The Role of Social Networks on the Upheavals of the Middle East and North Africa

Amir Hooshang Mirkooshesh

Department of International Relations, Science & Research Branch Islamic Azad University, Esfahan, Iran.
ammirkooshesh@gmail.com

Abstract: Globalization and the development of communication technologies have an important impact in some developing and Islamic countries; particularly the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).Expansion of the electronic communications technologies such as satellite networks and Internet had clear impacts on the public minds of this region. Information and communication technologies like Internet and mobile phones has played important role in the struggle for democracy and human rights in the region of the MENA. The causes of the protests also include a combination of non-technological factors such as: decades of suppression, authoritarian and inherited governments, low economic and social development, human rights violations, Political and economic marginalization of people. Recent upheavals and uprisings in the Egypt and Tunisia and other countries of the region due to the use of the content generated by users of internet is named Facebook and Twitter revolution. Creating and producing a huge volume of information posted by users on the Internet are called Internet content, including text, image, and video and audio clips that generate and load by Internet users. The news of self-immolation of a young Tunisian in December 2010   spread through social networks like Facebook which create a movement that led to the fall of Tunisia Ben Ali's rule lasted 23 years. The news was released by these networks caused unrest to the entire region and especially in Egypt. Social networks have played an important role in the Arab world according to the initial uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia and subsequently other countries in the region and the overall impact   on the democratic struggle in the region. Governments' violent clash with protesters and bloggers and cutting off Internet, arrest, imprisonment and beating online activists in countries undergoing turbulence shows the importance of the Internet and social networks. From Morocco to Bahrain, the Arab world has witnessed the emergence of independent media community, which has steadily increased engagement of citizens with Internet. It is expected by 2015, Internet will have one hundred millions Arab audiences. The number of Facebook users in the Arab world in December 2010 has been over twenty-two millions which 75% of them are young people between 15 to 29 years.
[Amir Hooshang Mirkooshesh. **The Role of Social Networks on the Upheavals of the Middle East and North Africa.** Journal of American Science 2012; 8(3):160-171]. (ISSN: 1545-1003). http://www.americanscience.org. 20

Introduction

Information revolution and subsequent development of communication technologies such as satellite networks and the Internet's growing has created influences on many aspects of social, cultural, political, and economic growth in new societies, So that many scholars have talked about a phenomenon that called network society in the contemporary period. Social networks as the advanced generation of social media provide significant interactive features for Internet users. This issue can cause an increase in the participation of citizens in some of the political and social process. Interactive features of social networks caused a wide range of diverse online subjects raised in these networks.Sometimes this can lead to opportunities such as participation in political and social projects. An obvious example of this can be social, political participation and the rise of popular movements in the MENA.

Since in developing Arab countries, the governments have often monopoly over media and naturally use it to strengthen their presence and legitimacy of their benefits. Social networks have become a tool for information and insight to break the monopoly of political and media in these countries. The growth rate of Internet usage in the MENA confirms that the role and influence of media and Internet especially social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter is undeniable. Here are questions to be posed: Is it possible to call the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia and other countries in the MENA as Facebook and Twitter revolution? Do social networks have had unique role in the protests? DO this generated content in social networks and mobile phones and its share was the cause of upheavals and its expansion? What are the Strategies, techniques and technologies used in the recent uprisings? Do social networks have the power to create revolution and overthrowing governments? I will review social media and social network structure and its features, notably the social network, Facebook. Then I will pay more to the role of social networking on the upheavals in the MENA to response the questions.

Typology of virtual communities

Virtual Community is a kind of community that the primary mode of interaction   is in electronic form (online / virtual) and not face to face. Sometimes

Virtual communities are considered as a set of homogeneous activities.

There are several types of Virtual communities that have different characteristics and describe by different theories. There are different kinds of typologies that cover various aspects such as demographic dimensions, Tissue organizational composition, membership features and environmental technologies. The typology of social networks may be based on the need for such studies, that is members have to satisfy the needs that are present in the virtual communities (Hinds and Lee, 2008:2).

Social media

Social media are a group of new media that share the following characteristics (Mayfield, 2008:5):
• Encourage the participation of the social media audiences will eliminate the boundaries between media and spectators.
• liberalization of most social media services are free and open access to ideas, opinions and encourages information sharing without a hitch.
• Two-way communication: traditional broadcast media are one way but social media provide two-way or multi-way communications between users.
• Establishing communities: the social media allows communities to form quickly and communicate effectively to their communities. Social Communities share interests and concerns.

Types of social media

1 - Social Networking: These sites allow people to create personal web pages, and then create contents to share with each other or communicate. The Largest social networks include Facebook and MySpace.
2 - Blogs: Blogs are the most well-known social media. Blogs are online journals, with some new material.
3 - Wiki: A Web site which allows users to add content or edit the information and act as a public document or database. The most famous of more than 2 million Wikipedia articles are in English.
4 - Podcasts: Audio and video files that are shared through services like Apple-ITunes.
5 - Forum: A place for online discussion which often shapes around special interests and title.
6 - Content communities: communities that contain specific types which organize and share special contents. The Most popular communities for image are flicker, to save links is del.icio.us and for video is YouTube.
7 - Micro blogs: Blogs that are low volume, which contains small amounts of it, are played online via the mobile network. Twitter has a leadership role in this field (Mayfield:6).

The structure of social networks

Graphical representation of social relations is called social networks which cover social entities (like people or organizations) such as a set of nodes and ties (or trade counseling). In other words, social networks are a set of relations that are connected between the nodes to each other. The structure of social networks is defined with some mathematical graph, such as density or concentration (Hinds and Lee).

Information revolution led to the birth of the new economies that their structures are data, information and knowledge.Social networks are nodes of individuals, groups, organizations and systems that are relevant to one or more types of interdependencies, which are tied to values, insight and common ideas, social communication, kinship, financial exchange, trade, joint membership in organizations, participation in group events and ... (Serrat, 2009).

