CHAPTER-V

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION

"If you want to liberate a society, just give them the internet."
-Wael Ghonim (Egyptian Google Executive)

The brutal murder of Khaled Said, a 28 year old Egyptian at the hands of two policemen became the catalyst for one of the biggest revolutions in the history of Egypt. This horrific incident would have been passed off as another case of police brutality if not the cell phone photos of the battered and bloodied face of Kaled Said or the videos of his murder had been circulated in the various social networking sites. For many of the youths who were fed up with police brutality on a daily basis Khaled become the symbol for many Egyptians who dream to see their country free of brutality, torture and ill treatment.[1] Over the coming months online protests against the horrific incident and police brutality began to gain momentum and within a short span of time the internet powered youth started to organize calls for silent protests and demonstrations through online communities and groups. Three prominent online groups played a crucial role during the initial calls for demonstration the April 6 Movement, We Are All Khalid Said, and the ElBaradei Facebook groups.

What started out as an online protest against police brutality soon became a national movement against torture, poverty, corruption and unemployment in Egypt leading to the toppling of President Mubarak's 30 years dictatorial regime.

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[1] See for details http://www.elshaheed.co.uk/home-khaled-said-full-story-background-truth-what-
\happened-torture-in-egypt-by-egyptian-police/

Since the revolution there have been countless debates on the role played by social media in the revolution. However, in spite of the continuing debates on the question of whether if social media had caused the revolution; the general consensus remains more or less the same that social media was an important factor in accelerating the revolution. Branded by the media as the Facebook Revolution or Revolution 2.0, the 18 day Egyptian Revolution epitomizes the struggle between the internets savvy youth on one hand and an outdated regime on the other hand. The Tahrir Square protest on 25th January, 2015 represents the ultimate culmination of the efforts of the social activists who successfully utilized social media to spread information and organize the mass movement. Social media is a relatively new phenomena in revolutions, however, owing due to its influence in the Arab Spring in general and the Egyptian Revolution in particular, certain important factors had come to assume a central place in future discourse on revolutions such as the impact of social media on public opinion, its capacity to transmit information within a few seconds and the ability of the individual to transmit information across the globe. Nonetheless, the significance of social media is further accentuated by the importance of mobilization of ideas and people which is a fundamental element in revolutions.

The march of the Egyptians against the repressive system on 25th January is principally viewed as one of the most powerful forms of cyber activism that the world had witnessed in the 21st Century. Social media was utilized in two ways firstly it acted as a tool for the activists to mobilize, organize and inspire the masses and secondly it acted as a medium to document the unfolding events in the revolution. Without the initial call to arms online and Facebook's ability to get thousands though not millions into the

streets, then the demonstrations might never have reached the mainstream majority of Egyptians, and Mubarak might have survived.[2]

5.1. Social Media in Egypt

According to Egypt's Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT) report 'The Future of the Internet Economy in Egypt: A Statistical Profile 2013,' Facebook users dramatically increased from 4.2 million users in 2010 to 9.4 million user in 2011 while Twitter users increased from 19.3 thousand users in 2010 to 129 thousand users in 2011.[3]Over the last decade or so, the Arab region in general and Egypt in particular have witnessed a sharp rise in the use of social media. As per the Arab Social Media Report in December 2010, with around 4.7 million users, Egypt constitutes about 22% of total users in the Arab region.[4]

Since the 1990s Egypt became one of the leading countries in the availability of internet services on a large scale in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Internet started in Egypt in 1993 with a cable connection to France of a 9.6 kbps bandwidth to the Egyptian Universities Network (EUN) and the Cabinet Information and Decision Support Centre (IDSC) with the National telephone organization (predecessor of Telecom Egypt) providing the services.[5] The government authorization to allow the private sectors to step into the provision of internet services in 1996 further ushered in a huge increase in the number of private sector Internet Service Providers (ISPs), who were allowed to own and manage their own infrastructure. With more than 100 internet

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[2]See for details Maha Taki and Lorenzo Coretti, *The Role of Social Media in the Arab Uprisings-Past and Present*, Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture, volume 9, Issue 2, April 2013, p.5, http://www.westminister.ac.uk.

[3] See for details http://www.mcit.gov.eg.

[4]See for details Dubai School of Government, *Social Media in the Arab World: Influencing   Societal and Cultural Change*, http://www.arabsocialmediareport.com

[5] See http://www.mohamedrashad.com/internet_history_egypt.html.

providers, internet access in Egypt is really cheap. The government also took up some steps towards the expansion of ICTs leading to the establishment Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT) in 1999 to develop the national ICT Sector. Egypt's MCIT focuses on three key objectives: the transformation of Egypt into a digital society, the development of the ICT industry and the establishment of Egypt as a global digital hub.[6] The MCIT report 2013, states that since 2007 Egypt's internet broadband uptake is growing steadily with an annual growth rate of 40.3%, reaching 1.8 million subscribers while mobile internet uptake has an average annual growth rate of about 54% reaching 3.07 million subscribers in 2011 compared to 1.3 million in 2009.[7]

The government placed almost no restriction on the spread of commercial internet or on its content as the regime felt that it would aid economic development. This outlook prompted the Egyptian government to adopt many strategies to increase the diffusion of the internet, as a result there was a significant increase in the number of internet users from 0.65 million users in the year 2000 to reach 29 million users in the year 2011.[8] However, it kept a close watch on the critical bloggers, many of whom were frequently arrested by the government. In 2005, Egypt's Ministry of Interiors ordered the internet café owners to record their customer's names from their IDs in a record that has to be shown to the state security officer in whose jurisdiction area the net café is located.[9] Egypt under President Hosni Mubarak was marked by repressive laws which denied its citizens basic human rights. Any form of opposition was successfully suppressed by the regime by imposing brutal punishments upon those who went against it. The media was

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[6] See http://www.mcit.gov.eg/ict_Strategy.
[7] See for details http://www.mcit.gov.eg/indicators/indicators.aspx
[8] See for details http://www.mcit.gov.eg.
[9] See http://www.anhri.net/en/reports/2005/pr0223.shtml.

left moderately free but it was prohibited from writing critically about Mubarak or his family. One of the most repressive laws curtailing freedom of expression is the 1958 Emergency Law which authorizes the President to impose censorship on all means of communication. Furthermore, in 1995, Mubarak passed the Press Law No. 93 which limited press freedom by imposing lengthy prison terms along with hefty fines for journalists convicted of libel and other ill defined publication crimes.[10] In addition to the Constitutional Law and the Press Law, the media was also regulated through multiple legal texts such as the Penal Code, the Journalism Regulation Law, the State Documents Law, the Party Law, the Civil Servants Law and the Intelligence.[11] Under these circumstances, the media simply became a puppet of the dictatorial regime whose only task was to transmit the regime's message and propaganda. Many cases involving police brutality were covered up and many of the testimonies of the victims were hushed up by the media. In 2005, the peaceful demonstrators protesting against a referendum for constitutional change were attacked by police in central Cairo. Women were beaten, stripped and sexually molested in broad daylight and in front of satellite television cameras. The case was closed when the authorities declared they had insufficient evidence to identity the attackers.[12] The demand for reforms in the legal framework governing the media post the 2011 revolution further testify to the repression of the rights of the media as well as freedom of speech and expression in Egypt. The severe repression of the democratic rights led the Egyptian population to carve out a virtual public space where they could debate contentious issues that could not be discussed in public.

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[10] See for details Fatima el Issawi, *Egyptian Media Under Transition: In the Name of the Regime….In The Name of the People?,* http://www.lse.ac.uk.

[11] Ibid.

[12] See Rahab –El Mahdi and Philip Marfleet, *Egypt the Moment of Change*, (Zed Books Ltd., London, 2009), p. 126.

The importance of social media in Egypt has thus been building up for years; by 2005, Egypt was home to a thriving and diverse blogosphere of committed and insightful commentators who began to challenge the narrative of the state- run media, uncovering major stories that the state controlled sector either couldn't or wouldn't run.[13] In 2008, the April 6 Movement used Facebook to gain more than 70, 000 supporters to help raise awareness for striking workers in Mahalla al- Kobra, Egypt.[14] A horrific church bombing on New Year's Eve 2010 in Alexandria also sparked a movement among many young Egyptians to post images communicating solidarity between Christians and Muslims.[15]

While the government closely monitored print and broadcast media, it more or less neglected the social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. Though Internet penetration has increased dramatically over the last several years, with 40-45 million Internet users identified in 16 Arab countries surveyed in 2009, the technological capabilities of modern life that are taken for granted in highly developed societies, have progressed in a relatively short span of time and have not been embraced by the authoritarian governments that dominate the Middle East.[16] The absence of strict government censorship and monitoring enabled the cyber activists to create a virtual world where they could openly exercise their right to freedom of speech and expression. These discussions in turn prompted the growth of collective consciousness. One participant in Cairo has

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[13] See for details Tim Eaton, *Internet Activism and the Egyptian Uprisings: Transforming Online Dissent into the Offline World*, Volume 9, Issue 2, April 2013, p.7, http://www.westminsterpapers.org

[14] See Jennifer Preston, *Movement Began with Outrage and a Facebook Page that gave it an outlet*, 5th February, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com

[15] See The American University in Cairo, John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement, *Youth Activism and Public Space in Egypt*, 2011, p. 21, http://www.schools.aucegypt.edu.

