribal factions in Yemen) called on their adherents to join the anti-Saleh protests.⁷⁰ In response, the Yemini government aggressively attempted to stop the demonstrations and footage of the violence was posted on Facebook and Youtube, arousing national fury.⁷¹

While university students' Facebook pages were instrumental in publicizing the February demonstrations (the amount of student users numbered in the low hundreds), Yemen has the lowest levels of internet penetration in the entire MENA region, at 1.8 percent of the population.

⁶⁶ Black, Ian. (2011). Wael Ghonim Anointed Voice of the Revolution by Tahrir Square Faithful. *The Guardian*.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ghobari, Mohammed, & Sudam, Mohamed. (2011). Protests Erupt in Yemen, President Offers Reform. *Reuters*.

⁶⁹ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Julianne, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 19.

⁷⁰ Davies, Catriona. (2012) Yemen's Tribes Put Differences Aside to Protest for Change. *CNN World*

⁷¹ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Julianne, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 20.

Given their low internet penetration rate, the role of social media usage in the Yemini uprising is unclear.

Jordan

Demonstrations in Jordan picked up in January 2011 and were principally organized by trade union activists and major opposition party, the Islamic Action Front (IAF) (also a division of the Muslim Brotherhood).⁷² On January 14th, a major trade union leader led a demonstration with more than 8,000 people rioting against rising fuel and food prices.⁷³ On January 28th (following Friday prayers) activists from numerous organizations such as leftist groups, trade unions, and MB members protested in Amman for government reform (with a turnout of over 3500 people).⁷⁴ Finally on February 25th (again following Friday prayers) the IAF organized a protest with 10,000 protestors from 19 political opposition parties.⁷⁵ This led to other protests and violence between protestors and security officials.

Social media tools were instrumental in encouraging protest against the Jordanian regime. For instance, The March 24th movement (comprised of leftists, Islamists, and independents) and IAF leaders employed Facebook to organize protest activity.⁷⁶ Although there was a diverse base of protestors, the IAF mobilized the masses (through social media) by emphasizing the poor economic conditions that were applicable to the range of groups protesting in Jordan.⁷⁷

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Protests in Jordan, Jan-Feb 2011. *Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East*. (2012).

⁷⁴ Thousands Protest in Jordan. *Al Jazeera*. (2011).

⁷⁵ Jordan Braces for its 'Largest' Rally. *PRESSTV*. (2011).

⁷⁶ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Juliane, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 21.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Bahrain

Demonstrations in Bahrain were mostly provoked by the Sunni regime's injustices to the Shia majority (consisting to approximately 70 percent of the population) in numerous issues such as employment, housing and education. In February 2011, thousands of Shiites demonstrated at the Pearl Roundabout calling for democratic change and greater political liberties.⁷⁸

Given that Bahrain was a prosperous Gulf state with widespread mobile phone ownership and high internet diffusion rates, social media was employed extensively by protestors particularly by Bahrain's middle class.⁷⁹ Security forces clashed with protestors at the Pearl Roundabout and footage of unarmed protestors being beaten, tear-gassed and even killed was posted all over YouTube, Facebook and Twitter and elicited public outrage and increased protest.⁸⁰ While the government attempted to downplay the violence by claiming that only four protestors were killed, this prompted rioters to post more photos and footage of the horrible injuries of the protestors at the Pearl and motivated more people to protest.⁸¹

Because of social media's importance in inciting protest, the Bahraini regime began to employ social media to its own ends. After the Bahraini troops forcibly subdued the protests, the government launched a Facebook campaign to locate important protest activists called 'Together to Unmask the Shia Traitors'.⁸² The government posted a list of their target protestors on the Facebook page with pictures and footage and asked Bahrainis to disclose the protestors'

⁷⁸ Unrest in the Middle East and Africa- Country by Country. *CNN*. (2011).

⁷⁹ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Juliane, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 21.

⁸⁰ Chulov, Martin. (2011). America Rebukes Bahrain after Violent Crackdown on Demonstrators. *The Guardian*.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Bahrain: Shouting in the Dark. *Al Jazeera English*. (2012). Video posted on www.youtube.com/watch?v=xaTKDMTOBOU#108.

identities for arrest.⁸³ The campaign extracted a lot of information and the names of arrested protestors were ‘checked off’ on the Facebook page.⁸⁴ The Bahraini government also launched other Facebook pages to demean anti-regime protestors. For example, the government launched a Facebook page named after a 20 year old female activist who protested at the Pearl Roundabout, titled ‘Against Ayat Qurmezi’.⁸⁵ The Facebook page received a lot of information and derogatory posts demanding Ayat’s detainment and death. Eventually, Ayat was arrested and subsequent to three months of torment, apologized on state TV.⁸⁶

Bahrain demonstrates the way in which social media tools can be a ‘double edged sword’. Protestors employed Facebook to disseminate information and broaden the protest base more effectively, while the Bahraini government used Facebook pages to find and arrest protest activists more effectively and quickly than would have otherwise been possible.⁸⁷

Morocco

The main protest coordinator in Morocco was the February 20th youth movement which employed Facebook and YouTube as its main way of communicating.⁸⁸ Early on, they posted a YouTube video that portrayed various Moroccans discussing their grounds for participating in protests; some of the reasons mentioned were greater prospects for employment, education and

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Dixon, Suzi. (2011). Facebook used to Hunt down Bahrain Dissidents. *The Telegraph*.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Bahrain: Shouting in the Dark. *Al Jazeera English*. (2012). Video posted on www.youtube.com/watch?v=xaTKDMTOBOU#108.

⁸⁷ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Julianne, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 22.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 24.

democratic equality.⁸⁹ This spread to Facebook and Twitter and about 1,000 new members joined the Feb 20 Movement.⁹⁰ While over 30,000 people did protest in Rabat (the capital city) for government change, the masses rapidly diminished, with only several hundred left and no real necessity for police involvement.⁹¹ While protest in Morocco was not as substantial as other MENA states, small-scale protests persisted largely because of social media activists.

The Moroccan regime used social media to correspond with the Feb 20 Movement, often as a preventative measure. For example, a few days before the demonstrations, the Youth and Sports minister retorted to the Feb 20th Movement with a Facebook post requesting dialogue as opposed to hostility. In his post, the minister also held foreign activists responsible for devising the protests as a means of weakening Morocco.⁹² Government-endorsing groups also launched internet campaigns encouraging people to neglect the protests and even started rumors that the demonstrations were called off.⁹³

Syria

Although it is not the focus of this study, it is important to discuss the case of Syria and the distinctive features of its Arab Spring protests. For one, protest activity continued significantly longer than any other country while leading to minimal improvements and increasing casualties. At first, social media calls for protests in Syria did not lead to actual

⁸⁹ miriamelsas9 (poster).Morocco Campaign #Feb20#morocco [video]. (2011, Feb 16). Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0f6FSB7gxQ>.

⁹⁰ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Juliane, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 25.

⁹¹ Abend, Lisa. (2011). Protests in Morocco: Just Don't Call it a Revolution. *Time*.

⁹² Lalami, Laila. (2013). Arab Uprisings: What the February 20 Protests Tell us About Morocco. *The Nation*.

⁹³ Ibid.

protest activity. In February 2011, Syrian opposition organizations launched a Facebook campaign that urged the Syrian public to protest on February 4-5th. While over 16,000 Facebook users offered supporting comments, the protests (organized completely on Facebook) did not materialize.⁹⁴

The protests eventually gained momentum in March after the creation of ‘The Syrian Revolution 2011’ Facebook page which informed the public of protest updates.⁹⁵ This along with other Facebook pages appeared to be instrumental in mobilizing, and organizing protest. Twitter and YouTube were also instrumental in inciting the public by posting information and footage of government violence against Syrian protestors.⁹⁶ Aside from the main set of ‘cyber activists’, the ‘Local Coordinating Committees’, who supplied information through their website and Facebook page of government brutality against protesters were also instrumental in mobilizing the public.⁹⁷

In the absence of social media tools, large gatherings (such as funerals and Friday prayers) were frequently used to organize protest activity. Demonstrations were also coordinated with trusted individuals informing one another during ‘face-to face meetings’, cautiously handing out fliers, and with a little sophistications, using social media sites such as Facebook or Skype.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Juliane, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 23.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Fielding-Smith, Abigail. (2011). Syria Protests Escalate Over Death of Boy. *Financial Times*.

⁹⁷ Local Coordination Committees of Syria. (2012).

⁹⁸ Arnold, David. (2012). Syria Witness: Stories of Allegiance, Protest and Survival. *Middle East Voices*.

Cross National Analysis

While the internet clearly had a facilitating effect on the Arab Spring protests, it is important to look at internet access, penetration, and usage rates across the region and verify its correlation to protest activity. Variables that need to be considered are, access – or lack thereof to the internet, internet penetration rates, data regarding internet tools exploited (e.g. number of tweets, size and number of Facebook groups/users, etc). Subsequently these variables should be weighed against the level of protest activity in order to gain a better representation of the internet's impact on the Arab Spring protests.

This first part of the cross national analysis will present information that demonstrates that social media usage was a facilitating variable in many of the protests. The second part will reveal (also using cross national data) that despite social media tools' influence on protest activity, its relationship to protest is weak and other important mediating variables need to be considered.

Before assessing social media's impact on the 2011 protests it is helpful to have a general picture of social media penetration in the MENA region at the time of the protests. Table 2 (below) demonstrates the overall Facebook, Twitter and internet penetration rates in the MENA region in 2011.

Table 2: Facebook, Twitter and Internet Penetration Rates- 2011

from *2011 populations, from United Nations ILO Department of Statistics, <http://laborsta.ilo.org/>