Social networks are global phenomena, with communities like MySpace, Facebook and Twitter, with millions of users in the worldwide. People who join these communities are able to spread their interests and concerns by multimedia. They can link to your existing friends or looking for new friends. Social networking sites help individuals in recognition of shared interests and hobbies.Social networking websites are online communities where people share their interests and activities. These websites connect people through chat, e-mail or message (Online Social Networks, 2008).

Social networking sites are web-based services that allow individuals to: (1) Create a social network profile or community within the system. (2) Provide a list of other users and sharing the contents. (3) Your contact list and others and link with other related lists' name and nature of communication in different sites. Social networks are known as public discourse too and can be used interchangeably. A unique feature of social networks is that people can make their profiles visible or accessible to others (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

Social network is a social structure that consists of nodes that are generally persons or organizations that cover one or more specific affiliation. Virtual social networks are new generation of Internet web sites which users as a virtual joint axis can communicate with each other. Specific topics include professional and social networking with business, friends, common interests in different fields like cinema, sports, music and with common language, common nationality and common religion are active in cyberspace. Social networks are used in sociology, anthropology, geography, social psychology, language, communication sciences, information science, organizational studies, economics, and modern biology.

The term "social network analysis" refers to a wide range of methods and tools for program analysis and representation of social networking sites. the realm of

the theoretical concepts of social networking include application and network vision to different aspects of social psychology, sociology and science organizations. Social networks are based on math graph theory. Social network analysis for the matrix algebra program designed to build the network. Social network analysis has a number of positive characteristics with respect to its application as an analytical tool. In addition, the use of social network analysis provide a quantitative method for studying complex social phenomena such as kinship, social structure, big corporates and elites power, otherwise it is limited to qualitative research tool (Hinds and Lee).

Theory of social capital

Social capital theory is widely used in the structure of social networks. Theory of social capital takes into consideration both social network itself, knowledge and other resources that may be supplied through the network. Capital theory uses of information processing paradigm to explain how is the impact of social structure on the results of social networking community and individual levels group (Simon, 1976). Social relations are considered as the flow of information, knowledge or other sources. Social capital theory claims that the structure of social networks with more restrictions or sets of interconnected nodes in a network will facilitate the use of resources. It seems that depending on the structure and limitations caused by a coherent group is expected to support this kind of norms and mutual trust (Coleman, 1988).

Social networks are macro concepts which classify as a subset of social media on the social networks on the individuals and groups Interests. Internet social networks, unlike traditional social networks that the communications between network components which are based on face-to-face interaction have one-to-one correspondence or multi to multi correspondence. This correspondence may be related to relations such as friendship, kinship, common interests, exchange trade or common beliefs. In a social network, there is no vertical hierarchy and the only important factor is people.

Social networking features (second-generation Web)

First-generation Web or World Wide Web was created in the1990s. E-mail, web sites, search engines, chat rooms, online business, online news and developments have emerged in this period (Shih, 2009). Second Generation Web came in early 1995 with the advent of social networks. These networks present profile pages and friends. They are based on famous networks such as Facebook that have now millions of members around the world (Shih).

The main characteristics of social networks

• Identity in social networking is more realistic because users usually want to add people to their friends list that are not anonymous.
• To share information or content generated by users, such as, video, photos, news and public or personal experiences or opinions.
• Ability to mobilize and organize individuals and groups.
• The establishment of friendly relations among people of different religious groups and associations.
• Increased confidence among users due to being more transparent communications space.
• Use of multimedia applications on social networks with video, audio, image, animation, text, graphics, chat and links.
• Different language of social networks compare to other media because of criticism of the government and politicians.
• The prevailing collecting wisdom on social networks.
• Removing the language borders in social networking that is the characteristic of globalization.
• Information and news through social networks and playing the role of alternative to mainstream media.
• Initiative, creativity, innovation, democratic structure and social capital are other features of social networking.

Upheavals in the Middle East and North Africa

Wave of Arab revolt in the region of Middle East and North Africa that began from Tunisia and Egypt developed in this region with unprecedented speed and makes fundamental changes in this region. A deep Social- economic crisis in the region with authoritarian and corrupt regimes and communication technology was the cause directed this wave toward a fundamental change (Cheterian, 2011).

Tunisia is a country with a population of 10 millions. A simple event could change the region without previous planning and forecasting. On December17, 2010 Mohammad Bou Azizi, a young Tunisian fruit seller in 36 years old died of severe burns of self-immolation because of government officials' abuse. Diffusing burning pictures on the Internet raised Tunisian public awareness and rest of the world and the Tunisian President Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia and the domino collapse of totalitarian regimes in the region began. At first protests occurred in Algeria, Jordan, Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen. Protests in Egypt and Tunisia continued to Hosni Mubarak left, and Ben Ali escape. Ali Abdullah Saleh, Yemen's president has forced to resign from power. The state of emergency in Algeria after 19 years was removed and new government came to Jordan. The second wave of protests spread to Libya, Bahrain and Syria. In Syria the government is engaged in a brutal suppression. Bahrain in the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council has supported this suppression too. Libya protests were

quickly drawn into civil war. NATO's support of the revolutionary war caused the overthrow of Colonel Gaddafi and his death (Ruhoak & Ijzerloo, 2011).

Egypt with 85 millions populations is the most populous country in the Middle East. By calling social networks, people gathered in Tahrir square and other squares at January 25 to protest the killing of Khalid from Alexandria city residents. Khalid Saied, a young Egyptian man in Alexandria published full report about the sale of drugs by police on his web page and thus police arrested him and he died due to torture. Khalid Saied's full report on internet and people's joining to his web page was caused Facebook and Twitter known as the main output of information for people that was the trigger of uprisings. Social networks continued planning to attend people in the main streets and squares of cities.Tahrir Square in Cairo was the symbol of the protests and demonstrations (Chalcraft, 2011). Mubarak's regime and even with a record of parties like the Muslim Brotherhood were caught. Muslims and Coptic Christians joined in the protests to topple the Mubarak regime. The clash between demonstrators and police in Egypt on 28 January had many killing and injuring that led to military presence on the streets. The Egyptian army rejected use of force against the opposition, and in his January 28 statement recognized the legitimacy of the Egyptian people. On February 10, 2011 Mubarak resigned and the Egyptian people took to the streets for joying. With the continuing rise of Egypt's people, Hosni Mubarak was tried.