[16] See Madeline Storck, *The Role of Social Media in Political Mobilisation: a Case Study of the January 2011 Egyptian Uprising*, University of St Andrews, Scotland, 2011, p. 15, http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org.

stated: "imagine if every day, somebody comes over to your home and steals something, and you don't do anything about it. You don't even call the police or tell your parents that there was a thief. Everybody, even a mentally-retarded person, could see that we were all getting ripped off every single day. We could all see it happen before our very eyes but we were silent!"[17]

The common frustrations against the system and its failure to address the existing political, economic and social problems had been an important factor in strengthening the common consciousness. Prior the revolution, Egypt's political system was a hybrid type, it consisted of democratic institutions and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) coupled with a repressive system quick in suppressing any opposition. In regard to social and political organizations, the regime did not prohibit the formation of these organizations, by 2011 there were about 16,800 CSOs in Egypt.[18] Nevertheless, certain restrictions were placed upon these CSOs, for instance, prohibition of collaboration with international organizations and granting of certain powers to the government to dissolve these organizations. These CSOs were closely monitored by the Ministry of Interiors.

As the use of social media began to increase, collective consciousness also began to grow. Social media sites provided a common ground for the discontent masses to come together and discuss things that mattered to them. Lack of strict censorship coupled with anonymity further encouraged the youths in particular to rely upon the social networking sites as a means to relieve their frustrations and dissatisfactions against the system. Social media played a crucial role in the formation of a common identity during these initial

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[17] See The American University in Cairo, Note 15, p.11.
[18] See The American University in Cairo, John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement, *Youth Activism and Public Space in Egypt*, 2011, p. 90, http://www.schools.aucegypt.edu.

stages preceding the revolution, factors like shared experiences, use of slang and local idiom in the social networking sites contributed in shaping together a common identity. The new technologies facilitated the formation of common identity by breaking down geographical barriers and enabling the people to connect and participate in the public sphere.

An important factor in the increase of the use of social media was the lack of youth participation in the public sphere. The initial mobilization phase was fundamentally a result of the interaction between the middle class youth falling under the educated and unemployed youth category. Those with the highest level of education (at least some university) constituted 46 percent of Egyptian protesters.[19] The youth makes up for majority of the population, since 1990 youth population aged 15- 29 has grown to 65 percent in Egypt.[20] And unemployment, which officially sat at a manageable 7.3 percent in 2000, reached 10 percent in 2009, with joblessness particularly acute among university educated youth.[21] With unemployment and poverty the number of suicide rate in Egypt is particularly high especially amongst the youth below the age of 25 years. According to the Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, a total of 1160 suicides were reported in the year 2005, 3700 in 2007, 4000 in 2001 and 5000 in 2009 along with 104, 000 suicide attempts.[22] The untapped human potential coupled with under representation in the public sphere further perpetuated resentments against the

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[19] See for details Mark Beissinger, Amaney Jamal, and Kevin Mazur, Princeton University, *Who Participates in Democratic Revolutions? A Comparison of the Egyptian and Tunisian Revolutions*, p.15, http://www.aihr-resourcscenter.org.

[20] See for details Rama Halaseh, *Civil Society, Youth and the Arab Spring*, p. 263, http://www.um.edu.mt.

[21] See for details Laurel E. Miller, Jeffrey Martini, Stephen F. Larrabee, Julie E. Taylor, Twewodaj Mengitsu, *Democratization in the Arab World: Lessons from around the Globe, (*RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 1st Edition, 2012), p. 87.

[22] See for details http://www/egyptindependence.com/news/egyptian-suicide-rate-rise.

regime. The domination of the public sphere by the government and its agencies compelled the frustrated youths to look for alternative public spaces which they could claim as their own spheres of influence. The social networking sites consequently became the primary medium for expression for the frustrated youth, who had been silent for years as a consequent result of the regime and its oppressive laws. A few years before the 2011 revolution, a small but influential groups of urban, highly educated, middle class, primarily young Egyptian activists, coordinating and operating through multiple social media platforms, formed an array of loosely affiliated grassroots activists networks throughout the country.[23] What the youth started was a new literary movement through which they can state their opinions as well as interact with their like minded peers. As Underwood and Jabre explain, young men and women "learn to analyze critically their circumstances, come to recognize that the world is subject to change, and ultimately are empowered to rise to the challenge of changing the world in which they live." [24]

The growth of social media in Egypt can be attributed to certain factors- the emphasis of the government on the development of ICTs and their supposed potentiality to boost economic development, the absence of an independent media to convey public feedback to the government, the suppression of the democratic rights leading to widespread discontentment, the presence of the varied social, economic and political issues and the exclusion of the youth from the public sphere. These factors culminated in the formation of a networked society, a new social structure marked by greater scope of

[23]See for details Sahar Khamis, Paul B, Gold and Katherine Vaughn, *Beyond Egypt's "Facebook Revolution" and Syria's "YouTube Uprising."Comparing Political Contexts, Actors and Communication Strategies*, http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=791.
[24] Underwood and Jabre as quoted by Rama Halaseh, Note 20, p. 265.

freedom and which preached new hopes for a better future for the millions of discontent Egyptians.

5.2. Timeline of Key Events

The initial calls for the 18 day protests were mainly done through online groups and communities. The success of the Tunisian Revolution gave the Egyptians the impetus they needed to finally stage their long over-due revolution against an unjust and corrupt system. The success of the Tunisian Revolution taught the Egyptians certain important things, firstly, the state is not all powerful. The fleeing of the Tunisian President Ben 'Ali and the quick success of the Tunisian Revolution showcased to the Egyptians that the state apparatus is not as strong as it appears to be. Secondly, the state is not as unified as it appears to be. The decision of the Tunisian Army to break with the President exposed the fragility of the state apparatus which the opposition could exploit. Some of the main demands of the Egyptian activists were:

1. To put an end to President Hosni Mubarak's regime: President Mubarak came into power in 1981 after the assassination of President Anwar al- Sadat. And through rigged elections President Mubarak's National Democratic Party (NDP) had been in power for more than three decades by relying on coercion and confrontation. With widespread corruption, police brutality, inefficient public services, high rates of unemployment, poverty etc., there were widespread discontentment and resentment amongst the Egyptians against the regime. However, perhaps the greatest discontentment of the Egyptians lies in the absence of citizen participation in the public sphere. The rigged Parliamentary elections not only discouraged many Egyptians to stay away from actively participating in the elections but the regime also successfully employed varied means of

torture tactics to suppress any form of opposition whether be it from a handful of opposing political parties or from the citizens.

2. To put an end the Emergency Law of 1958: Egypt's Emergency Law empowers the police to arrest and torture any Egyptian citizen without official warrant. Since the implementation of this law the State Security had imprisoned and tortured thousands of political activists, peasants, students, journalists and writers who dared to raise their voice against the corrupt and unjust system. The torture tactics employed by the State Security had been a major concern for the Human Rights Watch in the region. According to the Egyptian Association against Torture 'such abuse is part of a strategy to terrorize individuals and to ensure complete submission of the people'.[25] With the help of the Emergency Law the police has emerged as one of Egypt's largest and most heavily armed criminal mob.[26]

3.To put an end to the concept of hereditary succession: President Mubarak's son Gamal Mubarak emerged on the national political scene in 2000 when he joined his father's political party and soon became its deputy secretary general. The NDP than began to groom Mubarak junior as the next President of Egypt. Supporters of Gamal Mubarak continued to repeatedly voice their argument by stating that support to Mubarak junior would signify a step towards democracy as he would be the first civilian president in Egypt since the Revolution of 1952 but majority of the Egyptians refused to accept this argument. As this would imply a hereditary succession, where the Pharaoh passes on his throne to his son; the continuance of the restriction on citizen participation in the public sphere.

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[25] See Rabab El-Mahdi & Philip Marfleet, Note 12, p. 2.

[26]See Ashraf Khalil, *Inside the Egyptian Revolution and the Rebirth of a Nation: Liberation Square*, (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1st Edition, 2012), p. 26.

4. To put an end to poverty and unemployment. The Liberalizing period of the mid 1990s in an attempt to lure funds and loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (World Bank) thousands of state owned industries were privatized. However these new economic policies only served to benefit the few rich sections of the society while thousands of the population continued to live in extreme poverty and deplorable conditions. The poverty rate, as measured by the standard of one U.S. dollar a day in earnings, rose from an estimated 20 percent in 2000 to 25 percent in 2009.[27] And unemployment, which officially sat at a manageable 7.3 percent in 2000, reached 10 percent in 2009, with joblessness particularly acute among university educated youth.[28] One of the most popular slogans used during the uprising was "bread, freedom, social justice."[29]

5. To put an end to corruption: Egypt ranks 115th out of 139 nations in the Corruption Perceptions Index.[30] Under Mubarak's regime loyalty played a crucial factor particularly if a Member of Parliament or the Councils wanted to advance in the political game. While the few opposition were arrested and tortured, the loyalists were given certain privileges and benefits ranging from land loans to immunity from arrests. In addition to this, there was also widespread corruption at various levels of the government.