See Figure 12 and Figure 21 for rankings using official GCC population data

** ITU statistics 2009 <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ICTEYE/Indicators/Indicators.asp>

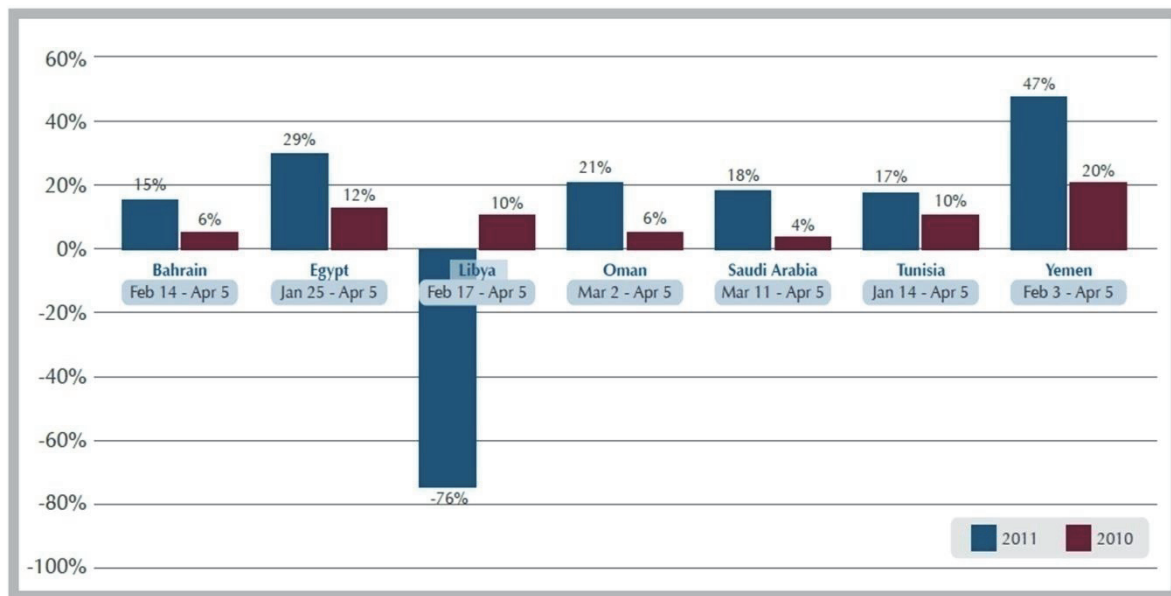
Country	Estimated Number of Active Twitter Users (Avg. between Jan 1st and March 30th, 2011)	Twitter penetration* (%)	Number of Facebook users (4/5/2011)	Facebook penetration* (%)	Internet users per 100 **
Algeria	13,235	0.04	1,947,900	5.42	13.47
Bahrain	61,896	7.53	302,940	36.83	53.00
Comoros	834	0.12	9,080	1.28	3.59
Djibouti	4,046	0.45	52,660	5.89	3.00
Egypt	131,204	0.15	6,586,260	7.66	24.26
Iraq	21,625	0.07	723,740	2.24	1.06
Jordan	55,859	0.85	1,402,440	21.25	26.00
Kuwait	113,428	3.63	795,100	25.51	36.85
Lebanon	79,163	1.85	1,093,420	25.50	23.68
Libya	63,919	0.96	71,840	1.08	5.51
Mauritania	1,407	0.04	61,140	1.78	2.28
Morocco	17,384	0.05	3,203,440	9.78	41.30
Oman	6,679	0.23	277,840	9.37	51.50
Palestine	11,369	0.25	595,120	13.10	32.23
Qatar	133,209	8.46	481,280	30.63	40.00
Saudi Arabia	115,084	0.43	4,092,600	15.28	38.00
Somalia	4,244	0.04	21,580	0.22	1.16
Sudan	9,459	0.02	443,623	1.01	9.19
Syria	40,020	0.17	356,247	1.55	20.40
Tunisia	35,746	0.34	2,356,520	22.49	34.07
UAE	201,060	4.18	2,406,120	50.01	75.00
Yemen	29,422	0.12	340,800	1.37	9.96

In determining social media's impact on protest, Figure 1 (below) indicates that growth rates were significant during the protest period. By April 2011, the total number of Facebook users in the Arab world was 27,711,503 up from 21,377,282 in January 5, 2011, having almost doubled since the same time last year (14,791,972) in April 2010 and correlating with the time of the protest activity.⁹⁹ Moreover, the number of Facebook users in the Arab world increased by

⁹⁹ Salem, Fadi, & Mourtada, Racha. (2011). Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter" *Arab Social Media Report, Dubai School of Government*, Vol. 1 no. 2, 9.

30% in the first quarter of 2011, all indicating Facebook's correlation to the mobilization movements.¹⁰⁰

Figure 1: Growth Rate of Facebook Users During the 2011 Protests as Compared to a Similar Time in 2010



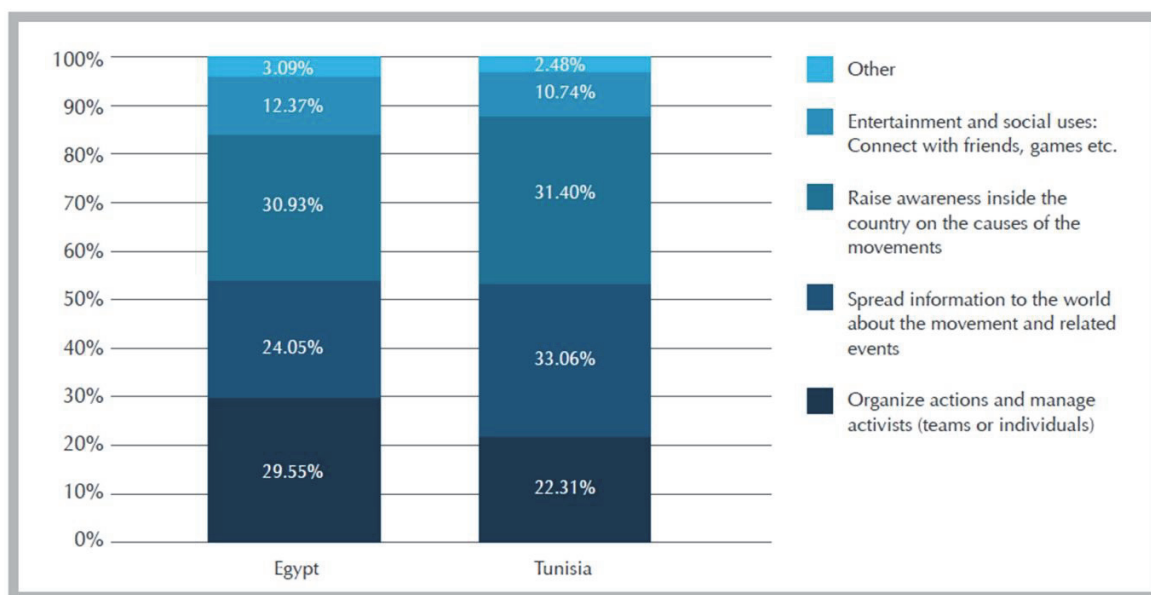
Source: Salem, Fadi, & Mourtada, Racha. (2011). Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter” *Arab Social Media Report*, Dubai School of Government, Vol. 1 no. 2, 5. <http://www.dsg.ae/portals/0/ASMR2.pdf>.

While Figure 1 indicates that social media usage spiked during the protests and therefore points to a correlation between social media usage and the protest activity, correlation does not necessarily imply causation and additional data is required to corroborate a claim of causation. While correlation does indicate that social media usage was instrumental in inducing people to protest, it is important to consider social media's influence on the 2011 protests in a more causal manner.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

As a first step to a closer analysis of social media and its impact on the Arab Spring protests, the Governance and Innovation program at the Dubai School of Government conducted a survey that was distributed through Facebook's targeted advertising platform to all Facebook users in Tunisia and Egypt. The survey ran for three weeks in March 2011, and was conducted in Arabic, English and French.

Figure 2: The Main Usage of Facebook During the Civil Movement and Events in Early 2011 was to:



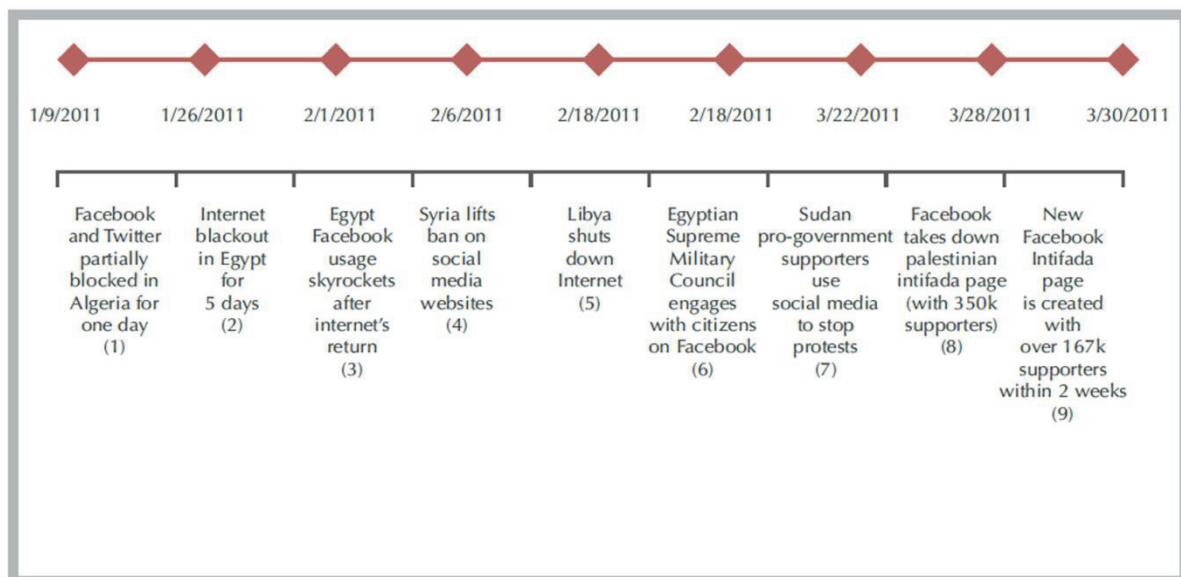
Source: Salem, Fadi, & Mourtada, Racha. (2011). Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter” *Arab Social Media Report, Dubai School of Government*, Vol. 1 no. 2, 6. <http://www.dsg.ae/portals/0/ASMR2.pdf>.

In both countries, Facebook users were of the opinion that Facebook had been used primarily to raise awareness within their countries about the ongoing civil movements (31% in both Tunisia and Egypt), spread information to the world about the movements (33% and 24% in Tunisia and Egypt respectively), and organize activists and actions (22% and 30% in Tunisia and

Egypt respectively). Less than 15% in either country believed Facebook was primarily being used for entertainment or social reasons. This in itself expresses the critical impact of social media on the uprisings.

The following figure shows some of the highlights of the first quarter of 2011 in both citizens' and governments' use of social media. Highlights include the Egyptian military council launching Facebook campaigns to connect with their constituents and Syria opening access to formerly restricted social media sites. Whether governments were blocking access to internet sites or actually using social media to engage its citizens, they clearly viewed social media as somewhat of a threat. The fact that many regimes felt the need to respond to social media usage lends credence to the notion of social media as a facilitator of protest.

Figure 3: Selected Highlights in Social Media and Internet Activity in the Arab Region in Q1-2011

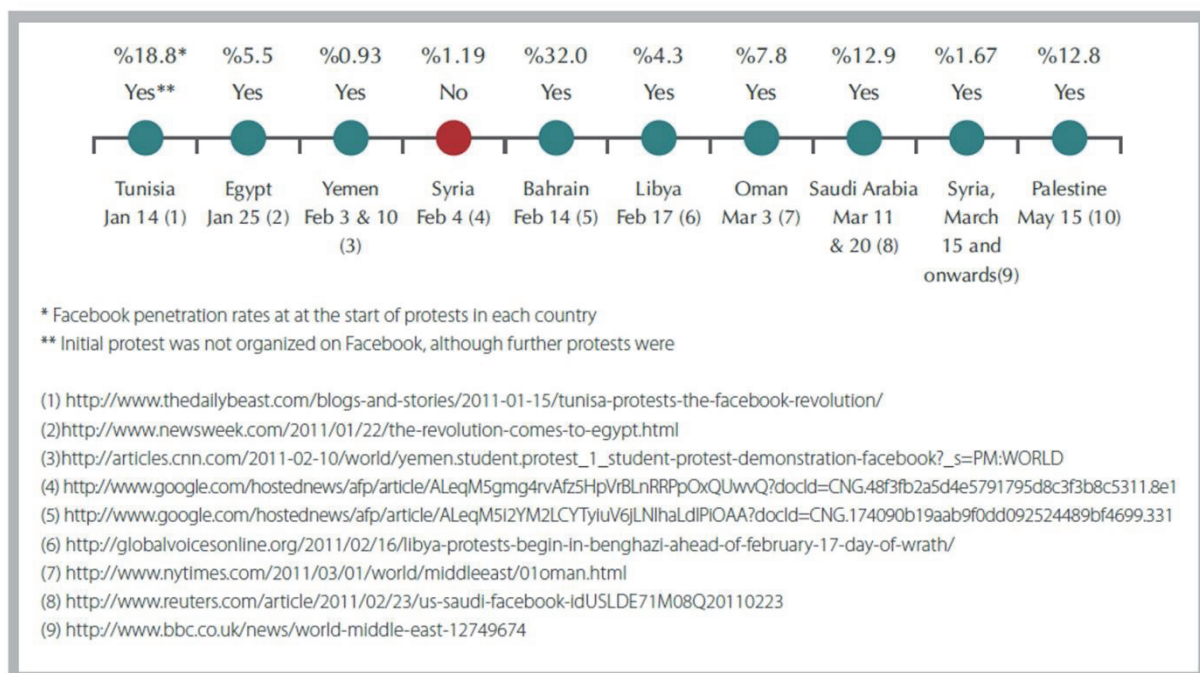


Source: Salem, Fadi, & Mourtada, Racha. (2011). Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter” Arab Social Media Report, Dubai School of Government, Vol. 1 no. 2, 4. <http://www.dsg.ae/portals/0/ASMR2.pdf>.