Bahrain's people also affected of uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia and in the February 14, 2011 in 10th year of promised political reforms were gathering in Manama Pearl Square. Bahrain's Shiite majority have been denied of political and social rights for years. By violence of security forces and killing and injuring a number of citizens, the Bahrain route linked to the Uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. With Saudi Arabia and the UAE military presence in Bahrain, people's repression intensified (Ottaway & Hamzway, 2011).

Protests began in Syria on January 26, 2011 and became a full-scale rebellion. On March 15, 2011.Popular uprisings in Syria was affected by the rise in the region and so will be remembered as an unprecedented uprising (Syrian Protests Add to Pressure on Assad Regime, 2011). People of Syria as well as other Arabs in the region began to protest against Bashar Assad's regime. The uprising began in the Syrian at Dra. Dra children in their school wrote on the wall, we want freedom, but they had arrested and tortured. People gathered to protest the government's behavior in front of the governor, who were insulted and humiliated and this was the beginning of uprising in Syria. While Protests continued Syrian tanks and snipers had suppressed the people on the street. The flow of water and electricity were cut off and the security forces were confiscated flour and food in areas like Dra, Homs and Doma (Fresh Violence Hits Syrian Town, 2011). Syria's military and security forces besieged and occupied cities like Dra, Homs, Jaish Alshqvr, Dyralzovr and Damascus (Dozens killed in Syrian border town, 2011). Syrian military and security forces violence has more than 6000 people killed and thousands injured, arrested, tortured or have disappeared ("Dozens tortured and killed in Syria," 2011). Despite severe repression, the Syrian anti-government protests still continue.

Yemen's 24 millions population and 50 percent unemployment rate among youth aged 18 to 28 and the geographical situation and sensitive to the presence of al-Qaeda and tribal separatist insurgency rebelled against the government's 33-years-old Abdullah Saleh. So many people have been killed and injured in Yemen by Security forces, and this process is still ongoing (Jones, 2011).At last, Abdullah Saleh left the power and went to America.

Facebook and Twitter penetration in Arab countries

Before the recent rise, Arab media had marginal and elitist role due to low Internet penetration rates and had minimal impact. Recent events brought social media to the forefront and social networks like Facebook, Twitter and weblogs have gotten validity for reporting and sending news quickly and this helped the expansion of uprisings.

The number of Facebook users in the Arab world in April 2011 was about 28 millions and in January 2011 about 21.5 millions while in comparison with April 2010 were about 15 millions users. In early April 2011 the average Facebook users in Arabic was more than 7.5 % while at the end of 2010 the rate was below 6%. The number of Facebook users in the Arab world in the first quarter of 2011 increased 30 %. Arab countries of Persian Gulf with Lebanon are six first Arab countries of using Facebook and the Emirates have the first rank. Egyptians are a quarter of Facebook users in the Arab world. 70% of Facebook users in the regions are youth between 15 to 29 years. The number of Twitter users in April 2011 was more than 200 millions. According to Twitter, Tweets increased from 55 millions a day to 155 millions in the first quarter of 2011 that shows 41% growth (Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook, 2011) .The number of Facebook users and the penetration of social networks in different regions in the world on Dec 31, 2011 are shown in the table 1 and Figure 1, 2 and 3 illustrate Facebook and twitter users in the MENA.

Table 1: New Facebook **Stats for 2011 Q4**

FACEBOOK USAGE AND INTERNET STATISTICS FOR DEC 31, 2011					
Geographic World Regions	Population (2011 Est.)	FB Users Aug. 31, 2010	FB Users June 30, 2011	FB Users Dec. 31, 2011	FB Penetration Dec. 31, 2011
Asia	3,879,740,877	93,584,580	152,957,480	183,963,780	4.7 %
Africa	1,037,524,058	17,607,440	30,665,460	37,739,380	3.6 %
Europe	816,426,346	162,104,640	208,907,040	223,376,640	27.4 %
Latin America	555,856,161	68,189,920	115,288,940	141,612,220	25.5 %
North America	347,394,870	149,054,040	167,999,540	174,586,680	50.3 %
Middle East	216,258,843	11,698,120	16,125,180	18,241,080	8.4 %
The Caribbean	41,427,004	3,925,060	5,903,520	6,218,960	15.0 %
Oceania / Australia	35,426,995	11,596,660	12,881,560	13,353,420	37.7 %
WORLD TOTAL	6,930,055,154	517,760,460	710,728,720	799,092,160	11.5 %