With these demands, the Egyptian civilians and social activists took to the streets on 25th January, 2011. In the weeks that followed Egypt witnessed a new generation of Egyptians who were unafraid of the threats and blows of the police and who were willing

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[27] See for details Laurel E. Miller, Jeffrey Martini, Stephen F. Larrabee, Julie E. Taylor, Twewodaj Mengitsu, Note 21, p. 86.
[28] Ibid, p. 87.
[29] Ibid, p .85.
[30] See for details Wael Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People is greater than the People in Power*, (Harper Collins Publishers, London, 2012), p. 165.

to go to any length to let their voice be heard. January 25th 2011: The protest on January 25th was made to coincide with a national holiday the National Police Day. The national holiday is a remembrance of the 50 police officers who were killed and the other 100 who were wounded when they refused to hand over their weapons to the British Army during the 1952 Revolution. The protesters choose this day specifically as it represented 'a fusion of the police and the people.'[31]

On the "Day of Revolt" Egypt witnessed wide protests in Cairo, Alexandria, Mansura, Tanta and other major cities. In spite of the protest guidelines passed on through the social media sites like We Are All Khaled Said the protests soon turned violent as the police began to fire tear gases and use water cannons against the protesters in Tahrir Square, Cairo, crying out "Down with Mubarak." Hours after the protests begins, the Interior Ministry issues a statement blaming the Muslim Brotherhood a claim which it denied. By the end of the day, thousands of protesters had gathered at Tahrir Square and one unified chant burst from thousands of lungs, "EL SHA'AB YUREED ISQAAT AN-NIZAAM (The people want to topple the regime!)[32] The protesters would not leave Tahrir Square unless President Mubarak resigns from office.

January 26th 2011: On the second day, the protesters continued to remain in Tahrir Square. In another attempt to drive out the protesters from the Square the police uses tear gas, water cannons, batons and even live ammunition. While in Suez, a clash between the police and the protesters result in the injury of 55 protesters and 15 police

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[31] See for details Wael Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People is greater than the People in Power*, (Harper Collins Publishers, London, 2012), p. 166.
[32] See for details Wael Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People is greater than the People in Power*, (Harper Collins Publishers, London, 2012), p. 184.

officers according to medical personnel.[33] Elsewhere, the Egyptian Diasporas showed their support to the ongoing protests in Egypt by staging protests in front of the Egyptian embassies across the world.

January 27th 2011: While protests and clashes between the police and the protesters continued across several cities like Cairo, Alexandria, Suez, Ismalia and the northern Sinai area of Sheikh Zuweid, Mohamed El Baradei (former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency) returns to Egypt and joins the protest. The internet is shut down leaving only one smaller ISP Noor to operate.

January 28th 2011: Egypt shuts down the internet completely. Approximately 3, 500 individual BGP (Border Gateway Protocol) routes were withdrawn, leaving no valid paths by which the rest of the world could continue to exchange internet traffic with Egypt's service providers.[34]The Muslim Brotherhood, who did not participate in the initial demonstrations, joins the protest. The government responds by deploying an elite special counter- terrorism force in Cairo and also warns the protesters of decisive measures. Clashes between the police and demonstrators turn deadly. Protesters set on fire a police station in Cairo. The headquarters of the ruling National Democratic Party was also set ablaze.[35] At least 1, 030 people got injured countrywide.[36] The riots continue on throughout the night even as President Mubarak announces that he had dismissed his government. Wael Ghonim, the Google Executive and the admin of We Are All Khaled Said goes missing.

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[33]See for details http://www.aljazeera.com.news/middleeast/2011/01/2011251533487490.html.
[34]See http://www.thegaurdian.com/technology/2011/jan/28/egypt-cuts-off-internet-access.
[35]See http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12327995.
[36]See for details http://www.aljazeera.com.news/middleeast/2011/01/2011251533487490.html.

January 29th 2011: In a speech delivered shortly after midnight President Mubarak announces that he had dismissed his cabinet and had appointed Omar Suleiman as vice president, and General Ahmed Chafiq as prime minister of a new cabinet. However, there is no mention of the President stepping down. The protesters refuse to leave the Square despite the troops firing into the air. Demonstrators in Cairo were caught in amateur video footage praying in Cairo's Qasr El- Nile Bridge despite being hit by water cannons.[37]

January 30th 2011: Mubarak fires the head of the ruling party as well as the Minister of Interior. Police forces are withdrawn from Tahrir Square. Protesters marched on a mosque, where the funerals of two demonstrators killed in clashes with the police took place; buildings were attacked and widespread looting was reported.[38] The Army issues a statement announcing that it will not use force against the demonstrators and that it recognizes the legitimacy of their demands.

January 31st 2011: While the protesters continued to camp out in the Square, Egypt's new Vice President promises dialogue with the opposition parties for new constitutional reforms. President Mubarak announces the names of his new cabinet on state television. Worldwide, the European Union calls for free and fair elections in Egypt while worldwide investors continue to withdraw significant capital from Egypt.

February 1st 2011: More than a quarter of a million people flooded into the heart of Cairo to take part in a demonstration which came to be known as the "March of Millions."[39] President Mubarak announces on state television he will not run for re-election but still refuses to step down and instead promises new constitutional reforms.

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[37] See http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12327995
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

President Barack Obama gives a live address and asserts that the Egyptians had the right to determine their own future. Shortly after his speech, clashes break out between pro-Mubarak and anti- government protesters in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria.[40]

February 2nd 2011: As preparation for another demonstration begins, clashes between the police and the protesters are reported in Cairo and Alexandria. In Tahrir Square, the government tries to break up the demonstration by employing plainclothes security and thugs who attacked the protesters by riding on horses and camels. The protesters accuse the military of allowing thousands of pro Mubarak supporters to enter the Square with knives and sticks. As the clashes continue, Wael Ghonim the Google Executive who founded the Facebook page We Are All Khaled Said is reported missing by his friend Hadid Habbab.

February 3rd 2011: Omar Suleiman rules out Gamal Mubarak succeeding his father. But the protesters remain adamant and the government tries to disperse the protesters at the Square with heavy gunfire.

February 4th 2011: Protest continues in the Square as Egypt enters its 11th day of unrest and mass demonstrations. Tens of thousands of Egyptians took part in a "Day of Departure" to oust President Hosni Mubarak.[41]

February 5th 2011: Gamal Mubarak resigns as the secretary- general of the National Democratic Party and Hossam Badrawi is appointed in his place.

February 6th 2011: The Muslim Brotherhood issues a statement stating that it has decided to enter into dialogue with Vice President Omar Suleiman.

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[40] See http://www.aljazeera.com.news/middleeast/2011/01/2011251533487490.html.
[41] See http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12327995.

February 7th 2011: In an attempt to win over the angry masses the government approves a 15 per cent rise in salaries and pensions. Wael Ghonim, the founder of the Facebook page We Are All Khaled Said is released from state custody. He gives a tearful interview on state television that adds momentum to the protests.

February 8th 2011: Protesters continue to gather at the Square and outside the Parliament to protest. Vice President Omar Suleiman announces another round of constitutional and legislative reforms.

February 9th 2011: Labor strikes further shut down the country. At the Suez Canal about 6, 000 state workers went on strike.[42]

February 10th 2011: The newly appointed Culture Minister Gaber Asfour resigns. President Mubarak gives a speech on national television announcing that he will remain in power until his term expires.

February 11, 2011: Demonstrators blocked the employees of the state television station from entering and leaving the building, accusing them of negatively reporting about the protests. Protesters marched on Egypt's Presidential Palace to repeat their calls for President Hosni Mubarak to step down immediately.[43] Omar Suleiman announces that Mubarak has resigning by handing over the power to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

Human Rights Watch has collected figures from doctors in 8 hospitals giving a total of at least 302 killed in the unrest in Egypt since January 28, 2011.[44] The 18 day Revolution witnessed two important tactics of the ruling regime use of violence and

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[42]See http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12327995.
[43]See http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12327995.
[44]See for details htpp://www.hrw.org/news/2011/02/08/Egypt-documented-death-toll-protests-tops-300

political promises. In suppressing the Revolution the regime had resorted to the use of state violence by even firing live ammunition against the protesters while at the same time in order to bring stability and order it tried to appease the protesters by promising a slew of constitutional reforms.