While digital media tools undeniably facilitated the 2011 protests, it is a mistake to view it as a sufficient in and of itself. Upon deeper examination of the evidence, it is clear that there are other significant variables at play.

Figure 4 demonstrates the countries where a Facebook page's appeal to protest was made on a specified date, and whether or not these protests were manifested in the streets. In all cases but one (the initial failed call to protest in Syria on February 4), this proved to be the case.

Figure 4: Mapping Calls for Protest on Facebook with Actual Demonstration



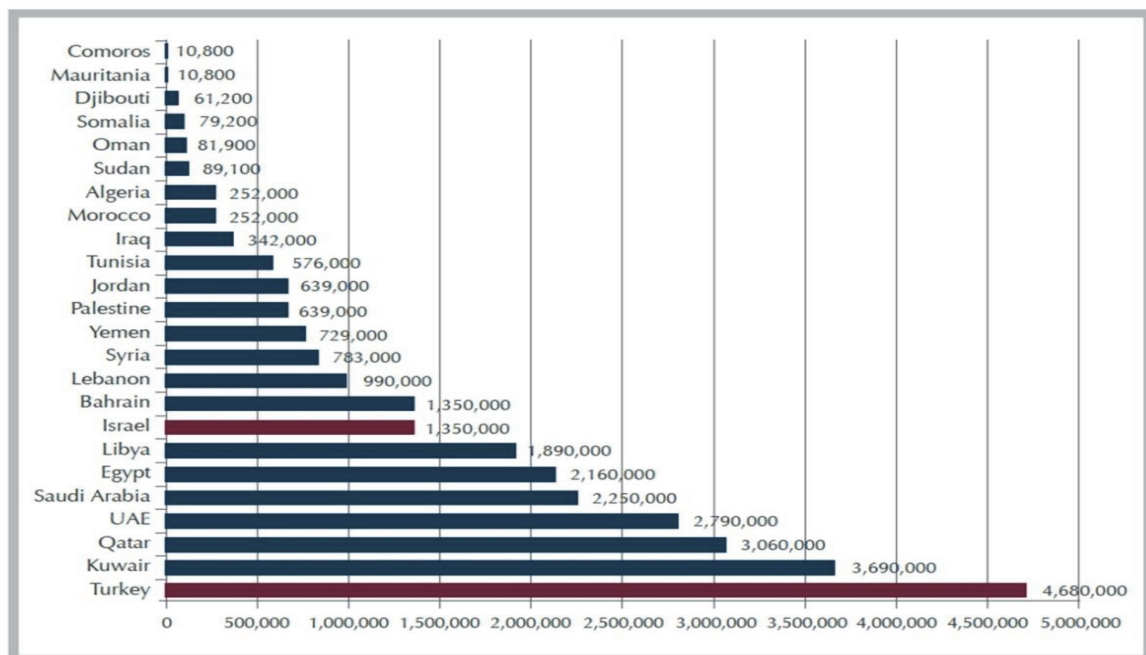
Source: Salem, Fadi, & Mourtada, Racha. (2011). Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter” Arab Social Media Report, Dubai School of Government, Vol. 1 no. 2, 5. <http://www.dsg.ae/portals/0/ASMR2.pdf>.

While Facebook was definitely a factor in the mobilization movements, considering the small Facebook penetration in many of these countries (notably Syria and Yemen), it can be argued that for many protestors these tools were not central and certainly not the dominant variable at play.

Furthermore, when fully considering the internet and social media penetrations rates in the MENA region, one cannot overlook that the Gulf Cooperation Council(GCC) countries still dominate the top five Arab Facebook users as percentage of population (Lebanon being the only exception). While countries like Qatar and the UAE are of the highest internet users in the Middle East, the offline mobilization is not particularly vibrant in the Gulf region (with the exceptions of Bahrain and Kuwait).

The following tables show the volume of tweets from each country which was estimated between January 1 and March 30 (Figure 5) and calculated as a percentage of total tweets in the Arab region over this time period (Figure 6).

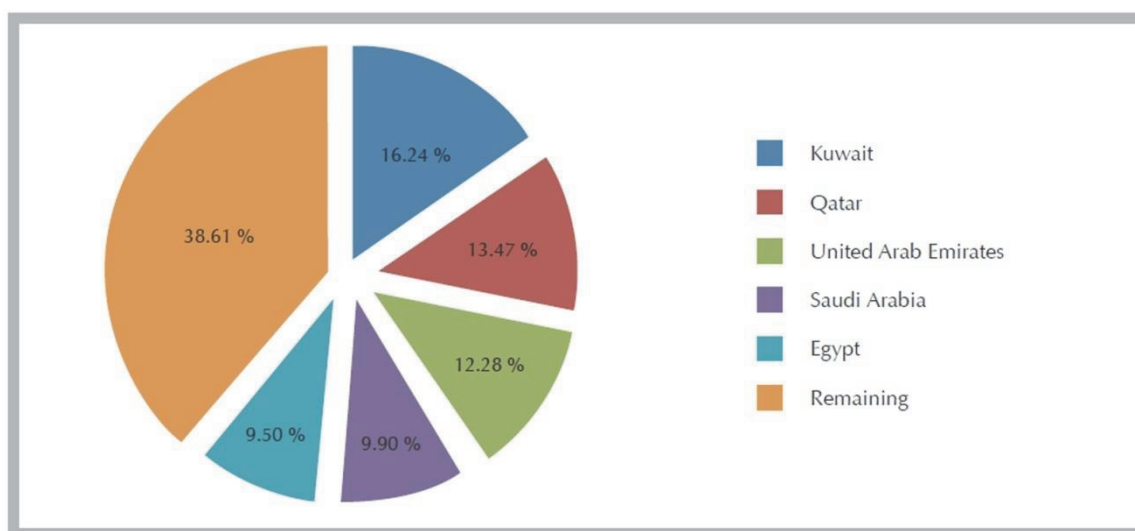
Figure 5: Number of Tweets in the Arab Region* Plus Israel and Turkey



*Iran was excluded due to lack of credible data

Source: Salem, Fadi, &Mourtada, Racha. (2011). Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter” Arab Social Media Report, Dubai School of Government, Vol. 1 no. 2, 18. <http://www.dsg.ae/portals/0/ASMR2.pdf>.

Figure 6: Percentage of Tweets in the MENA region (Jan 1-March 30, 2011)



Source: Salem, Fadi, & Mourtada, Racha. (2011). Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter” Arab Social Media Report, Dubai School of Government, Vol. 1 no. 2, 19. <http://www.dsg.ae/portals/0/ASMR2.pdf>.

The top five generators of tweets in the Arab region are Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, who also have the top five largest active Twitter populations in the region and comprised over 60% of tweets within the first quarter of 2011.¹⁰¹ Although the spikes in tweets correlate with protest activity in Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, and to some extent Saudi Arabia, the same cannot be said for Qatar or the UAE despite the fact that they are of the five countries that generated the highest volume of tweets in this period.

These indices reveal that mere accessibility of the internet or social media platforms is not enough to understand what happened during the Arab Spring. The Gulf region, where internet usage is relatively high for example, saw negligible protest (with the exceptions of Bahrain and Kuwait). Although Saudi Arabia did witness some protest activity, these nations

¹⁰¹ Salem, Fadi, & Mourtada, Racha. (2011). Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter” *Arab Social Media Report*, Dubai School of Government, Vol. 1 no. 2, 19.

have managed to keep ‘the lid of the pressure cooker... screwed down tight.’¹⁰² At the same time, places such as Yemen with minimal internet penetration witnessed major protests in the absence of social media organization.¹⁰³

Implications

It is important to recognize that successful uses of digital media across many cases of the Arab world are potentially counter-balanced by contextual instances where digital media, even when available, may not have been very useful. For example, the United Arab Emirates boasts some of the highest levels of connectivity and e-government development in the Arab world, but experienced hardly any successful offline mobilization.¹⁰⁴ This trend is applicable to many of the Gulf countries, which share common factors, (primarily oil wealth and a rentier state) giving them a capacity to satisfy economic grievances among their people and subsidize new infrastructures and master control over them. As was the case in Saudi Arabia, various regimes were very masterful in designing information censorship and management protocols.¹⁰⁵

The successful use of social media in many countries in the MENA region were somewhat offset by significant factors wherein digital media, even readily accessible, was not particularly useful.¹⁰⁶ Conversely, in some countries where social media was less accessible,

¹⁰² Tisdall, Simon. (2012). Barack Obama's Re-election and Events in Syria Dominate the Headlines in 2012. *The Guardian*.

¹⁰³ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Julianne, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 15.

¹⁰⁴ Howard, N. Philip, & Muzammil, M. Hussain. (2012). Democracy's Fourth Wave? Information Technologies and the Fuzzy Causes of the Arab Spring. *Paper prepared for presentation at the International Studies Association April 1-4, San Diego*, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 2-3.

¹⁰⁶ Howard, N. Philip, & Muzammil, M. Hussain. (2013). Democracy's Fourth Wave; Digital Media and the Arab Spring. *Oxford University Press*. Kindle file, Conclusion.

secondary factors enabled considerable protest activity to occur. Social media is shown to help facilitate protest but does not necessarily cause protest to occur.

Clearly the role of social media in protest activity cannot be understood without first accounting for the political and economic context in which these new media function. It is important to consider non-internet processes in order to understand the contextual variables that were in-play *before* the Arab Spring¹⁰⁷ and to identify factors that make a country more fragile and susceptible to protests. What might have made some countries more susceptible to protests than others to and what may explain the relative successes of some uprisings more than others? In some cases, the absence or presence of serious protest is unrelated to social media usage and entirely dependent on circumstantial variables. While there are a myriad of significant political, social and economic factors that are essential to understanding the incidence of protest, the focus here will be will on pre-existing civil society activism (which in large part signifies the political, economic, and social goals) as an important interceding variable to social media and mobilization.

In order to offer further context to social media and its effect on protest activity, it is helpful to draw on social movement theory. More specifically, the idea that social movements are more likely to occur in communities with ‘dense network ties’, and that those solicited to take part in protest are likely to already have pre-existing ties to those in the movement.