Source: Internet World Statst-htp://www.internetworldstats.com/facebook.htm

**Figure 1 illustrates Facebook users in the world by geographic regions in 2011 Q4**
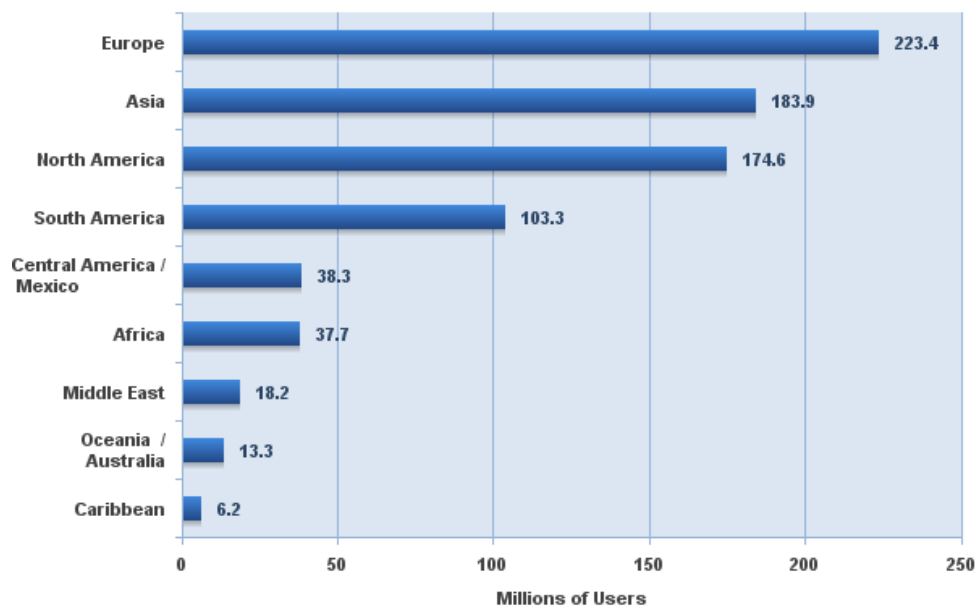
Source: Internet World Stats - www.internetworldstats.com/facebook.htm
Facebook users worldwide are 799,092,160 on December 31, 2011
Copyright © 2012, Miniwatts Marketing Group

Figure 2 illustrates Number of active twitter users in the MENA region (Average number between Jan. 1 and March 30, 2011): Source: Arab Social Media Report Vol. 1. No.2
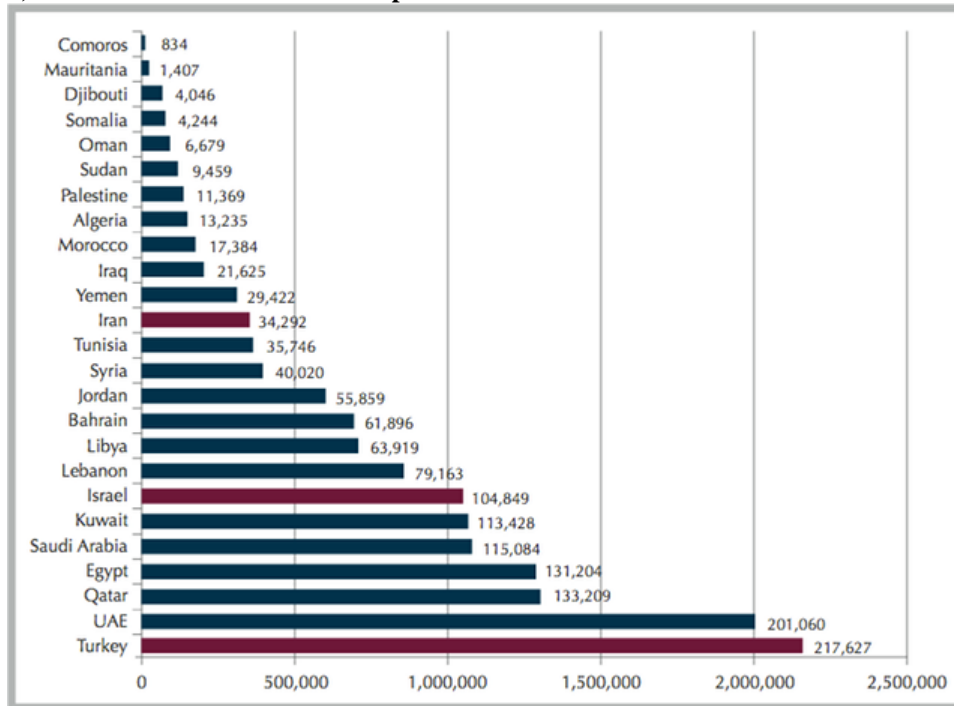
Figure 3 Number of New Facebook Users in the Arab Region, plus Iran, Israel and Turkey (Jan. 5-Apr. 5, 2011):
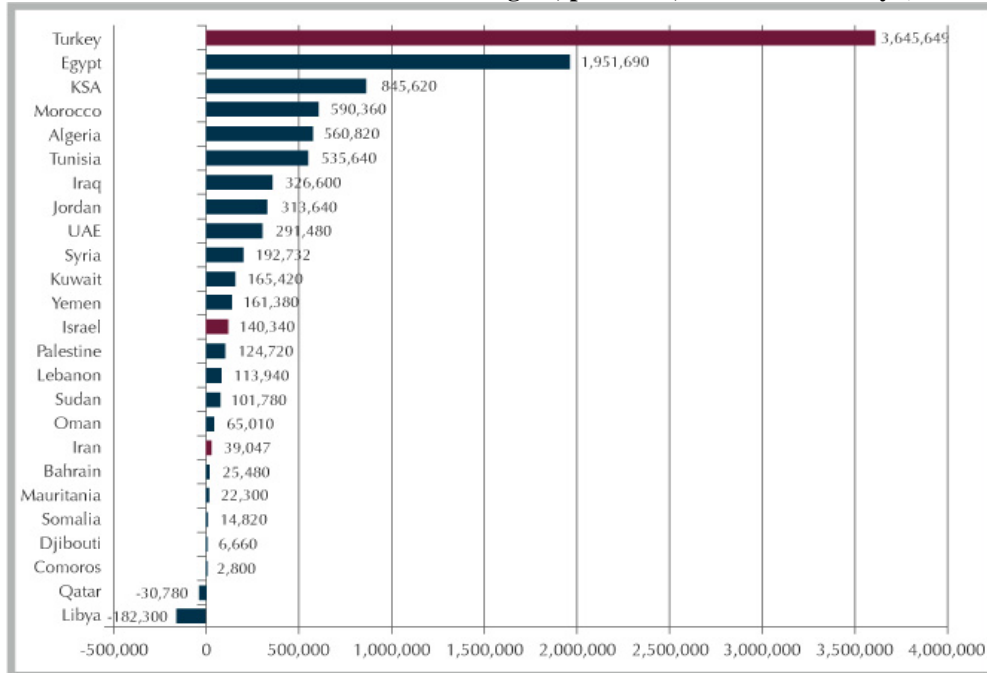