The January 25th protest is largely regarded as an outcome of the efforts of the various online groups like We Are All Khaled Said, April 6 Movement and the ElBaradei Facebook groups that had a huge youth following. But later in the course of the revolution the various opposition groups and the Muslim Brotherhood also joined the revolution. This further added to the increasing cohesiveness of the multitude groups within the Egyptian society working towards one common goal to bring change in Egypt.

5.3. Role of Social Media in the Egyptian Revolution

The Egyptian Revolution had been branded by the media as a 'Facebook Revolution' or a 'Twitter Revolution.' However, it would be an over estimation to solely assume that social media was the only factor which triggered the revolution. An analysis of the social, economic and political conditions which existed prior the revolution clearly showcases that there was widespread discontentment and resentment amongst the Egyptians against the system. Hence, social media cannot be simply ruled out as a single factor in causing the revolution. But in spite of the inherent criticisms the role of social media in the Revolution cannot be sidelined. Social media was one of the key factors which accelerated the revolution. Suppression of freedom of speech and expression is a common phenomenon prevalent under almost every dictatorial regime and as is in the case of Egypt. What social media provided to the Egyptians was an outlet through which they could voice their opinions with like- minded individuals and also think up of ways

and solutions to address the existing problems. Prior the revolution, social media served some important functions: firstly, it helped in building a politically conscious environment which was a crucial factor for setting the ground to stage the revolution. Secondly, it provided an alternative sphere for the public to have political discussions and debates, a freedom which was mostly restricted by the ruling regime. Thirdly, it enabled the activists to plan the protests anonymously. Fourthly, it provided a low cost and highly efficient platform from which the activists could organize the revolution.

The above inherent advantages make social media a very important tool in promoting change particularly in non democratic regimes. This view had been a central factor in the United States' democracy building campaign in the developing countries. Prior the Arab Spring, a number of the groups and individuals directly involved in the revolts and reforms sweeping the region, including the April 6 Movement in Egypt, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and grass- roots activists like Enstar Qadhi, a youth leader in Yemen, received training and financing from groups like the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute and Freedom House, a non- profit human rights organization based in Washington according to interviews and American diplomatic cables obtained by Wikileaks.[45] The United States' Republican and Democratic Institutes are created and financed by the Congress through the National Endowment for Democracy set up in 1983 to promote democracy in the developing nations. Stephen McInerney, executive director of the Project on Middle East Democracy, a Washington based advocacy and research group had stated,"we didn't fund them to start protests, but we did help support their development of skills and networking.

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[45] See for details http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/15/world/15aid.html

That training did play a role in what ultimately happened but it was their revolution. we didn't start it."[46]

In order to fully comprehend the role of social media in the Egyptian Revolution it is thus pertinent to discuss the role that it played during the initial years prior the revolution. As the number of Internet Service Providers (ISP) blossomed in Egypt so did the number of internet savvy Egyptian youths. With access to a vast sea of knowledge coupled with increased online interaction with various people across the world, the Egyptian youth was able to carve out a virtual world where it could freely express its opinions without the constant glare and monitoring of the Interior Ministry. Egypt got its first taste of online activism through the Kefaya (Enough) Movement comprising of a group of young leftists. The movement was built around one single goal to prevent Gamal Mubarak from succeeding his father. Kefaya's mobilization and organization tactics mainly revolved around the efficient utilization of Information Technology. The group's website provided free membership to all its users and also at the same time it allowed the users to post their grievances anonymously. One of Kefaya's major organizing spaces was Misr Digital, the first digital independent newspaper in Egypt.[47] The group used four primary means of communication, firstly, it used electronic mails (e-mails) to contact its members and the general public. A text message sent to thousands of mobile phones helped draw 2, 000 persons to a June 2005 demonstration that one report described as "the most organized and impressive demonstration by the reform movement

[46]See for details Stephen McInerney asquoted by   http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/15/world/15aid.html.
[47]Seehttp://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2011/07/tahrir_square_was_a_foreseeable_supr ise.html.

to dat."[48]Secondly, it published advertisements online. It was more safer for the group to advertise online as they were likely to be censored by the government if they published on print media. In 2007, an anti- Mubarak rally advertised by the group on an independent newspaper Al-Karama (Dignity) was confiscated by the state security. [49] Thirdly, it published banners and caricatures (political cartoons) on its own website and on those supporting bloggers.[50] Fourthly, it posted audiovisual and photographic documentation of sexual abuse and physical harassment by the state security forces on its website.[51]

Kefaya's internal structure consisted of an inner circle of activists, a coordinator and a spokesperson. The group's message was also circulated by the community of *bloggers* using the group's insignia which was a yellow circle with the word Kefaya written in red through online blogging sites like 'wa7damasrya.blogspot.com' and 'misrdigital.blogspirit.com.' The bloggers wrote about human rights abuses by the police which received attention from international media like CNN, The New York Times, The Washington Post and Amnesty International. The popularity of these bloggers were attributed to the bold and honest way in which they discussed issues which were in a way forbidden by the suppressive regime. The initial blogs were published in English but later owing due to the development of Arabic software much of the blogs were published in Arabic which helped attract greater audience. The Kefaya Movement surfaced during this time as a prominent group which helped to mobilize the discontent youth by providing

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[48] See for details Nadia Oweidat, Cheryl Denard, Dale Stahl, Walid Kidani, Edward O' Connel and Audra K.Grant, *The Kefaya Movement: A Case Study of a Grassroots Reform Initiative*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2008, p. 21, , http://www. www.rand.org › Published Research › Monographs.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

them with an alternative outlet to channel their frustrations against the regime. Stressing on the importance of online activism one analyst writes, "If Kefaya has provided the political space for voices of opposition to speak out, blogs have provided the means for Kefaya's mobilization. Not only have the bloggers to challenge the original version of events expressing a wide array of abuses by Egypt's authorities and monitoring the lives of fellow activists in jail they have also rallied other activists around the cause of publicizing Kefaya demonstrations which have often been over looked by the mainstream publications."[52]

The Kefaya Movement launched a series of protests in 2004 and 2005 however it failed to mobilize the larger Egyptian population. But in spite of its supposed failure, the movement set the stage for the emergence of online activism in Egypt. Kefaya's demonstrations, while not covered by traditional media, were publicized to Egyptian Internet users through blogs and YouTube, which served as the medium through which many Egyptians heard the phrase "down with Hosni Mubarak" for the first time.[53] For many of the young Egyptians, the Kefaya and its community of bloggers represented the voice of a new genre of free spirited individuals who were unafraid of the suppressive regime and who were willing to go to any extent to let their voice be heard. The blunt honesty of the bloggers in questioning and discussing some of the political issues which were in a way considered as taboo further drew and inspired more Egyptian youths to the movement. Although, the regime never blocked or censored the websites or the blogs,

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[52]See for details Nadia Oweidat, Cheryl Denard, Dale Stahl, Walid Kidani, Edward O' Connel and Audra K.Grant, *The Kefaya Movement: A Case Study of a Grassroots Reform Initiative*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2008, p. 23, , http://www. www.rand.org › Published Research › Monographs

[53] See Rasha Abdulla, *Egypt's Media in the Midst of Revolution*, (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Publications Department, Washington, DC, 2014), p.8.

yet, many of the bloggers were constantly subjected to harassment by the police. This was particularly so in the case of some of the bloggers who refused to hide under the cloak of anonymity and used their real names instead; a move which added more credibility and star status to the concerned blogger. In all, blogging created a space for political awareness and discussion that was new to the region.[54]

Following close on the footsteps of the Kefaya Movement, the April 6 Movement burst upon the national scene in 2008. The April 6 Movement consisted of a small group of internet savvy Egyptians who launched a Facebook page on March 23, 2008 in support of the workers at Egypt's largest textile factory in the Nile Delta city of Mahalla al-Kubra who were going to protest against the prevailing low wages and the high food prices. To show support to the labour strike the leaders of the April 6 Movement which included Amal Sharaf, Israa Abdel Fattah, Ahmed Mahar and Mohammed Adel invited 300 people to join its Facebook page and within a day it had 3,000 members and within a few weeks, 70,000 had joined the call for strikes across Egypt in support of the Mahalla workers.[55] On 6th April, 2008, thousands of workers rioted but it was harshly suppressed by the police. Following the protest prominent young leaders of the April 6 Movement like Israa Abdel Fattah and Ahmed Maher were arrested by the police. This incident helped the political activists realize the power of social media in exposing an idea and generating support for it in terms of action.[56] Post the strikes the regime also realized to some extent that the internet could be employed as a tool by the social activists to work against the system. The NDP established an 'Electronic Committee' rumoured to have legions of

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[54]See Rasha Abdulla, *Egypt's Media in the Midst of Revolution*, (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Publications Department, Washington, DC, 2014), p.8.

[55]See for details http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/revolution-in-cairo/inside-april6-movement/

[56] See Rasha Abdulla, Note 53, p. 10.

well paid young men and women whose mission was to influence online opinion in favour of the party through contributions to websites, blogs, news sites, and social networks.[57] Nonetheless in spite of these new developments the number of discussion forums, chat rooms and blogs continued to increase. The occasional arrest and subsequent harassment of bloggers and online activists also continued but the fact was that the control of social media was beyond the state security.