Marina Ottaway and Amr Hamzawy argue that the protests that began in Tunisia in 2010-2011 were not a complete novelty but rather a magnification of the social unrest and civil society

¹⁰⁷ Howard, N. Philip, & Muzammil, M. Hussain. (2012). Democracy’s Fourth Wave? Information Technologies and the Fuzzy Causes of the Arab Spring. *Paper prepared for presentation at the International Studies Association April 1-4, San Diego, 2.*

activism ongoing throughout the region, particularly in Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, and Jordan.¹⁰⁸

They assert that on the whole protest activity has been motivated by social and economic grievances that were organized into official and unofficial civil society groups well before the 2010-2011 uprisings,¹⁰⁹ and the Arab Spring protests were a reflection of organization and activism that was already in the makings.

More formally organized networks of citizens and civic organizations successfully used information infrastructures to do political organizing and capacity building *over time*, not simply during the phase of street protests.¹¹⁰

To be clear, the cross national data proved that the social media tools do not cause protest to occur and that the effectiveness of protest through social media is highly dependent on the socio-economic and political context. Once the core economic/political motivations for protest are prevalent, then pre-existing civil society activism and the ability to organize and build on trusted networks can improve social media's facilitating potential.

¹⁰⁸ Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. *Carnegie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook*, 2.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Howard, N. Philip, & Muzammil, M. Hussain. (2012). Democracy's Fourth Wave? Information Technologies and the Fuzzy Causes of the Arab Spring. *Paper prepared for presentation at the International Studies Association April 1-4, San Diego*, 3.

Chapter 3: Civil Society as a Mediating Factor

Defining Civil Society

Although civil society is an important mediating variable, it is important to consider the nature and quality of civil society groups. Civil society is an ambiguous category, and in order to make sense of the effects that civil society can have (in particular on protest activity) it is important to identify the critical characteristics of civil society groups and the various ways in which they manifest in the MENA region.

Civil society is defined as ‘self generating’ and self-supporting community of people who share a normative order and volunteer to organize political, economic or cultural activities that are independent of the state’.¹¹¹ Civil society organizations are an integral part of all democracies and are independent from the state. Civil society is made up of various groups that promote different points of view.¹¹² A central component of a civil society is that a single group cannot claim to represent the entire society. A vibrant civil society is characterized by the existence of various organizations that each contributes a different dimension to the spread of ideas and information about national development and public policy goals.¹¹³

Civil society groups are generally comprised of ‘non-state actors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)’ and are not limited to political and pro-democracy groups. In addition to political and democratization associations, other relevant civil society groups include: trade unions, religious groups, community development organizations, professional and business

¹¹¹ Howard, N. Philip, & Muzammil, M. Hussain. (2013). *Democracy’s Fourth Wave; Digital Media and the Arab Spring*. Oxford University Press. Kindle file, Introduction.

¹¹² Civil Society Empowerment. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD),6. (2013).

¹¹³ Understanding Civil Society Issues for WHO. *World Health Organization Discussion Paper*,5. (2002).

associations, informal political and social clubs and various other interest and advocacy groups.¹¹⁴

Civil societies in the MENA region continue to struggle to function effectively because of the violence, repression, co-option and insecure legal structure that they face (in particular the political pro-democracy groups).¹¹⁵

Civil Society groups in the MENA region generally fall into one of three categories in terms of their goals:

1. The pro-democracy sector is composed of highly politicized organizations that aim to advance democratic ideals and promote government reform. They seek to do this by implementing democracy-education programs, keeping tabs on government human rights actions, combating corruption, rallying the public, watching elections, lobbying for government reform and doing research on the relevant topics.¹¹⁶

2. The membership-based sector is composed of professional associations such as labor unions, professional syndicates, chambers of commerce and other political groups (with agendas unrelated to democracy promotion).¹¹⁷ This sector is of the most prevalent in a lot of MENA

¹¹⁴ Ibrahim, E. Saad. (2005). Civil Society and Prospects for Democratization in the Arab World, in Civil Society in the Middle East, edited by Richard Augustus Norton. *Koverkian Center for Near Eastern Studies, New York University*, 28.

¹¹⁵ Hawthorne, Amy. (2004). Middle East Democracy, Is Civil Society the Answer? *Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Carnegie Papers Middle East Series, no. 44, 12.*

¹¹⁶ Vallianatos, Stefanos. (2013). Arab Civil Society at the Crossroads of Democratization: The Arab Spring Impact. *The Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation- German Marshal Fund Project*, 4.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

countries. While its foremost objective is to supply their members with social and economic services, they are often politically active as well and are highly censored as a result.¹¹⁸

3. The service-NGO sector is composed of the classic non-profit associations which are also involved in cultural activities such as youth groups and mutual aid associations. They provide various services including vocational training, aid organization, educational coaching, community development projects, and promoting camaraderie through their activities.¹¹⁹

With this definition in mind, the next step is to analyze the role of these pre-existing civil society associations in facilitating protest.

Country-by-Country Case Studies of Pre-existing Civil Society

Civil society groups that were already in place started to use social media for disseminating information, gaining support and mobilizing protest. Social media did not have an abrupt impact on the 2011 protests. In many countries it took a number of years for people with pre-existing political or social ties to gain support and expand their turf online.¹²⁰ At the same time, in countries where pre-existing affiliations were scarce, people did not communicate or organize as effectively since they lacked a trusted solidarity network to build on. While pre-existing civil society movements were nowhere near as outstanding as the Arab Spring protests, their activities subtly set the stage for the eventual uprisings that occurred.

¹¹⁸ Sullivan, J. Denis. (2000). NGOs and Development in the Arab World: The Critical Importance of a Strong Partnership between Government and Civil Society. *Civil Society and Democratization in the Arab World* 9(102), 1–18.

¹¹⁹ Vallianatos, Stefanos. (2013). Arab Civil Society at the Crossroads of Democratization: The Arab Spring Impact. *The Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation- German Marshal Fund Project*, 4.

¹²⁰ Howard, N. Philip, & Muzammil, M. Hussain. (2013). Democracy's Fourth Wave; Digital Media and the Arab Spring. *Oxford University Press*. Kindle file, Introduction.

This section will present an overview of the significant civil society and social movements that were in place well before the Arab Spring protests in the following countries: Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, Bahrain, Kuwait and Syria. It will demonstrate how those same pre-existing associations laid the foundation for protest activity and were also active during the Arab Spring itself. In each case, the pre-existing organizational movements will emerge consequential to the 2011 uprisings.

Egypt

Civil society groups, like the April 6 Youth Movement in Egypt, and banned political parties, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, have all successfully used information infrastructure to do political organizing and capacity building *over time*, not simply during the phase of street protests. The 2011 uprisings did not occur spontaneously. Rather they were an extension of existing civil society and social movements that were gaining power over the last decade.

In Egypt, there were mounting civil society and labor movements in the 1990s and 2000s and then the eventual 2011 uprising. The ‘We are all Khaled Said Group’, the 6 April Movement (founded in 2008 concerning labor complaints), ‘Muslim Brotherhood youth, the group around presidential hopeful Muhammad el-Baradei, the ‘new left’, human rights and other civil society activists, striking workers: all played a role in Mubarak’s overthrow’.¹²¹ Protest activity in Egypt was comprised of unauthorized labor-sit-ins and strikes (unauthorized by the official government-run professional associations and labor unions).¹²² Egypt endured over a thousand social protests from 1998-2004 and in 2004 alone experienced 250 episodes (a 200

¹²¹ Dalacoura, Katerina. (2012). The 2011 Uprisings in the Arab Middle East: Political Change and Geopolitical Implications. *International Affairs*, 68.

¹²² Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. *Carnegie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook*, 2.

percent increase from 2003).¹²³ The increase is mainly attributed to Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif introducing an economic liberalization development without adequate ‘social safeguards’.¹²⁴ By the 2005 elections, social protest increased further and in 2006 *al-Masry al-Youm* (a newspaper in Egypt) reported 222 protests, labor sit-ins and strikes in 2006¹²⁵ and 580 in 2007.¹²⁶

In 2007 public sector employees began to organize in Cairo under collective action agendas with 55,000 real estate tax collectors protesting for several weeks demanding equal salaries to other tax collectors.¹²⁷ Public sector employee protests were also organized by spinning and weaving worker groups in the Delta town of al-Mahalla al-Kubra in 2006-2007. These protest also had political connotations with employees protesting for local trade union committee members to be impeached and campaigning against government corruption.¹²⁸

While political protest activity subsided after the 2005 elections as political movement groups felt their efforts were ineffective in promoting government improvements, socioeconomic activism expanded significantly.¹²⁹ In 2008, 400 strikes involving somewhere between 300,000 to 500,000 workers took place.¹³⁰ The most historic of the strikes was one that occurred on April 6th and was instigated by youth activist and workers’ groups networks.¹³¹

Protest began to spread from big cities such as Cairo and Alexandria to others towns like

¹²³ Beinin, Joel. (2008). Underbelly of Egypt New Neoliberal Agenda. *Middle East Report*.

¹²⁴ Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. *Carnegie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook*, 2.

¹²⁵ Beinin, Joel, & el-Hamalawy, Hossam. (2007). Strikes in Egypt Spread From Center of Gravity. *Middle East Report*.

¹²⁶ News Report: Workers Leadership Forms Preparatory Committee for Workers. *The Socialist Center for Socialist Studies*. (2009).

¹²⁷ The Struggle for Workers’ Rights in Egypt. *Solidarity Center Report*. (2010).

¹²⁸ Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. *Carnegie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook*, 3.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Beinin, Joel. (2008). Underbelly of Egypt New Neoliberal Agenda. *Middle East Report*.

¹³¹ Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. *Carnegie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook*, 3.

al-Mahalla al-Kubra. It also attracted a diverse range of ‘formal and informal opposition groups such as the Nasserist Karama Party (not yet legally recognized), the Wasat Party (also still unrecognized), the Egyptian Movement for Change (Kefaya), the Lawyers’ Syndicate’¹³² and other groups as well. The most significant civil society movements at the time were the state workers’ association, the April 6th Youth group, political blogger networks and university professors and educated elite who together formed various associations and movements.¹³³ Roughly 25,000 Mahalla workers organized protests that generated significant fights between workers and security personnel.¹³⁴ Prominent opposition factions such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Wafd liberal Party endorsed the protests but did not actively participate.¹³⁵

The April 6th 2008 protest was of particular significance because in addition to its socioeconomic platform, the associations involved also called for political reform. ‘They demanded higher wages, improved public services in the health, education, and transportation sectors, the elimination of government corruption, an end to police torture and arbitrary detainment, and the creation of a fair judiciary system.’¹³⁶ The actual protest only lasted a day and when youth activist groups attempted to renew the demonstrations on April 6th of 2009 and 2010, it was unsuccessful and demands once again became mostly socioeconomic.¹³⁷ In 2009 Egypt saw about 1,000 workers’ strikes and industrial demonstrations¹³⁸ and 300 labor protests

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Egypt: Revolution Revisited. *Al Jazeera*. (2013).

¹³⁴ Labor Protests Politics and Workers Rights in Egypt. (2010). *Event transcript, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.

¹³⁵ Trager, Eric. (2011). The Unbreakable Muslim Brotherhood: Grim Prospects for a Liberal Egypt. *Foreign Affairs*.