Arab ICT Use Report 2010, Madar Research, Dubai, UAE

International standards and indicators of Facebook penetration in Arab countries
Indicators to assess trends and factors that attract audiences in Arab countries to Facebook (Facebook Usage: Factors and Analysis, 2011):
1. Digital Access Index   2. Internet penetration   3. GDP based on per capita income 4. Freedom of Internet
5. Other development indicators
**• The gender gap index   • Human Development Index**

Figures 4, 5, 6 and 7 illustrate Facebook penetration according to international standards:

Figure 4: Facebook Penetration and Digital Access Index in the Arab Countries*
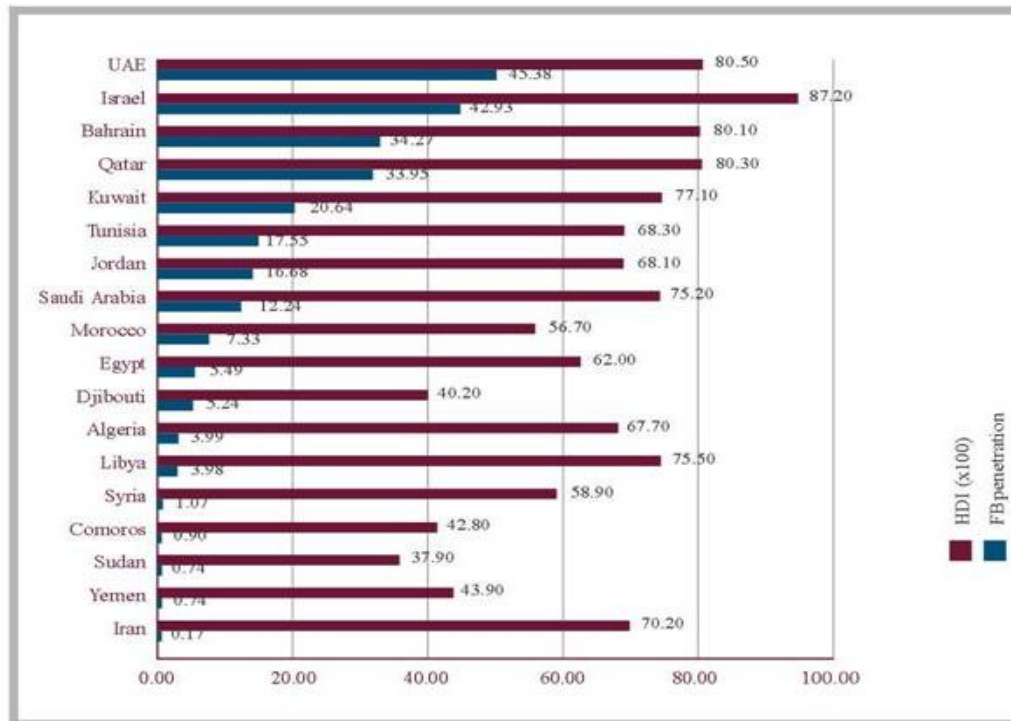(plus Iran and Israel) (Dec. 2010)
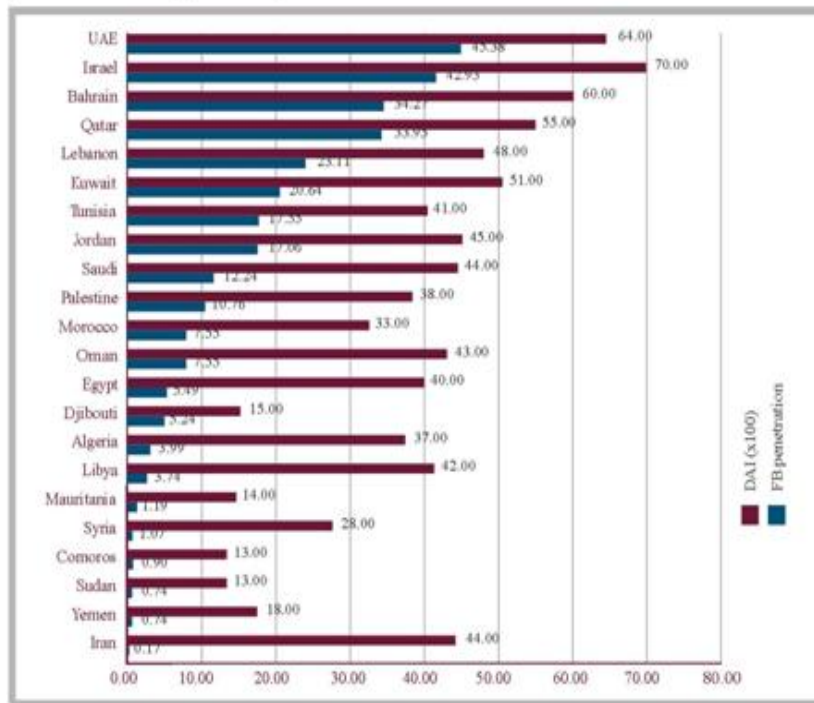
* Excluding Iraq and Somalia; no data on DAI was provided
Source:Arab Social Media Report Vol.1 .No.1