Another notable example on the use of social media as a mode of creating political awareness and mobilization prior the revolution was the ElBaradei's Facebook campaign. In 2009, Mohammed Mostafa ElBaradei, a diplomat and a lawyer by training and also the former chief of the United Nation's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) decided to return to Egypt as his term was nearing an end. ElBaradei's return to Egypt was heralded by many Egyptians as the dawn of a new era in Egypt's politics. Corresponding with the increasing support for ElBaradei, a number of Facebook groups and pages began to crop up to support the nomination of Mohamed ElBaradei as President of Egypt. A young university student Mahmud al-Hetta started a Facebook group called ElBaradei President of Egypt 2011 while a Facebook page for ElBaradei was also set up Wael Ghonim, a Google Executive. The tactics which were employed by the social activists were firstly to create political awareness by posting the interviews and visions of ElBaradei. Secondly, they tried to get the members of these online groups to participate in the Facebook campaign. For instance, the Facebook group ElBaradei President of Egypt 2011 urged its members to replace their Facebook profile photos with that of ElBaradei. The possibility of a contender to Egypt's presidency throne gathered many support to these groups and pages

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[57] See for details Wael Ghonim, Note 30, p. 36.

especially from the young people. It was however with the historic reception of ElBaradei in 2010 that demonstrated the importance of social media as an alternative and effective medium for communication particularly under a dictatorial regime. The social activists were initially faced with certain problems the regime was already against ElBaradei. As per the reports published in some independent newspapers on the morning of ElBaradei's arrival, the security agencies through an unofficial statement had made it very clear that they would not allow the Egyptians to greet ElBaradei at the airport and that they had mobilized eighty thousand riot police to deal with any such gathering. Moreover, the Emergency Laws also prohibited any form of large gatherings. However inspite of these shortcomings the social activists were able to communicate with each other as well as with the masses through social media sites like Facebook and Twitter through constant updates and posts. On February 2010, ElBaradei returned to Egypt, more than one thousand cheering supporters flooded into the Cairo International Airport to greet the man who had suddenly been vaulted into the position of Egypt's saviour.[58]

On 6th June, 2010 an incident which would have been passed off as another case of police brutality forever changed Egypt's history by bringing down one of its most powerful dictator. Khaled Said, a 28 year old Egyptian from the coastal city of Alexandria, Egypt was tortured to death by two police officers in Alexandria. Several eye witnesses described how Khaled was dragged from an Internet café (Spacenet Internet café) by two policemen who had caught him trying to expose corruption by uploading pictures of the police splitting the proceeds of a drug bust.[59] According to the 'el shaheed' website Said was brutally kicked and punched by the two policemen and in spite of his

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[58] See for details Ashraf Khalil, Note 26, p 105.
[59] See Laurel E. Miller, Jeffrey Martini, Stephen F. Larrabee, Julie E. Taylor, Twewodaj Mengitsu, Note 21, p. 95.

calls for mercy they continued until he died. Khaled was a peaceful young Egyptian and like millions of Egyptians he was planning to escape his oppressive homeland by obtaining a U.S. passport. He had committed no crimes nor broke any laws his only fault was that he was at the wrong place at the wrong time. Post the incident the police authorities refused to investigate and instead issued a press statement stating that he died from swallowing a pack of marijuana. However, a cell phone camera photo taken by one of the relatives of Khaled Said at the morgue began to circulate in the various social networking sites. The picture is horrific; Khaled's face is cut and mangled, several teeth seem to be missing and blood is still spooling underneath his head.[60] The pictures undoubtedly showed that Khaled did not choke to death on a packet of marijuana. Soon, these pictures will make Khaled Said a martyr of the Emergency Law.

On 8th June, 2010, 31 year old Google Executive Wael Ghonim came across the shocking image of the distorted and bloodied face of Khaled Said and decided that something should be done against the police brutality in Egypt. Ghonim then went online and created a Facebook page entitled We Are All Khaled Said or Kullena Khaled Said under the pseudonym 'el shaheed' which is Arabic for "the martyr." Some 36,000 joined the page on the first day.[61] The first thing that he posted on the page was: "today they killed Khaled. If I don't act for his sake, tomorrow they will kill me."[62] Within two minutes, three hundred members had joined the page. According to the official We Are All Khaled Said, Facebook page: Khaled has become the symbol for many Egyptians who dream to see their country free of brutality, torture and ill treatment. Egyptians want

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[60] See Ashraf Khalil, Note 26, pp. 75-76.
[61] See for details http://www.wagingnonviolence.org/feature/egypts-revolution-began-long-before-2011/
[62] See for details Wael Ghonim, Note 30, p. 60.

to see an end to all violence committed by any Egyptian Policeman. Egyptians are aspiring to the day when the current 30 years long emergency martial law ends and when Egyptians can freely elect their true representatives.[63]

The Facebook page also contained other cases of police brutality in Egypt. Calls for silent protests were also launched by the group; the first Silent Stand was held on 18th June, 2010. A Twitter campaign aimed at raising awareness about torture and inhuman treatment in Egypt was also launched by the group on 20th July, 2010. Soon this group began to gain support from the other online groups such as the April 6 Movement, Youth for Justice and Freedom as well as several other bloggers, social activists and associations. The growing support further widened the scope of the demands of the social activists; the demand for an end to police brutality eventually led to include putting an end to poverty, torture, unemployment, corruption and President Hosni Mubarak's 30 years rule.   The mounting online support coupled with the success of the Tunisian Revolution further gave the social activists the necessary impetus they needed to advance their demands.

The 18 day revolution officially began on 25th January, 2011 and the event was termed as yawm al-ghadab, or The Day of Rage.[64] The call for demonstration was announced by the We Are All Khaled Said page. Before long, the invitations had reached over a million people on Facebook, with over 100, 000 indicating that they were "attending."[65] The online groups were joined by El Baradei's National Organization for Change and the Kefaya movement and several professional syndicates. However, Egypt's

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[63] See http://www.facebook.com/elshaheed.co.uk
[64] See Laurel E. Miller, Jeffrey Martini, Stephen F. Larrabee, Julie E. Taylor, Twewodaj Mengitsu, Note 21, p. 94.
[65] Rasha Abdulla, Note 53, p. 11.

largest and best organized opposition group, the Muslim Brothers, refused to participate on the grounds that the call was issued via social media and the Brothers could not verify its source or adequately plan and coordinate with its organizers.[66]

The above various movements and online groups played an important role leading up to the January 25 protest. Social media helped these movements and online groups to mobilize the different sections of the Egyptian society by creating a politically conscious environment and also at the same time it helped them to adopt new strategies and tactics involving Information Technology which could be used effectively against the regime. Many of the social activists were well experienced in social media tactics and this experience benefited them highly during the initial phase prior to the revolution as well as during the actual revolution. The social networking sites particularly Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were highly utilized by the social activists in spreading political awareness during the initial phase of the revolution. Facebook pages like We Are All Khaled Said and the April 6 Movement were constantly engaged with its members through online discussions and online polls. Moreover, as is shown by the examples of the multiple protests staged by these groups prior the revolution social media also enabled the social activists and the protesters to remain in constant contact in the course of the protests and demonstrations through online updates and posts which were very quick and effective. The continued online interaction between the social activists and the protesters helped to create a vibrant interactive environment which was in a way isolated from the prying eyes of the suppressive regime and which helped to set the grounds for the emergence of a revolution which would bring down Mubarak's 30 years regime.

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[66]See Rasha Abdulla, *Egypt's Media in the Midst of Revolution*, (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Publications Department, Washington, DC, 2014), p.95.

5.3.1. Social Media as an Organizational Tool

"We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate and *YouTube* to tell the world."[67] Compared to the Tunisian Revolution which took 28 days, the Egyptian Revolution was fairly quick as it took only 18 days to bring down President Hosni Mubarak. While some attribute this quick revolution as a result of social media, others continue to doubt the effectiveness of social media. However, in spite of the continuous debates regarding the role of social media in the Egyptian Revolution there seems to be an overall consensus that social media did help in accelerating the revolution. Social media with its capacity to disseminate information to millions within a few seconds proved to be a detrimental factor in accelerating the revolution. The social media tools helped speed up the revolution by enabling the revolutionaries to effectively organize their revolution within a short span of time. Stressing upon the interaction between political movements and new technologies David Rothkopf, CEO and Editor of the Foreign Policy Group, had stated ''we are accustomed to political movements requiring charismatic leaders and political infrastructure. But what happened in Egypt was, thanks to social networks and a new information culture, a revolution led by networked clusters of individuals in which all the grassroots capabilities of old infrastructures were instantly available via the application of new technologies.'' [68]

On 28th January, 2011 while Egypt was experiencing one of the most powerful protest movements in the 21st Century, the government shut down the internet services

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[67] See for details Roberto Jorquera, *Protest at the Speed of Light: Social Networking the Revolution*, May 8, 2013, Links: International Journal of Socialist Renewal, http://www.links.org.aw/node/3334.