¹³⁶ Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. *Carnegie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook*, 3.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Shaoul, Jean. (2010). Egypt Gripped by Social Unrest. *World Socialist Web Site*.

in the beginning of 2010.¹³⁹ In response to recurrent socioeconomic demonstrations, the government steadily ‘shifted from repression to a policy of making targeted concessions to the protesting groups.’¹⁴⁰ The salaries of state employees were increased a few times, at the same time as the government strictly managed the prices of basic foods.¹⁴¹

In 2010 there were protests again and clashes erupted between opposition supporters and security forces as the parliamentary elections were coming up.¹⁴² The political demonstrations were once again initiated by those same informal and formal political groups and networks.

On the whole, it is evident that well before the January 25th revolution; there were political movements and civil society networks laying the foundation for a strong resistance against Mubarak’s regime.

Tunisia

While social media was an important tool in mobilizing protesters in the December 2010 protests, a range of civil society groups including trade unions, education unions, human rights organizations and opposition groups were in place a lot earlier than the Tunisian uprising and were clearly instrumental in organizing their members to demonstrate against the regime. The involvement of these groups resulted in the mobilization of a large swath of Tunisian society including students, teachers, journalists, human rights activists, trade unionists and opposition politicians.

¹³⁹ El Hennawy, Noha. (2010). Egypt’s Opposition Seeks to Translate Social Discontent Before Elections. *Al-Masry al-Youm*.

¹⁴⁰ Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. *Canergie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook*, 3.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ahmed, Amir. (2010). Egyptian Police, Opposition Supporters Clash ahead of Elections. *CNN*.

As in many MENA countries, a large bulk of protest activity (predating the Arab Spring) stemmed from economic grievances and for the most part lasted for a short period of time and remained local. That said, the al-Haud al-Mangami 2008 uprising wherein a local mining company protested what they deemed to be an inequitable recruitment policy, actually spread nationwide and lasted several weeks with youth activists and workers unions protesting and rioting throughout Tunisia.¹⁴³ In response, the Tunisian government arrested more than 200 protesters.

In addition to economic protest, Tunisia also witnessed political mobilization in the last decade. Notably, the 2005 World Summit on Information Society that took place in Tunis instigated public protest.¹⁴⁴ The hypocrisy of the Tunisian government (who clearly limited their citizens freedom of information) hosting a summit devoted to the topic of freedom of information led to a mass demonstration in Tunis.¹⁴⁵ Other more minor incidents of political protest occurred since then involving students, youth activist groups, teachers unions, journalists, human rights activists, trade unionists and political opposition groups, ‘hunger strikes and sit-ins defending political freedoms and civil liberties were not a rarity in Tunisia’¹⁴⁶ in the years leading up the Arab Spring. While some of these unions had fairly positive interactions with the

¹⁴³ Ottaway, Marina, &Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. Canergie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook, 5-6.

¹⁴⁴ Tunisia: NGOs protest deterioration of rights in Tunisia two months ahead of World Summit. *World Organization against Torture*. (2005).

¹⁴⁵ Breuer, Anita. (2012). The Role of Social Media in Mobilizing Protest: Evidence from the Tunisian Revolution. *German Development Institute & Deutsche Institut für Entwicklungspolitik*, 13.

¹⁴⁶ Ottaway, Marina, &Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. Canergie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook, 6.

Tunisian government, they were still active in increasing participation in broader social movements.¹⁴⁷

Jordan

Jordan actually witnessed small scale protest activity for over two decades, some political others, socioeconomic. Unlike in Egypt, political and economic movements were closely interlinked in Jordan.

In 1989 after the establishment of various economic policies (most notably privatization policies that impacted state employees) there was an eruption of protest activity.¹⁴⁸ The protest activity was not only fueled by economic grievances, but also political accusations of corruption and inequality. As a result, the Jordanian government reactivated parliament and the Islamic Action Front saw an increase in parliamentary seats.¹⁴⁹

The next surge of protest was set off by the second intifada in Palestine in September 2000. Within just the first week of October, 73 demonstrations and 203 marches arose in Jordan.¹⁵⁰ Politically induced protest was closely intertwined with economic grievances. It wasn't long before political demonstrators were protesting against unemployment, taxes on food staples and increases in gas prices. Demonstrations were coordinated mostly by civil society groups, workers unions, opposition parties and professional associations. Yet, despite the surge in protest activity, most of the efforts elicited minimal government responses. In January 2011 when these groups once again began to demonstrate (partially as a result of the Tunisian revolt)

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Andoni, Lamis. (2011). Jordan of the Future. *Al Jazeera*, 2.

¹⁴⁹ Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. Carnegie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook, 6.

¹⁵⁰ Schwedler, Jillian. (2003). More Than a Mob: the Dynamics of Political Demonstrations in Jordan. *Middle East Report*, no. 226.

the Jordanian government didn't react by easing up political restrictions, but rather by allocating \$283 million to cut down taxes on gas and food staples¹⁵¹ (although the Jordanian government has responded mostly economically, its resources are limited and it may have to resort to political concessions eventually).

Crucially, the 2011 protests were not spontaneous. To some extent they were a buildup of civil society groups and collective action movements that were already in place. On January 28th, following Friday prayers, 3,500 opposition activists from diverse organizations such as trade union organizations, MB members, leftist groups protested in Amman and demanded government change.¹⁵² The biggest protest took place on Friday (again the prayer services served as a good means of assembling), February 25th with the Islamic Action Front drawing together 10,000 Jordanians from 19 political parties and civil society associations to protest in Amman. The significant turnout was largely from members of pre-existing civil society and opposition groups. These groups were a strong force behind the 2011 Jordanian protests.

Morocco

In the last decade or so Morocco endured 'successive waves of protest' as well. Many of the demonstrations involved labor unions (some government aligned, others not).¹⁵³ Protests in the early 2000s were also driven by 'diplomes chomeurs' (unemployed graduates).¹⁵⁴ While the 'diplomes chomeurs' pre-Arab Spring demonstrations mostly pertained to demanding better job

¹⁵¹ Salary Hike Comes After a Day of Protest: Jordan Hikes Govt Salaries in Face of Discontent. *Al Arabiya News Channel*. (2011).

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. *Canergie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook*, 4.

¹⁵⁴ Bank, Andre. (2012). Jordan and Morocco: Pacification Through Constitutional Reform? In Protest, Revolt and Regime Change in the Arab World, edited by Muriel Asseburg. *Stiftung Wissenschaft and Politik German Institute for International and Security Affairs*, 30.

opportunities, during the Arab Spring (and upon the toppling of the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes) these same activists modified their demands to include greater political freedoms and government integrity.¹⁵⁵ Protest activity peaked in 2007. Between January and October of 2007, 945 demonstrations took place with youth activists, labor unions and professional associations protesting unemployment, unaffordable prices and adverse labor conditions.¹⁵⁶ Although protest activity died down for a few years after that, these groups were not insignificant to the Arab Spring and the pre-existing networks they established enabled protest organization to be more effective.

Algeria

Protest activity in the 1980s resulted in a government change, elections and then a military government to avoid an Islamist triumph. This was followed by a civil war in the 90s with exceptionally violent behavior from Islamist groups as well as security forces.¹⁵⁷ While there was significant conflict and instability during this period, this study will examine the political and socioeconomic unrest in the postwar period.

Much like Egypt, political mobilization was generally separate of socioeconomic protest. Political protest was mostly instigated by the Tamazight (Berber) Kabyle activists who insisted on the government's acknowledgement of the Tamazight language and cultural privileges.¹⁵⁸ Their protest movement directly impacted the 2002 elections; in addition to the Tamazight

¹⁵⁵ Bank, Andre. (2012). Jordan and Morocco: Pacification Through Constitutional Reform? In *Protest, Revolt and Regime Change in the Arab World*, edited by Muriel Asseburg. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 30.

¹⁵⁶ Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. *Carnegie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook*, 4.

¹⁵⁷ Ryan, Yasmine. (2010). Uncovering Algeria's Civil War: A French Investigation into the Deaths of Seven Monks is Challenging the War's Historical Narrative. *Al Jazeera*.

¹⁵⁸ Maddy-Weitzman, Bruce. (2011). The Berber Awakening. *The American Interest*.

groups boycotting the elections, they also prevented the Kabyle population from casting their votes by terrorizing the local polling stations. Tamazight groups were also active in anti-regime protests against president Abdulaziz Bouteflika.¹⁵⁹

Labor unions in Algeria were especially involved in socioeconomic protest (even more so than in Morocco). Even government aligned Algerian General Workers Union (UGTA) partook in a number of protests and went on strike in 2003 to protest privatization measures, the lowering of workers' salaries, poor labor standards, and inadequate pension and social security plans.¹⁶⁰ In 2008, widespread unemployment (particularly among the youth) and poverty led to protest activity and demonstrations which involved hundreds of youth activists.¹⁶¹ These protests led to the development of independent labor unions. Members of professional associations (including teachers) also protested the economic liberalizing policies being implemented by government for fear that they would lead to price hikes and inflation.¹⁶²

By the time the Tunisian revolt came about, political activists, civil society groups and labor unions in Algeria already built up some momentum and the Tunisian uprising set off violent riots throughout Algeria over mounting unemployment and inflation.¹⁶³ While the Algerian regime arrested over 1,000 protestors in response, and successfully contained the protests, the Algerian government ended up agreeing to lower the prices and taxes on food staples and as a result reduced some of the unrest temporarily.

¹⁵⁹ Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. Canergie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook, 4.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹⁶¹ Ford, Robert (2008). Scene setter for A/S Welch visit to Algeria. *WikiLeaks*. *WikiLeaks cable:08ALGIERS198*.

¹⁶² Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. Canergie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook, 5.

¹⁶³ Algeria Opposition Bent on Protest Despite Govt Move. *Al Arabiya News*. (2011).

Bahrain

Although small scale protest did occur in a few Gulf countries, the two countries that witnessed the most significant protest activity involving various incidents were Bahrain and Kuwait. In both states the purpose and demands were political.¹⁶⁴ Political and civil society organizations in Bahrain were gaining clout by around 2005 onwards. The al-Haqq Movement for Liberty and Democracy (more rejectionist than the Shi'i Islamist al-Wifaq and the left-leaning, non-sectarian Wa'ad groups) and the human rights movement, centered on the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights—were highly instrumental in the eventual insurrection.¹⁶⁵ On the whole, most protests in Bahrain were related to Shi'i-Sunni clashes that characterize much of its political and social way of life.¹⁶⁶ In the last decade, various Shi'i political movements and organizations (Shi'i being the clear majority) protested against the Sunni elite marginalizing their people as well as naturalizing non- Bahraini Sunnis.¹⁶⁷ The Shi'i maintained that the Sunnis were doing it to rework the Sunni-Shi'i ratio and guarantee that the Shi'i does not gain equal rights.¹⁶⁸ Shi'i activist youth groups, human rights advocates and political bloggers also protested for greater political and civil rights.¹⁶⁹ Security officials responded violently to protesters and as a result aroused greater protest activity especially from 2008 through 2010 with protest resulting in

¹⁶⁴ Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. Canergie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook, 6.

¹⁶⁵ Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (III): The Bahrain Revolt. *International Crisis Group* (2011), 14-20.

¹⁶⁶ Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. *Canergie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook*, 7.

¹⁶⁷ Cherif Bassiouni, Mahmoud, Rodley, Nigel, Al-Awadhi, Badria, Kirsch, Philippe, & Arsanjani, Mahnoush. (2011). Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry. *Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry*.