Figure 5: Internet Freedom Ranking and Facebook penetration in the Arab countries*
(plus Iran and Israel) (Dec. 2010)
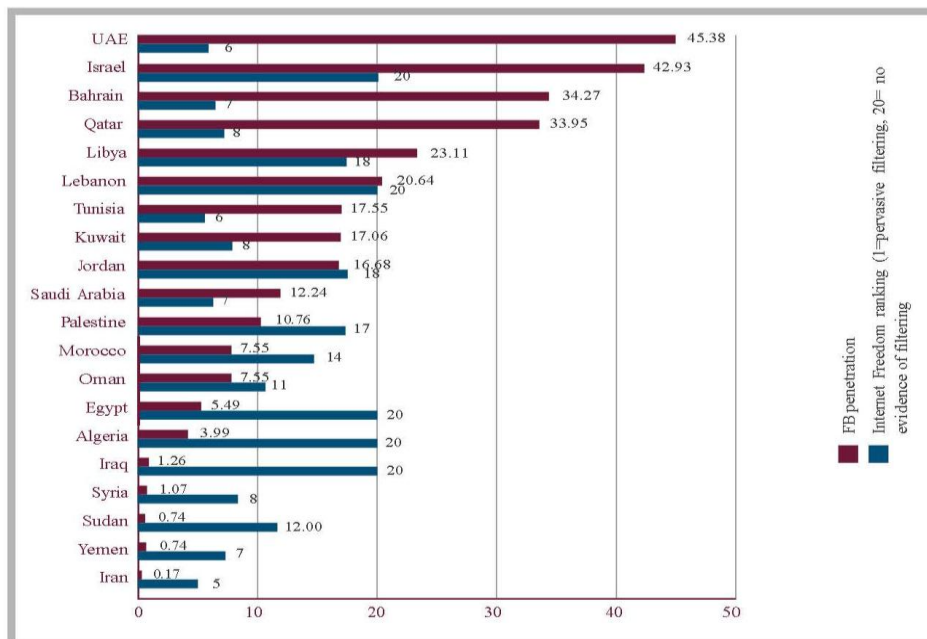
* Excluding Somalia, Djibouti, Comoros and Mauritania (no data available on Internet freedom rankings)
Source:Arab Social Media Report Vol.1 .No.1

Figure 6: Facebook Penetration Rates and Human Development Index in the Arab Countries*
(plus Iran and Israel) (Dec. 2010)

* Excluding Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Oman and Somalia (no data available on HDI)
Source:Arab Social Media Report Vol.1 ,No.1

Figure 7: GDP per Capita and Facebook Penetration in the Arab Countries (plus Israel and Iran) (Dec. 2010)
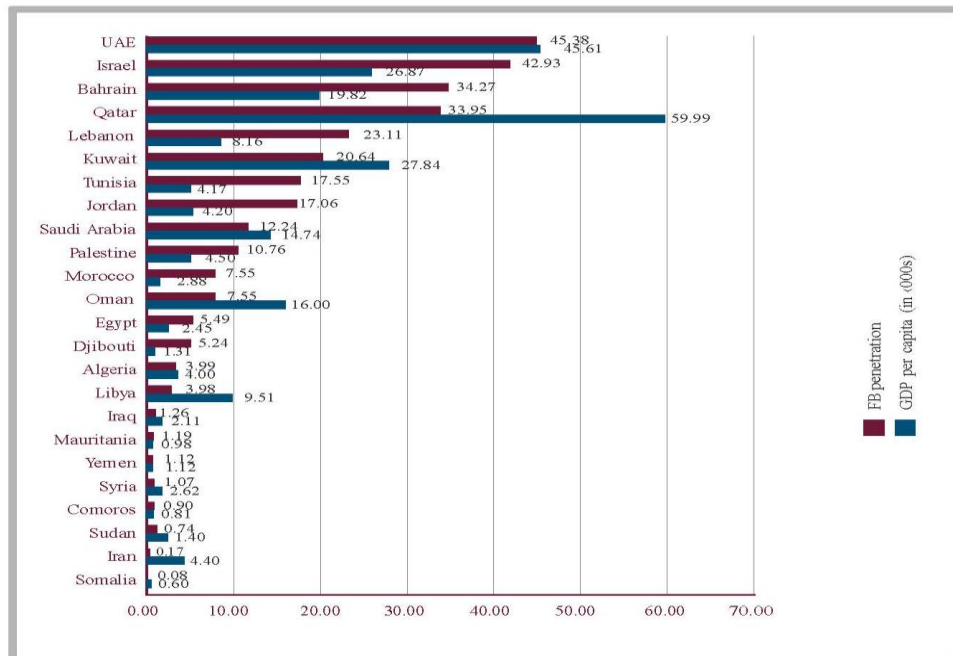
Source:Arab Social Media Report Vol.1 .No.1

The Role of Social Networks on the Upheavals of the MENA

Social networks play several roles simultaneously. These networks provide simple process, low cost and free communication of people with each other. Unlike traditional media this communication can be done online, without middleman and with two or more sides. So no selection of news and information from official sources are available. These networks could advance the movements of the Middle East and North Africa, rather than parties, political groups and organizations. The process of public opinions and mobilizing people in social networks is done in two stages: first stage of networking in cyberspace and in the second stage network in real space.

Recent events point out this fact that new technologies like Internet and social media and new software applications can influence on rapidity of uprisings and sustainable social change. Arab Spring not only challenged the dictatorship years, but also raised the detection efficiency of the new media technologies to create shared values to support the uprisings. In fact, social and political unrest in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain have occurred by new technologies in different ways. How social media can play a key role in the uprising or revolution? Many believe such a role for the media and the magnification is not real. It should be acknowledged that despite the Arab uprisings did not create by new technologies, but they caused propagation of the movements. Social media and mobile phones not only make people able to organize and coordination but also it is a valuable tool for dealing with state control of information.

Recent protests and riots in Egypt and Tunisia and other countries of the MENA is known as the Facebook and Twitter revolution. These social networks are based on content created by users. Content generated by users include text, images, and videos, audio clips that are created and loaded by Internet users. This content has played important role in the recent protests and riots(Comninos,2011). Communications and information technology networks such as Internet and mobile phones has played important role in the struggle for democracy and human rights in the MENA, although many researchers believe that the role of these technologies Should not be exaggerated (Kravets,2011). Alongside The role of information and communication technologies , non-technological factors, other important information and communications technologies, decades of oppression, marginalization, political and economic crisis of legitimacy and authority, economic, human rights and ... has also played important roles in the protests and uprisings in the region .