[68] See for details David Rothkopf as quoted by Emand El- Din Shahin, *The Egyptian Revolution: The Power of Mass Mobilization and the Spirit of Tahrir Square*, Journal of the Middle East and Africa,3:46–69,2012, p. 49, http://www.tandfoline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21520844.2012.669452

completely. This drastic step undertaken by the Egyptian government was perceived as a response to the threat of social media and its organizational capacity. Social media with its inherent characteristics like speed, interactivity and low cost allowed the Egyptian activists to successfully tap into these strengths through the varied social networking tools like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. It provided an organizational infrastructure that began in the virtual world and which was later shifted offline to the real world. The Egyptian activists created Facebook pages, Twitter accounts and personal blogs to disseminate information as well as to engage with the vast audience. They were able to successfully tap into the social, economic and political injustices which existed in the Egyptian society and use these collective discontents to mobilize the masses through social media. Through social media the social activists were able to carve out a virtual public sphere where they could create political awareness without the interference of the state security. The Facebook groups like We Are All Khaled Said, April 6 Movement, the ElBaradei Facebook groups and the vast array of bloggers played a crucial role in mobilizing the masses during the initial period leading up to the revolution. These groups talked about the so called taboo topics under the dictatorial regime like police brutality, corruption, poverty and unemployment to which millions of Egyptians were subjected to everyday thereby breaking the Egyptian culture of silence with their fierce criticisms against the regime. This bold new approach gained high popularity particularly amongst the vast multitude of discontented youths who were desperately seeking for an outlet to vent out their frustrations. The Facebook page We Are All Khaled Said which was initially formed to commemorate the death of Khaled Said soon began to introduce political issues in its discussions that helped to attract more political activists to its page.

While the ElBaradei Facebook groups and also the April 6 Movement also began to adopt a more comprehensive agenda by focusing on issues like police brutality and Mubarak's regime. The overlapping issues supported by these groups helped in moulding a common identity which further contributed towards building a strong social solidarity.

Social media consequently served as an organizational platform from which the Egyptian activists were able to connect and engage with the masses as well as other activists. According to Rafat Ali, a social media expert and founder of Paid Content, Facebook helped to organize the activists inside the country while Twitter functioned to help get the message out to the broader world.[69] The Facebook page We Are All Khaled Said which was at first created by the Google Executive Wael Ghonim to commemorate the death of Khaled Said eventually evolved into a common interest to fight against police brutality and to bring down President Hosni Mubarak. This *Facebook* page had two pages- one in English and one in Arabic. The group's name in Arabic was Kullena Khaled Said; the Arabic page was maintained by Wael Ghonim, a Google Executive with the help from Abdel Rahman Mansour whom he met through Facebook while the English page was maintained by Mohamed Ibrahim, an Egyptian IT consultant. In addition to these two Facebook pages, Ghonim also created a website called 'The Martyr': www.elshaheed.org which was managed by Amr El- Qazzaz, an active blogger. An English version of the website- www.elshaheed.co.uk was also created which was managed by Mohammed Ibrahim. These websites were created to bring together all news and stories of Khaled Said.

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[69] See http://www.wired.com/2011/02/egypts-revolutionary-fire.

The Khaled Said page played an instrumental role in preparing the youth for the revolution. Prior to the revolution the Khaled Said page staged a series of silent stands which showed the efficacy of the page administrators in organizing its members. Before the stands the page passed on relevant information like time and place of the stand, including certain specific instructions like "let's all wear black T-shirts head to the cornice and stand alone turn your back to the street do not debate or argue with anyone…this way no one can claim we did anything wrong, we want the media to document Egyptian youth standing along 3 or 4 kilometres of the cornice".[70]

In order to strengthen the spirit of participatory democracy the Khaled Said page held online polls which were later published online. An example of the results of an opinion poll which was held on June 19, 2010 just after the first Silent Stand.[71]

How did security forces react to your participation in the stand?
47% They did not even speak to me.
32% They spoke with me but I was very calm.
15% They spoke with me and I was normal.
6% I got angry and they provoked me.
Do you feel the Silent Stand was effective?
28% Very Effective.
38% Satisfactory.
3% Not effective.
12% Useless.
19% I don't care.
For those who didn't join the Silent Stand, why didn't you participate?
6% I was scared.

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[70]See for details Wael Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People is greater than the People in Power*, (Harper Collins Publishers, London, 2012), p.71
[71] Ibid, p. 83.

4% I had exams.
6% I was too lazy.
16% I had work.
25% My parents would not let me.
20% I'm outside of Egypt.
17% I'm not convinced.
6% I did not know the scheduled time.
Will you come to the next stand?
39% Certainly.
39% Most probably.
22% I will not come.

The group however did not focus only on the Khaled Said case alone which was apparent from the 'Day of Anger' demonstration. This demonstration was called as a protest against the upcoming 2010 parliamentary elections. However, the demonstration was not much of a success as even though online invitations were sent out by the page administrators they did not specify any locations. In spite of the low turnout, the administrators of the Khaled page continued to focus on their campaign in exposing corruption in the upcoming parliamentary elections. But just one day before the elections, the Arabic page Kullena Khaled Said was suspended by Facebook presumably by the Egyptian security forces but it was however resuscitated the next day. On the day of the elections the page asked its members to report on any fraud or default practices that they have witnessed in the elections and soon enough there was a massive response from the members. In the backdrop of this anti corruption campaign the Arab Spring was also slowly taking shape with the protests and demonstrations in Tunisia followed by the end of the Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's 23 years rule. Inspired by the success

of the Tunisian revolution the administrators of the Khaled page decided to create an 'event' entitled 'January 25: Revolution against Torture, Poverty, Corruption and Unemployment.' Initially the 'event' was named 'Celebrating National Police Day January 25'; the main idea behind the 'event' was to celebrate Egypt's National Police Day by brining into light the various transgressions that the Egyptian police had inflicted upon the citizens. The idea for the 'event' was posted on the Khaled page on 30th December, 2010. While the administrators of both the Khaled page and the April 6 Movement tried to come up with unique ways to 'celebrate' 25 January, the fall of the Tunisian President Ben Ali changed the whole perspective of these cyber activists. The 'event' was renamed by the Khaled page and the words 'poverty, corruption and unemployment' were deliberately added to attract more support especially from groups such as workers, government employees and human rights activists. Before long, the invitation had reached over a million people on Facebook with over 100,000 indicating they were "attending."[72] Once this event was posted other online groups like the April 6 Movement, ElBaradei groups, Nizar Qabany Page and the Egyptian Sugar Cane Juice Page also began to promote the 'event' on their facebook pages. The Khaled page worked closely with the April 6 Movement and other groups in coordinating and organizing the January 25 protest. In order to protect the protesters it sought out the support of another Facebook group whose members included thousands of amateur photographers. The administrator of the Khaled page Wael Ghonim felt that this would be an important step in protecting the protesters as the regime feared the media and the security forces would be careful not to be photographed showing any violence. The administrator of that group

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[72]See Rasha Abdulla, *Egypt's Media in the Midst of Revolution*, (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Publications Department, Washington, DC, 2014), p.11.

Ibrahim al Masry then came up with an 'event' "The Camera Is My Weapon" which was soon joined by hundreds of photographers. Later on other groups also joined in to support the protest like the Youth for Justice and Freedom, Kefaya Movement, Leftist Tagamu Party, the Nasserite Party, the Popular Movement for Democratic Change (HASHD), young people of the Labor Party, young people of the Wafd Party, and the Front of Coptic Youth.

The January 25 'event' was very well organized with detailed instructions like protesting guidelines, time and places of protests and chants. These instructions were uploaded by the administrator of the Khaled page on the eve of the January 25 protest.[73]

<u>Time and place of protests</u>

People must move together in numbers of more than ten until they reach the protest destination…the locations are not just the ones mentioned here. There are other locations that have not been announced where protests will be organized in different locations

Greater Cairo: Shubra Roundabout, Matariyya Masr Square, Cairo University, the Arab League Street.

Alexandria: Al-Manshiyya Square, Mahatet Masr Square.

Unified Chants

The unified chants are one of the most important protest ideas….These are the chants that have been agreed upon.

Bread….Freedom…Human dignity.

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[73]See for details Wael Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People is greater than the People in Power*, (Harper Collins Publishers, London, 2012), pp.167-169.

We will not fear, we will not bow…like we've don't for so long.
We shall sacrifice our blood and lives for you, dear Egypt.
It's my right to find work and live…The petty income is not enough.
Let's go, people, transcend the fear…..Let the whole world know.