¹⁶⁸ Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. Canergie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook, 7.

¹⁶⁹ Popular Protests in North Africa and the Middle East: The Bahrain Revolt. *International Crisis Group, Middle East North African Report no. 105*. (2011).

violent collisions with security forces.¹⁷⁰ These groups, protests and movements laid the foundation for the eventual 2011 Bahraini uprising.

Kuwait

In Kuwait, most protest activity was organized by middle to upper class professionals, activists and bloggers as opposed to labor workers.¹⁷¹ In 2006, over 4,000 youth activists coordinated the ‘Orange Movement’ and compelled the government to reduce the number of voting districts from 25 to 5¹⁷² in order to reduce vote buying and tribal loyalties by making it necessary to appeal to a large range of voters (although new elections took place, tribal loyalties and vote buying continued.)¹⁷³ The Shi’i population also demonstrated for equal political and economic privileges.

More notable however was the women’s rights movement in Kuwait that existed years before the 2011 protests. The earlier demonstrations opposed mandatory (naqab) veiling, and the later ones expanded to include demands for equal political rights for women.¹⁷⁴ The majority of protest activity was organized and executed by middle to upper class women who were part of civil society organizations aspiring to generate social reforms by demonstrating, lobbying, and campaigning for women’s rights through media infrastructures, and forming political

¹⁷⁰ Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. Canergie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook, 7.

¹⁷¹ al- Saadi, Yazan. (2011). Kuwait the Paradox of Sustained Instability. *Al Akhbar*.

¹⁷² Tetreault, Mary Ann. (2006). Kuwait Annus Mirabilis. *Middle East Report*.

¹⁷³ Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. Canergie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook, 7.

¹⁷⁴ al-Mughni, Haya. (2010). Women’s Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Progress Amid Resistance. Kelly, Sanja, & Breslin, Julia (Eds.). *Freedom House, New York, NY*, 3-6.

alliances.¹⁷⁵ Finally, in 2009, the women's right movement was fully triumphant and the Kuwaiti government granted women equal political rights.¹⁷⁶

That said, the Kuwaiti government did not respond as accommodatingly to the Shi'i population's (30%) protests for equal political and economic privileges as they did to the Women's Right Movement and the Orange Movement.¹⁷⁷

Overall, the Orange movement, women's right associations and even the Shi'i protest all played a role in the larger protests that took place in 2011.

It is important to note that while civil society activists utilized social media to coordinate protest and disseminate information, authoritarian regimes also responded and used digital media to counter the uprisings.¹⁷⁸ Though in many cases this did damper protest momentum and it also substantiates the claim that social media tools were instrumental in the toppling of authoritarian regimes.

Yemen

With low levels of internet usage and significant protest activity, the important function of pre-existing organizational (including tribal association which was pre-existing group activism) in the Yemini protests is evident and substantiates social movement theorists claim of pre-existing civil society membership boosting participation in protest.¹⁷⁹ In the last three years,

¹⁷⁵ Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. Canergie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook, 7.

¹⁷⁶ al-Mughni, Haya. (2010). Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Progress Amid Resistance. Kelly, Sanja, & Breslin, Julia (Eds.). Freedom House, New York, NY, 2.

¹⁷⁷ Ottaway, Marina, & Hamzawy, Amr. (2011). Protest Movement and Political Change in the Arab World. Canergie Endowment for Political Peace: Policy Outlook, 7.

¹⁷⁸ Howard, N. Philip, & Muzammil, M. Hussain. (2013). Democracy's Fourth Wave; Digital Media and the Arab Spring. *Oxford University Press*. Kindle file, Chapter 3.

¹⁷⁹ Jamjoon, Mohammed. (2011). Yemen's Youth Find their Voice. *CNN International Edition*.

Yemen witnessed conflict between existing parties, instigated by the JMP, and youth activists. In particular, Yemeni protestor Tawakul Karman led demonstrations every Tuesday in front of the cabinet building later nicknamed “Freedom Square” demanding government change.¹⁸⁰

Moreover, Houthis, opposition groups, and tribal blocs demonstrating for government change in Yemen were all from extremely solid pre-existing networks that were generally run by conventional methods rather than by internet and social media tools.¹⁸¹

Syria

Although the Syrian case is more unique and did not follow the pattern of other MENA countries, it is still important to discuss the relationship of pre-existing civil society networks to the protest activity that emerged. A Syrian protestor maintained that it is hard to coordinate protests in areas where people are not acquainted and therefore lack conviction in one another.¹⁸² This notion supports social movement theory and its emphasis on the importance of ‘strong, interpersonal social ties, as well as dense social ties in networks, as a means of facilitating individual participation in protests by decreasing the uncertainty of mobilization’.¹⁸³ This is especially true in Syria, where government subjugation of the 2011 protests has been extremely violent making protest activity exceedingly dangerous. In light of the risks that protest activity in Syria entails, pre-existing social connections among protestors is of immense significance since people will have more courage to protest if they are already embedded in trusted solidarity

¹⁸⁰ al-Sakkaf, Nadia. (2011). The politicization of Yemen’s youth revolution. *Arab Reform Bulletin, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.

¹⁸¹ Boone, Jeb. (2011). In Yemen, Civil War Comes to Saleh's Door. *Christian Science Monitor. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost*.

¹⁸² Arnold, David. (2012). Syria Witness: Stories of Allegiance, Protest and Survival. *Middle East Voices*.

¹⁸³ McAdam Douglas, Tarrow, Sidney, & Tilly Charles.(2008). Methods for Measuring Mechanisms of Contention.*Qualitative Sociology* 31, no. 4, 644.

networks that solicit them. Minority groups in Syria typically exhibited a higher degree of interpersonal trust. As a result, neighborhoods with a high number of Kurdish residents (such as Al-Malikiyah , Qamishli , Amuda , Efrîn, Ra's al-'Ayn, Al-Darbasiyah and Ayn al-Arab¹⁸⁴¹⁸⁵¹⁸⁶¹⁸⁷¹⁸⁸¹⁸⁹) and areas with a lot of refugees from the Golan Heights were frequently the locations of a lot of the larger demonstrations¹⁹⁰ and areas with weaker interpersonal ties witnessed less protest activity. Even before the Arab Spring Kurdish areas saw higher degrees of unrest. In 2004 for example, there were anti-regime demonstrations in the north-eastern town of Qamishli. During an uncontained soccer game, citizens waved Kurdish flags, which led to political controversy. Police got involved and between police attacks and conflict between Kurdish and Arab factions, over 30 people died.¹⁹¹ Sporadic blows between government forces and Kurdish rioters also arose since then.¹⁹²¹⁹³

Although pre-existent minority affiliations were relevant in the Syrian demonstrations, it is not that simple; individual's numerous and concurrent social connections are consequential and at times are 'conflicting influences' in an individuals' decision to protest.¹⁹⁴ This is true in various Syrian districts where people have social connections to the protesters, but

¹⁸⁴ More Kurdish Cities Liberated As Syrian Army Withdraws from Area. *Rudaw*. (2012).

¹⁸⁵ Markey, Patrick. (2013). After quiet revolt, power struggle looms for Syria's Kurds. *Reuters*.

¹⁸⁶ City of Derik taken by Kurds in Northeast Syria. *Firat news*. (2012).

¹⁸⁷ Ban: Syrian regime 'failed to protect civilians. *CNN*. (2012).

¹⁸⁸ Clashes between Kurds and Syrian army in the Kurdish city of Qamişlo, Western Kurdistan. *E Kurd.net*. (2012)

¹⁸⁹ Abdulmajid, Abid. (2012). Armed Kurds Surround Syrian Security Forces in Qamishli. *Rudaw*.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. 101

¹⁹¹ Isseroff, Ami (2004). Kurdish Agony – the Forgotten Massacre of Qamishlo. *MideastWeb*.

¹⁹² Brandon, James. (2007). The PKK and Syria's Kurds. *Terrorism Monitor*, Washington, DC: *The Jamestown Foundation* (3).

¹⁹³ Isseroff, Ami (2004). Kurdish Agony – the Forgotten Massacre of Qamishlo. *MideastWeb*.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 19, 641-2

simultaneously have business relationships within ‘regime circles’ that could negatively affect their participation.¹⁹⁵

Quantitative Analysis: The Impact of Civil Society Membership and Social Media Usage on Protest

In addition to qualitatively outlining civil society activism in the MENA region, it is helpful to quantitatively examine the role of civil society and social media in terms of the individual level of analysis. More specifically, given that a successful protest relies on the involvement of many individuals, it is important to examine the individual’s decision to participate in protest both in terms of pre-existing civil society membership (or lack thereof) and social media usage.

This section will present a Stanford University Report titled, “The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring”. The Report is based on micro-level survey data from the First Wave of the Arab Barometer. Using the Arab Barometer survey data, the Stanford study attempts to determine whether an individuals’ participation in protest activity is rooted in pre-existing civil society activism and/or digital media usage, controlling for various general socioeconomic features.

The Arab Barometer (AB) survey study, completed face-to-face dialogues with national samples representative of the populations in Jordan, Palestine (Gaza and the West Bank), Algeria, Morocco, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Yemen from 2006-2008.

¹⁹⁵ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Julianne, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 24.

Respondents were asked how frequently they utilize the internet, whether they are affiliated with civil society groups and whether they attended a demonstration within the last three years. These variables are the basis for the Stanford study which investigates the correlation amongst these variables as well as their predicted probabilities in order to determine whether civil society and/or social media usage were instrumental in encouraging individuals to participate in protest.

Given that the Arab Barometer Survey used internet usage as a variable (as opposed to social media usage) the Stanford study uses internet consumption as a rough proxy variable for all kinds of social media (YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, blogosphere). While those social media websites were not as widespread in the years of the survey, more old school instant message capacities and other methods of online organization – (blogs for example) were already fairly popular and instrumental in shaping political dialogue.¹⁹⁶

The dependent variable in the Stanford study observes survey respondents' involvement in protest over the last three years (which is from 2003-2008 based on the dates the survey was conducted). Table 3 outlines the respondents' answers as to whether or not they partook in protest.

¹⁹⁶ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Julianne, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 33.

Table 3: Respondents' Reported Protest Activity

Have you attended a demonstration or protest march in the past 3 years?	Jordan (N=1132)	Palestine (N=1262)	Algeria (N=1226)	Morocco (N=1266)	Kuwait (N=714)	Yemen (N=1109)
Once	7%	8%	9%	7%	16%	14%
More than once	4%	25%	13%	13%	19%	15%
Never	89%	67%	78%	80%	65%	71%

Source: Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Juliane, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency, 34, portraying data from the Arab Barometer First Wave*

The two relevant independent variables are respondents' internet usage and their involvement in civil society. The first step is to analyze respondents' internet usage and determine whether respondents who participated in demonstrations are active online.

At the time of the Arab Barometer survey, about 60 percent of respondents did not utilize the internet at all, while over 25 percent utilized the internet a minimum of once a week. Table 3 outlines the percent of respondents who reported not using the internet at all. Although much has changed in the way of the internet usage in the MENA region, there was still a wide range of internet usage rates across MENA countries. To the right of it is a chart of all of the survey respondents' internet usage, using all respondents of the AB survey.