Communications and social networking sites in cyberspace have played important and unprecedented role in changing social fabric of the Arab countries and in general the Middle East and North Africa. Rapid rise of educated classes, and changes in the composition and structure of previous elites gradually changed the communication mood of the general public in Arab countries. This gradual process in the long run, lead to a change in public mood communications. In other words, the outburst of new educated classes have risen modern facilities such as Internet and social networks, which among them Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have played important role in propagation of the protests. The main difference between networks and other media like broadcasting and press is bilateral and multi-way communications. Networks essentially have no restrictions on creation and using contents and all people can access to them. Since these networks are not monopoly or under government and organization dominance, they have solved the problem of multi voicing in communication and media. So it seems logical that authoritarian governments fear from freedom of internet and satellite networks. In many Arab countries governments limit social networking sites and blogs through filtering or lower Internet speed. But with all of these obstacles, people widely used these networks as a tool to inform and communicate with each other and they have created ways to overcome the obstacles.

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), has been published in 2009, the Arab states have no tangible progress in freedom of speech and thought (Towards Productive Intercommunication, 2009).
.In 2005, Reporters without Borders announced that four of the 15 Internet enemies, Libya, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia were also in this list. In 2010, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia and Syria in 2011 still remained on the list. In 2011 this organization announced of Saudi Arabia, Syria and Egypt as bloggers jail (Reporters without Borders, 2005, 2010, 2011).

Internet filtering is very common in the region and the work is done by western software. Sudan, Tunisia, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait are using Western technology to block Internet contents (Helmi and Jillian, 2010-2011). The Arab world from Morocco to Bahrain witnessed the emergence of a vibrant community of independent media and citizens to interact with Internet is constantly increasing and are expected by 2015 to attract about 100 million people of Arabs (Ghannam, 2011).

Despite severe censorship, governments were not able to silence protests and prevent the use of communication technologies and production of Internet contents, thus use of the Internet and social networks across the region has been growing. Dealing with protesters and use of force by governments, cutting

off the Internet and bloggers, arresting online activists and imprisoning and torturing them, in the MENA has shown the importance of Internet and social networks (Comninos).

Most of users of social networks in the region are young people. 50% of the population of Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco and Egypt are under 25 years and the rest of the Arab countries population under 25 years is between 35 to 47 percent of the total population (The Arab Media Outlook, 2008 - 2012). It is expected the demand for social networking and blogging will grow, though it is still the dawn of the digital age in the Arab world. Social media networks such as satellite broadcasting news and information have been able to influence the process of change. However, one can not expect that blogging and social networking to create a political change alone. The process change is Long-term and social media can accelerate this process. It Can be said that the change has accelerated since 2011 (Egypt Facebook community, 2011). The key of new uprisings are digital. Social networks have been able to bring disparate groups together by remote control and creating channels to weaken the traditional media control. Along with traditional activities, Internet is a tool for disseminating news and information, social media are used for communication and coordination and mobile phones to record events (Williamson, 2011).

Egyptians digital activists had supported from Morocco and they were trained how to use internet tools. Although the rise of social media played an important role but their role should not be magnified. Although terms such as the digital revolution, the web 2, the traditional media and new Facebook fill the space, but it should be noted that the revolution and reform will create by people who are exposed to social and political conditions(Neubauer &Pusnik, 2011:4). It should be emphasized that social and political movements belong to people and not to tools and community technology (Herrera, 2011) .It seems that the fundamental question is not whether the conflict in the Middle East and North Africa can not be regarded as the Facebook Revolution, But it shows how the second generation of the web can help and strengthen public discourse and political struggles of the people in the region (Neubauer &Pusnik).

Egyptian and Tunisian samples show that the second generation of the Web should not consider as a source of social and political conflict, but it acts as a catalyst for people's upheavals and a free space for thoughts, a platform for communication and it also provides a community to build social relationships, a society in which social space is a real political figure (Morsi, 2011).

The use of social networking and content generated by users in the Middle East and North Africa and the penetration of these networks is completely unprecedented. Penetration after the rise of these networks has shown the role and influence of media on the uprisings in the region. During Arab spring, social networks have attracted the attention of the world to protests. Many of the protesters used these possibilities to discuss their demands. There is a clear link between the demonstrators rallied by social networking and mobilizing protests in streets. Social media were the primary cause of gatherings and protests. Although the term of revolution may not be accurate, but the Facebook or Twitter social networks could play important role in movements and speed of these upheavals. Social networks have had a great importance in attraction of the world to Egypt and Tunisia and subsequently in other countries in the region to the Democratic campaign. These networks along with mobile phones could cover news that was not covered by other media and by sharing photos, videos and texts about the protests provide opportunity for all the world to know the facts (Comninos) .

Conclusion

The wave of the resurgence of the Arab countries in the MENA which began of Egypt and Tunisia propagated with an unprecedented speed in the entire region. This was not only a result of Internet-based communication technologies but also because there was a crisis in social and economic area along with the domination of the authoritarian Governments which have no response to the need of new generations. The story of the Middle East and North Africa is the story of young rebels who want democracy and topple dictators.

Informal Social networks and weblogs have played important role in the upheavals of the Middle East and North Africa. By using these tools, despite Arab Governments efforts to limit the access impact on the formation of anti-government opposition. After the political changes took place in Tunisia and Egypt, other countries of the region including Libya, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Bahrain, Algeria and ... also called for reforms in the political structure and process of democracy in their countries. This led to the formation of limited or widespread protest movements against the ruling regimes in those countries.

What is undeniable is the impact of these media, especially Internet and social networks including Facebook and Twitter on the upheavals and at speeding up and extending the uprisings in the region. Despite the obstacles and slow speed of Internet, mobile phones and short message system, the rapid developments in some countries even over the internet and news channels will inform planning for protests and rallies especially by users of social networks such as Twitter and Facebook, and it represents a political and social role in modern communication tools.

Many scholars believe that the hypothesis that the insurgency has been fueled by social media does not jibe with the facts and they do not believe such a role for these media and this role has been exaggerated. I believe, though it may not make a revolution in Arab world by new technologies, but media and especially social networks have expanded uprisings and protests in the region and they not only enable people to organize and coordinating the protests, but rather a tool to deal with state control over the information.