Protesting Guidelines

1. The protests are peaceful. We are peace advocates and not advocates of violence. We will not respond to any provocation from security forces and lose control.
2. Please be at the protest location promptly at the determined time
3. When leaving your house, do not carry anything you don't need, such as membership cards or licenses or credit cards. Carry only your personal ID and a sum of money sufficient for an emergency.
4. Please carry the Egyptian flag and refrain from carrying any signs of a political party, movement, group, organization or religious sect. Jan25 is for all Egyptians.
5. If you are not an experienced protestor, leave the front lines for experienced protesters to lead the march in order to avoid conflicting decisions.
6. Do not come out alone. Please be with someone and talk someone into coming out together, just like we take to the stadiums when there is a match to watch.

With everything planned out for the protests, the Egyptian activists began to spread the word offline as it was essential to reach the majority of Egyptians. The April 6 Movement for instance dispatched networks of activists to poor neighborhoods and beyond major cities in order to talk to people who would be unlikely to track the movement online.[74]The Khaled page in order to publicize the event amongst the working class Egyptians also came up with the idea of distributing mass test messages (SMS's) as well as asking each member to invite five other people in person to come out for the protests. The activists also passed on the information about the protest through the taxi driver as well as resorted to the more traditional methods of spreading information like passing on fliers. The evening talk shows where the average Egyptian gets most of his information from further helped in spreading the word about the protest.

As the protests began, the activists continued to pass on words of encouragement as well as safety tips to the protesters through Facebook and Twitter. And through the various status updates/ posts on Facebook and Tweets the activists were able to remain in constant contact with the protesters. The protests were launched on Twitter with the hash tag #jan25; the protesters were also able to communicate directly with the organizers as well as with each other using the '@' reply. Twitter proved to be highly efficient when it came to sending out SOS messages. Moreover, with the media banned from Tahrir Square many of the protesters and the activists took it upon themselves to spread the news of the revolution to the world. The protesters were encouraged to broadcast their version of the events on their Facebook and Twitter accounts, which many of them did

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[74]See The American University in Cairo, John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement, *Youth Activism and Public Space in Egypt*, 2011, p. 27, http://www.schools.aucegypt.edu.

with lurid description of the happenings on the streets and in Tahrir Square along with pictures and videos.

When the regime realized the power of social media and its organizing capacities it decided to shut down the internet and the mobile phone services across Egypt on 28th January, just three days after the start of the revolution. As soon as the activists came to know about the government's plans they took to Facebook, Twitter and blogs to warn the outside world of the internet blockade. One Facebook user posted this message on ElBaradei's page on the evening of January 27 starting tomorrow morning, all the foreigners in Egypt won't be able to communicate with their countries back home (facing issues or having troubles), because the Egyptian president gave his orders to cut and stop all kind of communications (Mobile + Internet), he doesn't want the whole world to see what he will be doing to his own nation, what kind of president is this? Please spread the word."[75]

The internet blockade lasted for five days. However, the activists were able to find some other possible solutions through dial-up connections to access the internet. Other Egyptians managed to access Twitter by using proxies, or by calling friends abroad from landlines and asking them to tweet messages.[76] But by this time social media was not that central to the revolution as the Egyptians were already out on the streets. And there was a seemingly growing interaction between the activists and the other organized oppositional movements. Nonetheless, the activists continue to work with these oppositional movements by coordinating the protests online and offline. Emphasizing on

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[75]See Nahed Eltantawy, Julie B. Wiest, *Social Media in the Egyptian Revolution: Reconsidering Resource Mobilization Theory,* International Journal of Communication 5 (2011), Feature 1207–1224, http://www.ijoc.org.
[76] Ibid.

the organizational capacity of social media, Manuel Castells has stated "the activists planned the protests on Facebook, coordinated them through Twitter, spread them by SMSs and webcast them to the world on YouTube."[77]

Social media acted as an important factor in accelerating the revolution with its many to many communication capabilities. It provided speed, interactivity including low cost mode of communication which allowed the activists to easily mobilize and organize the Egyptians under a common cause. Social media served as an important organizational tool in the following ways:

Firstly, the anonymous factor provided by social media enabled the activists to coordinate and plan out the protests peacefully without the interference of the Egyptian state security.

Secondly, the quick and cheap mode of communication helped to increase greater interaction between the activists and the protesters. The social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter were important interaction platforms which helped to facilitate faster sharing of ideas and opinions.

Thirdly, information could be efficiently passed on quickly without having to go through any governmental filtering.

There is no denying the fact that the 25 January protest like all protest movements could have been organized without social media. However, taking into consideration the situation that existed in Egypt prior the revolution which prohibits large gatherings with strict restrictions on freedom of speech and expression the

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[77]See Manuel Castells as quoted by Christian Fuchs, *Some Reflections on Manuel Castells' Book Networks of Outrage and Hope. Social Movements in the Internet Age*, http://www.triple-c.at>tripleC>article>download

protest could not have been efficiently organized within a few weeks as the activists would have to face strong opposition from the ruling regime. Nonetheless, the speed at which the 25 January protest was organized can be wholly attributed to the social media tools and its mass mobilization capacities. On the whole social media had offered a virtual platform where the Egyptians could create a public space free from the control of the government. And it was this virtual public space that helped in cementing the growing online social solidarity which was later shifted offline to fight in bringing new hope to Egypt and to its citizens.

5.3.2. Social Media as a Tool for Mass Mobilization

During the Egyptian revolution the social networking sites gave a boost to civic engagement which in turn triggered a process of mass mobilization on an enormous scale. Mass mobilization in general terms does not simply implies creating political awareness but it also involves rallying people for a particular cause, so that they act in a prescribed manner in achieving a set of objectives. And in order to unite people towards a particular cause civic engagement is an essential requirement. In the Egyptian revolution social media acted as an effective tool for mass mobilization by encouraging civic engagement particularly though the social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter that provided a forum for free speech and political networking opportunities. Facebook particularly proved to be an instrumental tool for bringing together people with diverse views from different parts of Egypt. Facebook pages like We Are All Khaled Said, April 6 Movement and the ElBaradei Facebook groups helped to create a virtual public space where the discontented and frustrated Egyptian population could come together to debate and express their opinions freely without any fear. Social media also helped in

overcoming the geographical constraints as anyone could join in the conversations from any part of world. The online debates or political discussions were not restricted to the Egyptians residing within Egypt alone as many of the Egyptians living abroad also took part in many of these online discussions.

The anonymity factor provided by social media also helped in encouraging greater interaction. With a regime in power quick in suppressing any form of opposition many Egyptians were reluctant to express their personal opinions lest it should offend the regime. As punishments for going against the regime were harsh, many activists as well as ordinary citizens had been arrested for false or vague accusations of crimes that had led to long term imprisonment and many of whom had suffered terribly at the hands of the police. These acts of the ruling regime had inflicted upon the Egyptians the fear that one can go against the regime only at one's own risk. However, social media provided an antidote to this problem by creating a virtual space where people could hide behind some false or fictitious name. For instance, it was on account of the anonymity factor that Wael Ghonim the administrator of the Facebook page We Are All Khaled Said was able to mobilize and organize the 25 January protest. The presence of these advantages provided by social media has helped the Facebook pages like the Khaled page and the April 6 Movement to create a virtual political environment free from the restrictions and oppressions of the ruling regime which in turn has helped to increase civic engagement, something which was nonexistent in the real world. The lack of public participation in Egypt's political process was what attracted thousands of Egyptians to these Facebook pages; through these online forums the citizens were given an opportunity to express their political opinions as well as engage in the participatory democratic practices offered by

these pages. For instance, the Facebook page We Are All Khaled Said held online polls and encouraged suggestions and ideas from their members regarding protest tactics prior the revolution. Moreover, the leaderless nature of the movement also entails that all decisions should taken through majority consensus, nonetheless, this seems to be an impossibility given the fact that there was absence of a clear organization to coordinate the decision making procedure These hurdles were rectified by the social media forums by providing a common platform where everyone could participate in the decision making process.

Mass mobilization was not only restricted to the Egyptians at home, the social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were also used by the social activists and the protesters to generate international interest and support to the revolution. During the Tunisian Revolution, the Egyptian activists had kept in constant touch with the Tunisian activists. They posted pictures, updates and videos of the Tunisian Revolution and also passed on words of encouragement to the Tunisian protesters through Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. When revolution broke out in Egypt the Tunisian activists also passed on relevant safety information to the Egyptian protesters through Facebook and Twitter. The Tunisian protesters advised their Egyptian counterparts to protest at night time for safety, to avoid suicide operations, to use media to convey their message for outside pressure, to spray paint security forces' armoured vehicles black to cover the wind shield and to wash their faces with Coca Cola to reduce the impact of tear gas.[78]

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[78] See Ahmed Fihaili, *The Impact and Role of Social Media Networks on Arab Spring: Egyptian Revolution Case Study*, Tomas Bata University in Ziln, Faculty of Multimedia Communications, February 2013, p. 8, http://www.digilib.k.utb.cz>handle>fihaili_2013_dp.