Table 4: Cross-Country Internet Usage

Country	Percent that do <i>not</i> use the Internet
Jordan	78%
Palestine	76%
Algeria	33%
Morocco	69%
Kuwait	20%
Yemen	69%



Source: Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Juliane, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency, 34, portraying data from the Arab Barometer First WaveSource: Arab Barometer, First Wave

The second part of the study looks at the significance of civil society in creating the strong social connections that facilitate mobilization and protest. Table 5 demonstrates respondents' reported involvement in civil society in response to the Arab Barometer survey question regarding whether a respondent was part of any formal group or organization.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ The survey expands this question to include, Political parties, living cooperatives or local societies, religious organizations, sport and entertainment clubs, cultural organizations, associations or workers' unions, farmer unions, professional unions or associations, economic organizations or associations, entrepreneurial organizations, parent-teacher associations, or other voluntary organizations.

Table 5: Civil Society in Six Arab Countries

Are you a member of any organization or formal groups?	Jordan (N=1130)	Palestine (N=1265)	Algeria (N=1283)	Morocco (N=1272)	Kuwait (N=730)	Yemen (N=1107)
Yes	6%	22%	21%	13%	20%	29%
No	94%	78%	79%	87%	80%	71%

Source: Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Juliane, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency, 35, portraying data from the Arab Barometer First Wave

Based on the data from the Arab Barometer, the Stanford study employed a binomial logistic regression model with a dichotomous (‘dummy’) dependent variable equal to 0 if respondents have not participated in protest activity and equal to 1 otherwise¹⁹⁸ (this includes the answers of participating in a protest “once” or “more than once”). Logistic models are employed to predict the probability of the occurrence of an event by quantifying the effect of some set of independent variables upon a dependent variable that must take either the values of 0 or 1.¹⁹⁹ In this case, the model will determine whether the incident occurred and as a result can establish which factors are most liable for causing the incident to happen. More specifically, the study will determine which factors are most significant in an individuals’ resolution to protest.²⁰⁰

The first major independent variable is internet usage, equal to 1 if respondents do not use the internet and increasing with frequency of use to 5, which represents daily or almost daily use.

¹⁹⁸ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Juliane, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*,35.

¹⁹⁹ See Appendix A in the Stanford study for more detail

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

The study employed a second dummy variable to indicate membership in civil society, equal to 1 if the individual is a member of a civil organization and equal to 0 otherwise.²⁰¹

The remaining variables are controls for gender, age (from 18-65), education (reporting the highest level of education that an individual completed, ranging from 0 (illiterate) to 7 (university education or above)), and income (income rankings are deciles, increasing with higher income). The regression models were done separately for every country.²⁰²

Table 6 outlines the results of the logistic regressions, reported as odds ratios. ‘An odds ratio is a measure of effect size and compares the odds of an event occurring in one group to the odds of the same event occurring in another group’.²⁰³ For instance, the table indicates that Jordanian protesters are over twice as likely to be male, while the likelihood that Palestinian protesters are male as opposed to female is over 3 to 1. ‘An odds ratio close to 1 indicates that a variable has little explanatory power’.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Ibid., 35-36.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

Table 6: Odds Ratios for Logistic Regression

<i>Dependent variable: attended a protest</i>	<u>Jordan</u>	<u>Palestine</u>	<u>Algeria</u>	<u>Kuwait</u>	<u>Yemen</u>
Age	0.988 (0.010)	0.984** (0.006)	1.001 (0.011)	0.994 (0.010)	1.002 (0.013)
Gender	2.132*** (0.491)	3.238*** (0.494)	1.379 (0.307)	1.176 (0.294)	1.775** (0.403)
Highest level of education	1.211** (0.107)	1.061 (0.066)	1.120 (0.087)	1.260*** (0.107)	0.981 (0.086)
Income decile	1.066 (0.046)	1.008 (0.028)	1.067* (0.040)	1.078 (0.050)	1.074* (0.042)
Civil society	2.143** (0.686)	2.202*** (0.374)	2.460*** (0.545)	1.139 (0.359)	0.979 (0.227)
Internet	1.255*** (0.093)	1.150** (0.066)	1.217*** (0.093)	1.249*** (0.103)	1.186** 0.100
Observations	938	1002	560	317	431
Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1					

Source: Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Juliane, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). *The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 36.

These results validate the initial assumptions that both internet usage and civil society membership are statistically significant in explaining an individuals' participation protest. While other factors such as age, gender and education level are statistically significant in some countries, internet usage is steadily significant in every country.²⁰⁵ It is also important to point out that the size of the odds ratios for civil society in Jordan, Palestine, and Algeria are much larger than the odds ratios for internet, implying that civil society had a greater effect in those countries.²⁰⁶

Based on the logistic regression in table 6, table 7 outlines the predicted probabilities for where individuals participated in protest based on internet usage and civil society involvement, holding the other variables constant at the mean. Every table entry outlines the probability that a respondent took part in a protest given that the individual either used the internet or was a

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

member of a civil society group, holding other variables constant.²⁰⁷ As table 7 illustrates, both internet usage and civil society membership always increase the probability of a respondent protesting.²⁰⁸

Table 7: Predicted Probabilities of Having Protested

	Jordan	Palestine	Algeria	Kuwait	Yemen
Member of civil society?					
No	0.09	0.28	0.13	0.33	0.31
Yes	0.25	0.55	0.33	0.45	0.36
Uses the Internet...					
Never	0.08	0.27	0.12	0.27	0.27
Daily	0.26	0.49	0.31	0.57	0.47

Source: Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Julianne, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 37.

Take Jordan for example, the probability that respondents in Jordan protested if they were not members of civil society was roughly 0.09; this probability increased to 0.25 percent if they were civil society members, all else being held constant.²⁰⁹ Jordanian respondents had a 7.7 percent probability of having protested if they never used the internet, and the probability increased to 26.4 percent if they used the internet daily.²¹⁰ Probability increases were also fairly big in the remaining four countries, with the exception of Yemen concerning the effect of civil society membership; the probability of Yemeni respondents protesting was 31.1 percent if they were not civil society members and 36.1 percent if they were.²¹¹ Overall, internet use seemed to account for larger increases in the probability of having protested in Yemen and Kuwait only; in

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 37.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

the remaining countries, civil society membership and internet usage had a similar effect in raising protest probability.²¹²

In light of the significance of both civil society membership and internet use, an interaction variable was inserted (for civil society membership and internet use) in order to quantify the effect of concurrent civil society membership with internet usage on protest activity.²¹³ This mode can distinguish whether in essence; internet usage intensifies the strong social connections established in civil society.²¹⁴

Table 8 outlines a second set of odds ratios for the new set of logistic regressions. The new interaction variable very much changes the results of the model, reducing the explanatory power of the internet usage variable significantly. The results imply that at least in Palestine, Algeria Kuwait, and Yemen, internet usage is a more effective variable in predicting protest participation when members of civil society use it.²¹⁵

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 38.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

Table 8: Ratios for Logistic Regressions, Interaction Variable

<i>Dependent variable: attended a protest</i>	<u>Jordan</u>	<u>Palestine</u>	<u>Algeria</u>	<u>Kuwait</u>	<u>Yemen</u>
Age	0.988 (0.009)	0.984** (0.006)	0.993 (0.010)	0.964*** (0.008)	1.000 (0.013)
Gender	2.133*** (0.491)	3.245*** (0.496)	1.276 (0.324)	1.207 (0.222)	1.857*** (0.428)
Highest level of education	1.212** (0.107)	1.061 (0.066)	1.285*** (0.111)	0.928 (0.061)	1.013 (0.091)
Income decile	1.066 (0.046)	1.009 (0.028)	1.065 (0.050)	1.024 (0.034)	1.075* (0.043)
Civil society	2.019 (1.267)	1.484 (0.428)	1.059* (0.093)	4.387*** (1.651)	0.364** (0.149)
Internet	1.251*** (0.100)	1.078 (0.074)	1.160* (0.101)	1.038 (0.064)	0.891 (0.118)
Civil society * Internet	1.021 (0.189)	1.201* (0.130)	2.002** (0.695)	0.786** (0.094)	1.658*** (0.234)
Observations	938	1002	560	317	431
Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1					

Source: Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Julianne, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 38.

It is also important to point out that civil society was also statistically significant in Kuwait and Yemen as well. This indicates that while internet usage is a consequential factor for civil society members, civil society membership without internet usage remains a significant predictor in protest. This supports the idea that strong social connections are best made in ‘physical groups rather than virtual forums’.²¹⁶ In effect, social media cannot replace a real-life political party, religious group or local society. As Gladwell put it, social media communication fosters “weaker ties,” as opposed to the more powerful ties that emerge from personal relationships.²¹⁷ Gladwell proposes that the stronger and more personal ties are what prompt

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Lindsey, A. Richard. (2013). What the Arab Spring tells us about the Future of Social Media in Revolutionary Movements. *Small Wars Journal*.

individuals to carry out high-risk activism. When the inter-personal more powerful ties are present, then social media can serve as a facilitating variable.²¹⁸

The study continues by using the odds ratios above to calculate the predicted probabilities of civil society members having protested depending on whether or not they used the internet (The results are shown in Table 9).

Table 9: Predicted probability of having protested, given membership in civil society

	Jordan	Palestine	Algeria	Kuwait	Yemen
Never uses Internet	0.16	0.42	0.21	0.06	0.23
Uses Internet daily	0.41	0.71	0.51	0.71	0.63

Source: Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Juliane, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 39.

In the hands of members of civil society, internet usage has a large impact on protest probability. In Jordan, Palestine, Algeria, and Yemen, daily internet usage by members of civil society more than doubled the probability protest participation. In Kuwait, daily internet usage multiplied this probability more than tenfold.²¹⁹ This is probably because of the pervasiveness of internet usage in Kuwait; given that the majority of respondents were internet users at some level, the marginal difference between those who never used the internet and those with daily internet is particularly great.²²⁰ In every other country, in which a more sizeable percent of

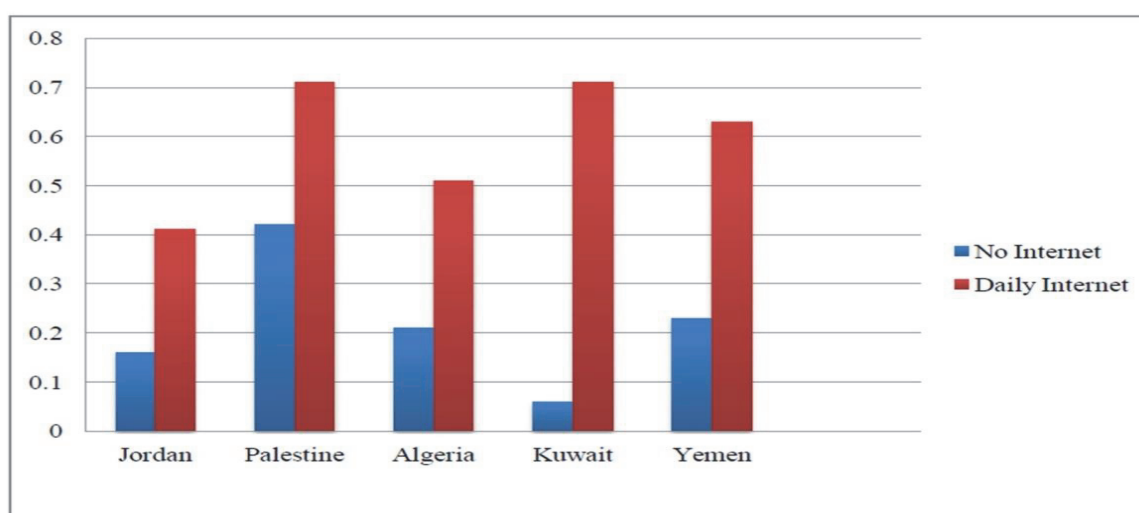
²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Juliane, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 39.

