

# ***THE ARAB SPRING AND THE SOCIAL MEDIA***

**Centre for Culture, Media and Governance,  
Jamia Millia Islamia**

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- Social Media, as of now, can be understood as the mix between older cultural conventions for data representation, access, and manipulation and newer conventions of data representation, access, and manipulation
- The Arab revolutionaries used Facebook to schedule and Twitter to coordinate the protests and Youtube to show it to the world
- The activists of the popular Arab uprisings used Social Media to educate, organize, share cultural products of movements, communicate, coalition build, and more

- The protestors used social media to organize the original action, communicate with and educate participants, and was used it as an alternative media source
- The Arab revolution that marked the downfall of the mighty dictators in Tunisia and Egypt has been largely enabled by the social media.
- Social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter have been the key mediums through which the protesters organized themselves to take to the streets and overcome the military forces

- Twitter feeds, liveblogs, videos and photos are disseminated across the web almost instantly despite limited internet access in many participating countries.
- Social media alone did not facilitate the Arab Revolution, but was a successful catalyst when combined with myriad methods of digital and traditional media.
- Technological advances like cell phones, video cameras, blog posts and Facebook, in conjunction with more traditional media outlets like *Al Jazeera*, created the circumstances for such effective information dissemination.

- Of course social media provided the outlet for free expression that government monitored traditional media did not.
- The contents shared between Arab nations and the rest of the world featured videos and images of people from all classes, not just the wealthy, and was captured by cellular phones and point and shoot cameras.
- Social media helped large groups to gather on the Arab Street in a short amount of time.
- It also provided a platform for people to express their solidarity, both within the country and with others in the region and beyond

- E.g. Egyptians heard about Tunisia from Tunisian citizens instead of the national news media.
- Instead of planning and creating a group of dissidents to follow, the word was spread quickly enough that enormous numbers were able to congregate in just days, and even hours—because someone knew someone who knew someone on Facebook, and word spread from there.
- Unlike traditional media, digital media allowed for a non-hierarchical, collective communication.
- However, there is some debate about the extent to which social media facilitated this kind of change

- Google contributed largely to the success of the revolutions by satellite photography with Google Earth and photographing city streets and neighbourhoods.
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- Google with its many web assets like Feedburner and Blogger helped the uprising by assembling information from the subscriber lists to blog newsfeeds and emails, providing identity of blog owners, which blogs link to other blogs having common political or ideological interests, etc.
- Google was accused of collecting information about home wireless networks during the times of unrest.

- When the internet access was cuff off, the search engine developed a workaround that allowed users to send Twitter messages over phone lines.
- YouTube also created a hub to promote videos from protestors in Tahrir Square
- Social media alone did not facilitate the Arab Revolution, but was a successful catalyst when combined with myriad methods of digital and traditional media.
- Indeed, there are lots of reasons to celebrate the constructive role that sites such as Facebook and Twitter played in Tunisia and Egypt.

- The communication during the moments of historic crisis in the Arab region has been credited to the social media that broadcasted ideas and unlimited publication of the stories of protests.
- Thus the success of these revolts has also been the gift of social media. It's a call to the dictators and ruthless rulers to watch out that in this heavily networked world, a Twitter Revolution is not far away from them.
- However, it is one thing to say that communication technologies deserve credit as a contributing factor in these democratic revolutions, quite another to say that these technologies are sufficient - or even necessary - to achieve political reform

***THE END***