Perhaps one of the best examples of civic engagement triggered by social media is the emergence of citizen journalism. When the government banned reporters from Tahrir Square, it was the citizens who disseminated information, pictures and videos to the world. Many of the protesters posted minute by minute updates as well as videos of the revolution which kept the foreigners as well as the Egyptians abroad updated on the happenings in Egypt. The growth of citizen journalism cannot be underestimated in a country like Egypt where the media is controlled by the ruling regime. The protesters were able to show the world their version of events to the world as well as reveal the true side of Mubarak's regime. Many of these videos, images and updates were used as sources by television news channels such as Al Jazeera, CNN and BBC. Facebook and Twitter played a crucial role in disseminating information to the outside world when the ruling regime shut down the local media. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were the three main social networking sites which were used by the protesters. In the second edition of a series of reports produced by the Governance and Innovation Program at the Dubai School of Government, it has been observed that among Arab countries, Egypt has seen the highest increase in the number of Facebook users in the first quarter of 2011.[79] In Egypt, a week before the resignation of Mubarak, the total rate of tweets in Egypt and around the world about political change escalated from 2,300 per day to 230,000 per day.[80] During the revolution when the government shut down the internet Google and Twitter helped the protesters to disseminate information about the revolution to the

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[79] See Ahmed Fihaili, *The Impact and Role of Social Media Networks on Arab Spring: Egyptian Revolution Case Study*, Tomas Bata University in Ziln, Faculty of Multimedia Communications, February 2013, p. 52, http://www.digilib.k.utb.cz>handle>fihaili_2013_dp.

[80] See for details Maisoon O. Al-sebaei, *Egyptian Diasporas, Social Media, and the 2011 Egyptian Revolution: How Egyptians Living in Saudi Arabia used Social Media during the Revolution*, Grand Valley State University, April 2013, p.35, http://www.scholarworks.gvsu.edu/theses.

world. Some of the 'hashtags' which were used during the revolution were- "#jan25," "#Egypt," "#Mubarak," "#Tahrir," "#Cairo." The following illustrate some examples of the tweets posted on Twitter on 25 Janaury.[81]

> **TravellerW Mo-ha-med**: #Jan25 violence on the gala bridge. W pushed through- but now we're stck on the bridge.
>
> **Monasosh**: Heading to kasr el nil bridge, massive crowd, there might be violence. Rabena yostor #Jan25
>
> **Salamander Sally Sami**: The march from Mohandessin reached Tahrir Square and a fire engine passed spraying water on protesters and left #Jan25
>
> **3arabawy Hossam**: Protesters in Shubra are trying to head to Tahrir Square. Protesters in downtown Cairo climb firetruck and destroy water cannon. #Jan25
>
> **Ashrafkhalil ashraf khalil**: #Jan25 Huge crow just rushed in from abdeen to join thousands controlling half of Tahrir square
>
> **TravellerW Mo-ha-med:** Police throws rocks @ demonstrtrs while we raised our arms. We're unarmed, they're in full gear. We are strong, they're weak. #Jan25 #Egypt

In addition to these tweets YouTube videos also helped to broadcast the events to the world. Many of these videos showed police violence against the protesters which helped the protesters gain sympathy and support from the international community. A video shot on the mobile phone of a bystander that showed an

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[81]See Alex Nunns and Nadia Idle, *Tweets from Tahrir: Egypt's Revolution as it Unfolded, in the Words of the People who made it*, (Or Books, New York, 2011), pp. 30-40.

unarmed man gunned down in the streets of Alexandria by security forces was pronounced Egypt's 'Neda' moment, drawing comparison to the YouTube video that had shown a young Iranian woman killed at a protest in Tehran in 2009.[82] According to the report prepared by 'Techno Wireless,' during the first week of the Egyptian Revolution 2011, Egyptian users viewed 8.7 million pages on YouTube.[83]

The growth of citizen journalism also helped to gather support from the Egyptian Diasporas across the world. The Egyptian Diaspora played a crucial role in gathering international support for the revolution; they organized protests during the revolution in New York City, Los Angles and other major cities in the world to show their support during the revolution. A multiple number of Facebook pages like the 'Voice of Egypt Abroad,' 'Egyptians Abroad in Support of Egypt' and 'New United Arab States' were also created by the Egyptians abroad to support the revolution. Furthermore, these Facebook pages also organized virtual protests to show solidarity with the protesters in Egypt which were also joined by people from all cross the world. Facebook, Twitter and Skype enabled these Diasporas to maintain constant contact with the protesters and helped them to establish an international support network for the protesters in Egypt. When Mubarak shut down the internet it was the Diasporas who helped in spreading the message of the protesters to the world. For example, when the internet was blocked by the government the protesters called up these expatriates to send messages through the social networking sites. People around the world, though Egyptians and Egyptian

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[82]See for details Maha Taki and Lorenzo Coretti, *The Role of Social Media in the Arab Uprisings- Past and Present*, Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture, volume 9, Issue 2, April 2013, p.19, http://www.westminister.ac.uk.
[83]See for details Ahmed Fihaili, Note 78, p. 49.

expatriates most of all, "followed the revolt and communicated with insurgents inside to collect stories" and used social media in order to show their national affiliation.[84]

Civic engagement in the revolution would not have been so effective if not for social media. Social media with its many to much communication capability had contributed immensely to the mass mobilization techniques by introducing speed and interactivity that were previously lacking in the traditional mobilization techniques that depended heavily on posters, leaflets and faxes. Social media with its ability to disseminate information to millions proved to be an important tool for the activists. In 2008, Omar Afifi, a former Egyptian police officer turned activist wrote a book advising the Egyptians how to avoid police brutality. Following the publication of his book, it was banned by the government and he had to flee to the United States. However, in spite of this Afifi continued to advise the Egyptians through the social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. When the Tunisian Revolution broke out, Afifi uploaded a series of YouTube videos on how the Egyptians should stage a revolution. He provided a detailed account relating to the place and time of protest etc. Social media also enabled the activist to pass on crucial safety information as well as protest guidelines, time and place of protest to the protesters through the Facebook pages like We Are All Khaled Said and the April 6 Movement. For instance, on the day before the revolution Wael Ghonim, the founder of the Khaled page uploaded relevant information concerning the 25 January protest which included the demands, time and place of protests, protesting guidelines and unified chants and this was accessed by more than 50, 000 people

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[84] See for details Maisoon O. Al-sebaei, Note 80, p. 43.

though various online forums, political websites, Facebook pages and Twitter accounts. Even during the silent stands prior the revolution similar instructions and guidelines were also passed out to the members of the page which helped immensely in coordinating the protests. Alternatively, the protesters also used social media to draw attention when in danger. 'The Guardian' cites tweets by Mohamed Abdel Fattah, an Egyptian video journalist, who on the evening of January 25, 2011, released a series of disturbing tweets in short succession during ongoing protests:[85]

> **@mfatta7:** Tear gas
>
> **@mfatta7:** I'm suffocating
>
> **@mfatta7:** We r trapped inside a building
>
> **@mfatta7:** Armored vehicles outside
>
> **@mfatta7:** Help we r suffocating
>
> **@mfatta7:** I will be arrested
>
> **@mfatta7:** Help !!!
>
> **@mfatta7:** Arrested
>
> **@mfatta7:** Ikve [I've] been beaten a lot

The presence of this continued interaction and feedback system between the activists and the protesters helped in strengthening the social solidarity which constitutes an important requirement in mobilizing the masses.

Social media proved its worth in the Egyptian Revolution. The social media tools helped to accelerate mass mobilization by increasing greater scope for civic engagement.

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[85] See for details Nahed Eltantawy, Julie B. Wiest, Note 75, p. 9.

The new social media tools had the obvious advantage over traditional media with its capacity to spread information within a few seconds to millions. And this proved to be an instrumental tool for the activists and the protesters alike. Amongst the social networking sites it was Facebook and Twitter that helped in disseminating information prior and during the revolution. Once information was shared online it was easier for the activists to engage the masses in discussions and debates. And it was through these online discussions/debates that the activists were able to bring together the people under a common cause and establish social solidarity. The establishment of social solidarity had been an important factor particularly prior the revolution as it would not have been possible to stage offline protests in the absence of a strong social solidarity amongst the users. Social media further aided civic engagement during the revolution by playing a dual role firstly, it helped to spread the messages of the activists to the protesters and secondly, it helped to spread the message of the activists and protesters to the world. The emergence of citizen journalism had been perhaps the highest form of online civic engagement. Social media empowered the Egyptians to break free from their silence and present their version of truth to the world. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube played instrumental roles in not only revealing the stories about police brutality and corruption which the regime had wanted to keep hidden away from the world but it also showcased to the world that the Egyptians were willing to go to any length to bring change into Egypt. The regime's attempt to block the internet in spite of the loss of billions of dollars to its economy bears testament to the mobilizing power of social media. What the Egyptian Revolution witnessed was the availability of resources and the efficacy of the actors to take advantage of those resources to bring about change in their political

environment. In all, social media helped to create a new chapter in mobilization movements by introducing new techniques and tools which were faster and more efficient and which had the ability to induce greater civic engagement and participation.