²²⁰ Ibid.

respondents never used the internet (see Table 3), the impact of daily internet usage in prompting members of civil society to protests is substantial. Figure (below) shows this graphically.²²¹

Figure 7: Protest Probability among Members of Civil Society by Internet Usage



Source: Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Julianne, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency, 34, portraying data from the Arab Barometer First WaveSource: Arab Barometer, First Wave

The fact that internet usage is shown to enhance protest participation among members of civil society follows logically since social media tools can eliminate major obstacles to achieving successful protest. Digital media infrastructures increase the ability of civil society associations to expand and find a critical mass of people with collective motivations,²²² it also allows for greater dissemination of information as well as more efficient organization.

To be clear, civil society activism is a necessary element to confronting authoritarian

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Bimber, Bruce, Flanagan, Andrew, & Stohl, Cynthia. (2012). Collective Action in Organizations: Interaction and Engagement in an Era of Technological Change. *New York: Cambridge University Press*. Kindle File, Chapter 1.

power .²²³ That said while pre-existing and established civil society associations are essential to successful mobilization, traditional civil society groups also face severe limitations. Authoritarian regimes considerably limit the ability of civil society groups' to resist government policies. Up until recently, most civil society associations more or less played by the rules of their governments.²²⁴

While Heydemann's analysis on 'upgrading authoritarianism' in the Arab world offers constructive insights on the methods that enabled authoritarian regimes to preserve their power throughout the 1990s and 2000s by introducing liberal reforms, including increased 'virtual liberal' reforms, 'upgrading authoritarianism' appears to have also generated unintended consequences. Although regimes afforded traditional civil society organizations with added working spaces in order to strengthen their authoritarianism, their system of co-optation and "virtual liberalism" also created new and improved spaces of activism.²²⁵

While the 2011 protests were not "Twitter revolutions" and in person street protests and face-to-face civil society networks were of primary importance²²⁶, the internet provided a forum with which to more openly communicate political and socio-economic grievances and more effectively engage and coordinate participants. Accordingly, it stands to reason that in the hands of civil society members, internet usage has a large impact on protest probability.

The Stanford study also calculated the predicted probabilities of protesting for non-member respondents with different levels of internet use. Determining the probability that non-members protested, given different degrees of internet use, helps evaluate the power of social

²²³ Cavatorta, Francesco. (2012). Arab Spring: The Awakening of Civil Society, a General Overview. *European Institute of the Mediterranean*, 76.

²²⁴ Ibid., 77.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid., 79.

media on its own and its ability to facilitate protest.²²⁷ Table 10 indicates that the probability increases are significantly lower than they were for members of civil society, and overall probabilities are lower than in the previous Table 9. For whatever reason, the probability even decreased in Yemen – a country with strong tribal ties and little internet penetration.²²⁸

The results confirm the premise that without a solid foundation of civil society activism in place, protest on the scale of the Arab Spring probably could not have happened regardless of social media activity. While social media may expand the number and range of participants, it cannot replace the physical implementation and personal investment necessary for successful protest.²²⁹ In Tunisia and Egypt for example, the structure and experiences that were instituted by local union activists in the mid- 2000 strikes served as the foundation for organizing the much larger mass protests of 2011.²³⁰

Table 10: Predicted probability of having protested, given NO membership in civil society

	Jordan	Palestine	Algeria	Kuwait	Yemen
Never uses Internet	0.07	0.11	0.31	0.44	0.30
Uses Internet daily	0.21	0.22	0.54	0.52	0.25

Source: Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Julianne, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 40.

²²⁷ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Julianne, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 40.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Lindsey, A. Richard. (2013). What the Arab Spring tells us about the Future of Social Media in Revolutionary Movements. *Small Wars Journal*.

²³⁰ Cavatorta, Francesco. (2012). Arab Spring: The Awakening of Civil Society, a General Overview. *European Institute of the Mediterranean*, 81.

The overall results of the study present convincing evidence in support of the notion that the probability of protest participation increases with being a civil society member and utilizing the internet, but most significantly by being a civil society member who utilizes the internet.²³¹ In terms of social movement theory, the internet functions similarly to civil society organizations in that it unites people with common interests.

While the results of the Stanford report are important for this study, it is important to address several limitations that render the study somewhat deficient. For one, the First Wave of the Arab Barometer was done in 2006-2008, when the internet was a more recent trend. In spite of the time lag, the results of the study remain quite relevant in that greater internet access facilitated protest activity.²³² Although a lot has changed in MENA region internet usage, there is still a wide range of usage rates across the region and the results are still useful for evaluating the significance of internet usage and civil society membership on protest activity even if the numbers would be different.

Another limitation of the study is that the respondents surveyed were from countries not fully representative of the MENA region. Crucially, countries like Egypt, Tunisia and Bahrain where the uprisings were most prominent were not included.²³³

In doing further research, it would be beneficial to employ the Second Wave of the Arab Barometer survey, conducted from 2010 to 2011 in a larger sample of countries: Jordan,

²³¹ Dewey, Taylor, Kaden, Julianne, Marks, Miriam, Matsushima, Shun, & Zhu, Beijing. (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in the Arab Spring. *Stanford University Public Policy Program- Final Report prepared for: Defense Intelligence Agency*, 40.

²³² Ibid., 41.

²³³ Ibid., 40.

Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, Morocco, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Mauritania, Syria, and Iraq.²³⁴

²³⁴ Ibid., 41.

Chapter 4: Conclusions and Implications

As the case studies of Arab countries across the Middle East show, the new Arab media is conducive to but, on its own, insufficient for successful protest and democratic advancement. New social media tools are undeniably changing the way the Arab world interacts within the borders of their countries as well as regionally and globally. These tools are also changing the way in which information is broadcast and presented in traditional media outlets. At the same time however, it appears that the internet best facilitates anti-regime mobilization in countries where individuals have already developed ties in civil society groups and where those civil society groups have an active and fairly independent presence in their societies (and of course in countries where the political and socio-economic contexts warrant protest) .

Looking back at the last couple of years in the MENA region, it is clear that the internet altered the means of communicating political and social grievances. Social media tools offer existing civil society groups virtual communication infrastructures that are less amenable to government control. The 2011 uprisings witnessed a strong domino effect mostly because social media tools enabled societies to connect over common grievances and cultivate portable strategies for protesting against their regimes.

It is important to re-emphasize that the starting point of the study is the existence of the basic political, social, and economic motivations. Throughout the Arab Spring, protestors employed social media to construct a political response to their local grievances. They were not motivated by Facebook; they were motivated by the actual injustices *documented* on Facebook. Digital media has become the ‘scaffolding’ on which civil society groups, representing social,

economic and political incentives (already embedded in secure networks of relatives and friends) can build.²³⁵

While the unfolding of events following the Arab Spring protests is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to consider the large range of outcomes: from the triumphant toppling of authoritarian regimes without outside help of secondary factors, to civil war, and from existing governments initiating reforms in response to protester demands, to a complete and sometimes violent suppression of the protests.²³⁶ Future research would benefit from exploring whether such intense differences can be partially attributed to the status (level of autonomy) of civil society associations' vis-à-vis their respective governments.

Although in the majority of countries in the MENA region internet access rates hover at about ten to twenty percent, the segments that do have access is politically significant. While the internet user base is expanding to include more and more of the general public, the bulk of internet users are mostly comprised of educated, young, professional and urban populations who most importantly were politically active and civically connected and inclined. These are the people who for the most part instigated and maintained the protest movements.²³⁷

It is difficult to determine whether or not the revolutions would have happened without new media. There were undeniably other integral socio-economic and political factors, such as government corruption, extensive poverty and widespread unemployment that fueled public discontent and prompted the Arab Spring uprisings. That said, the civil society groups and

²³⁵ Howard, N. Philip, & Muzammil, M. Hussain. (2011). The Upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia: The Role of Digital Media. *Journal of Democracy*, John Hopkins University Press Division 22, no. 3, 48.

²³⁶ Vallianatos, Stefanos. (2013). Arab Civil Society at the Crossroads of Democratization: The Arab Spring Impact. *The Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation- German Marshal Fund Project*, 1.

²³⁷ Howard, N. Philip, & Muzammil, M. Hussain. (2013). Democracy's Fourth Wave; Digital Media and the Arab Spring. *Oxford University Press*. Kindle file, Chapter 2.

political publics who did mobilize did so with the ‘direct application, initiation, and coordination, of digital media tools. Counter-factual scenarios are important, but the overwhelming evidence of what did happen concretely illustrates that the patterns of political change in these protests were digitally enabled.’²³⁸ Social media did not change to goal of social protest; they did however alter the capacity of social movement groups to communicate their purpose.

In every country where an uprising occurred, the inciting events of the Arab Spring were digitally spurred in some way (though in Yemen to a lesser degree). Communication technologies and new social media were part of the causal story. People were motivated to dissent for their personal socio-economic grievances. Information infrastructures mediated these motivations, such that the uprisings occurred consecutively within several weeks of one another and exhibited similar patterns.²³⁹ Social media embedded ties between pre-existing but sparser groups. It also disseminated public grievances further than a domestic society of activists and reached regional and global audiences.

Though the political effects of the uprisings were diverse, that does not weaken the central role of social media in the Arab Spring protests. With that in mind, this study has also demonstrated that countries that did not have an independent and strong civil society equipped with ‘digital scaffolding’ were much less likely to experience long and sustained protest activity.²⁴⁰ Social media sites connect individuals with common goals and interests but most effectively with people who are already connected through civil society groups. In countries

²³⁸ Howard, N. Philip, & Muzammil, M. Hussain. (2012). Democracy’s Fourth Wave? Information Technologies and the Fuzzy Causes of the Arab Spring. *Paper prepared for presentation at the International Studies Association April 1-4, San Diego*, 11.

²³⁹ Howard, N. Philip, & Muzammil, M. Hussain. (2012). Democracy’s Fourth Wave? Information Technologies and the Fuzzy Causes of the Arab Spring. *Paper prepared for presentation at the International Studies Association April 1-4, San Diego*, 16.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

where political conditions inhibit physical meetings and civil society groups to materialize, the internet is mainly a virtual forum for individuals sharing grievances. Digital media can only facilitate, not produce, the guidance essential to sustained protest activity. In person coordination, mobilization and a physical investment to the cause remains fundamental for successful protest.²⁴¹

Civil society activist in the MENA region certainly proved themselves as a force to be reckoned with and as a significant counterweight to authoritarian regimes. That being said, a vibrant civil society is not an absolute *modus operandi* for protest. Social media infrastructures were highly instrumental in mobilizing and strengthening existing civil society associations and advancing the 2011 uprisings. Social media was shown to be a stronger facilitator of protest in countries with pre-existing civil society activism, and civil societies enhanced their ability to organize, coordinate and strategize social and political activities through social media usage. Crucially, the combination of a strong and independent civil society together with strong social media connections is greater than the sum of its parts.

²⁴¹ Lindsey, A. Richard. (2013). What the Arab Spring Tells us about the Future of Social Media in Revolutionary Movements. *Small Wars Journal*.

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