Corresponding author
Amir Hooshang Mirkooshesh
Department of International Relations, Science & Research Branch Islamic Azad University, Esfahan, Iran.
ammirkooshesh@gmail.com

References
1. Boyd, D., & Ellison, N. (2007). Social network sites: Definition history and scholarship, Journal of Computer Mediated Communication, 13(1), Article 11.
2. Chalcraft, J. (2011).The Egyptian people demand the fall of the regime in The Arab spring of discontent: A collection from e-international relation by Alasdair McKay, Uk, Oxford University.
3. Cheterian, V. (2011, February). The Arab revolt: roots and perspectives, GCSP Policy paper No 12, Geneva Center for Security Policy.
4. Civil movements: The impact of Facebook and Twitter. (2011, May). Arab Social Media.
5. Coleman, J. S., (1988).Social capital in the creation of human capital, American Journal of Sociology, 94, S95-S120.
6. Comninos, A. (2011, June). Twitter revolutions and cyber crackdowns: User-generated content and social networking in the Arab spring and beyond, Association for Progressive Communications (APC). 1-18.
7. Dozens killed in Syrian border town. (2011, May17). Middle East Al Jazeera English. English. Aljazeera. Net, Retrieved 12 June 2011.
8. Dozens tortured and killed in Syria detention centers. (2011, August 31).BBC News.
9. Egypt Facebook community largest in Arab world. (2011, January 26). Spot-On Public Relations, Retrieved from http://www.pitchengine.com /spotonpr/egypt-facebook-community-larges t-in-arab-world/120523/.
10. Facebook usage: Factors and analysis. (2011, January). Arab Social Media Report, 1(1).
11. Fresh violence hits Syrian town.(2011, May 3).Al Jazeera English.
12. Ghannam, J.(2011, February 3). Social media in the Arab world: Leading up to the uprisings of 2011, The Center for International Media Assistance and National Endowment for Democracy.
13. Glaser, M. (2007).Your guide to social networking online, Cambridge, UK: The MIT Press.
14. Hassanpour, A. (1998). Satellite Footprints as National Borders: MED-TV and the Extraterritoriality of State Sovereignty, Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, 18(1), 53-73.
15. Helmi, N., &York, J. C. (2011), west censor east: The use of western technologies by Middle East censors. Retrieved from http://www.opennet.net /west-censoring-east-the-use-western-technologies- middle-east-censors-2010-2011.
16. Herrera, L. (2011).Egypt's revolution 2.0: The Facebook factor. Retrieved from http://www.religionresearch.org/ martijn/2011/02/18/egypts-revolution-2-0-the-facebook-factor.
17. Hinds, D., & Lee, R.M. (2008).Social network structure as a critical success condition for virtual communities, Department of Decision Sciences and Information Systems, Florida International University.
18. Hofheinz, A. (2007). Arab Internet use: Popular trends and public impact, In Naomi Skylar (Ed.), Arab media and political renewal: Community, legitimacy and public life, New York, NY: I.B.Tauris.
19. Jones, C, (2011).Yemen and The Arab spring: Moving beyond the tribal order, in The Arab spring of discontent: A collection from e-International relation by Alasdair McKay, Uk, Oxford University.
20. Kravets, D. (2011, January28). What's fueling Mideast protests? It's more than Twitter, Wired Magazine, and Retrieved from www.wired.co .uk/news/archive/2011-01-28/middle-east-protests-twitter.
21. Mayfield, A. (2008, August 1).What is Social Media? I crossing, Retrieved from http://icrossing.co.uk/ebooks.
22. Morsi, H. (2011). On revolutions false miracles and social media, Retrieved from http://www.hanimorsi.com/blog/index.php /archives/2011/02/24/on-revolutions-false-miracles-and-social-media.
23. Neubauer, T., & Pusnik.T. (2011). Are we witnessing a Facebook revolution? Evaluating the impacts of Web 2.0 in the peoples' struggles in North Africa and some implications for citizenship education, Networking European Citizenship Education, Retrieved from http:// www.nece.eu / Newsletter 01/11
24. Online Social Networks. (2008, October). Research Report Crown Copyright, Retrieved from http://www. communities.gov.uk.

25. Ottaway, M., & Hamzawy, A. (2011, January 28), Protest movements and political change in the Arab world, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Report, 1(2).

26. Reporters without Borders. (2005, November 17). The 15 enemies of the Internet and other countries to watch, Retrieved from http://www.en.rsf.org /the-15-enemies-of-the-internet-and-17-11-2005,15613.html.

27. Reporters without Borders. (2010, March12). Web 2.0 vs. control 2.0. Retrieved from http://www. en.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/Internet_enemies.pdf; Reporters without Borders. (2011, March 12). Internet enemies, Retrieved from http://march12.rsf.org/i/   Internet_Enemies.pdf.

28. Ruhoak, A., &Ijzerloo, J. (2011, June). The Arab Spring focus, rabobank economic research department.

29. Serrat, O., (2009, February 28)."Social Network Analysis, Knowledge Solutions", Asian Development Bank.

30. Shih, C. (2009). The Facebook era: Tapping online special networks to build better products, reach new audiences, and sell more stuff, Boston, Pearson Education.

31. Simon, H. A. (1976).Administrative behavior, New York, Free Press.

32. Syrian protests add to pressure on Assad regime. (2011, March 23).The Wall Street Journal. The Arab Media Outlook, 2008-2012, 47.

33. Towards productive intercommunication for knowledge. (2009). Arab Knowledge Report, Mohammed bins Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation and United Nations Development Programme, Retrieved from http://www.mbrfoundation.ae /English/Documents/AKR-2009-En/AKR-English.pdf.

34. Williamson, Asocial media and the new Arab Spring, Networking European Citizenship Education, Retrieved from http:// www.nece.eu / Newsletter 01/11.

2/12/2012