

## **The impact of cyber space on Egypt's revolution**

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### **Abstract**

Expansion of communicational infrastructures and increase in grassroots' access to media and cyberspace affect public's needs, political participation and the citizens' relationship with international, national and local political space. Nowadays, citizens in different countries have increased their awareness using communicational infrastructures and have spread out news and information in cyberspace and communicational media. They do not act passively in front of the other media like past, but they compare their life quality and legal freedoms with others by observing and evaluating the situation of their own country.

In the late 2010, some protests were raised in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria that no one could anticipate them. The common point of these protests was their origin rooted in cyberspace. By dismantling Tunisia, Egypt and Libya's governments and resignation of Yemen's president, it can be expected that these movements can be spread in the Middle East, to other totalitarian governments of the region.

In the protests process in the region and in particular in Egypt and Tunisia, protesters used cyberspace to coordinate campaigns. The organizers of these protests organizers in Egypt tried to take attention using devices that their audiences have, and shifted the leadership of protests from political parties and elites to the social networks.

The current study tries to answer this question using published documents and reports: In the framework of what process and under the effect of what factors cyberspace contributed to the formation of protests movements in Egypt?

**Keywords:** Cyber space, Egypt's revolution, Social networks, Civil movements

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## Introduction

Some political thinkers believe that the era of revolutions is over. However, in the new millennium with *Color Revolutions*, this thought was faced with doubt. In recent 35 years, 50 cases of 67 transformations from dictatorships to democracies have non-violence (Popvic and Djuric, 2011:17). High rate of non-violence movements in some political transformations are signs that violence is replaced with public protests. The rise of civil society means demand requests from the government using pressure and coercion: This can concern systematic efforts to dismantle the government. Some forms of this action include campaigns, refuge and lawsuit, strike, peaceful parade, boycott, emigrational movements, occupy and creation of parallel governmental institutions (Roberts and Garton Ash, 2009: 2).

Protests movements which occurred respectively in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Libya and Syria can be incorporated into the mentioned civil movements. Individuals take the existing sources to act of power; these sources are devices that allow them to pursuit their goals and interests, properly (Tampson, 2010:21).

In cases like Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Libya and Syria, protest movements by means of virtual space such as telephone, Blog, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and so on tried to extend these protests to other geographical places in country and challenge governments. So, these movements which have been occurred in these countries can be called networked-movements. Nevertheless, beside of many questions about their nature, their whys and wherefores and political reasons of the movements, Arabic revolutions confront us with a main question about the system of

organizing movement.

Evidence shows that social media increasingly has been used by effective groups like students and political activists to conduct political debates. Before and during the revolutions, these individuals used Face book, Twitter, and YouTube to put the governments under pressure. In some cases, they used new technologies in creative ways. Bloggers also used the Internet to publish critical information of the governments in Egypt and Tunisia. Our evidences suggest that political organizations and individuals used Western news sites [such as the BBC and CNN] to spread credible information to their supporters during the revolution. The result was that, by using digital technologies, democracy advocates created a freedom meme that took on a life of its own and spread ideas about liberty and revolution to a surprisingly large number of people. Interestingly, not a single Egyptian political Website we mapped linked to regional news sources such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya before the revolution (Howard et al., 2011:2).

Because of the weaknesses in independent media sector in Egypt, protesters relied on cyberspace and mobiles. As chronology of Egypt showed, a part of protest movement centralized on Virtual-Space and consequently government decided to cut the communications and block the access to the internet in order to control the protesters and the country. To study the role of virtual-space in the movements we try to investigate that "in the framework of what process and under the effect of what factors cyberspace contributed to the formation of protests movements in Egypt?"

### Research Methodology:

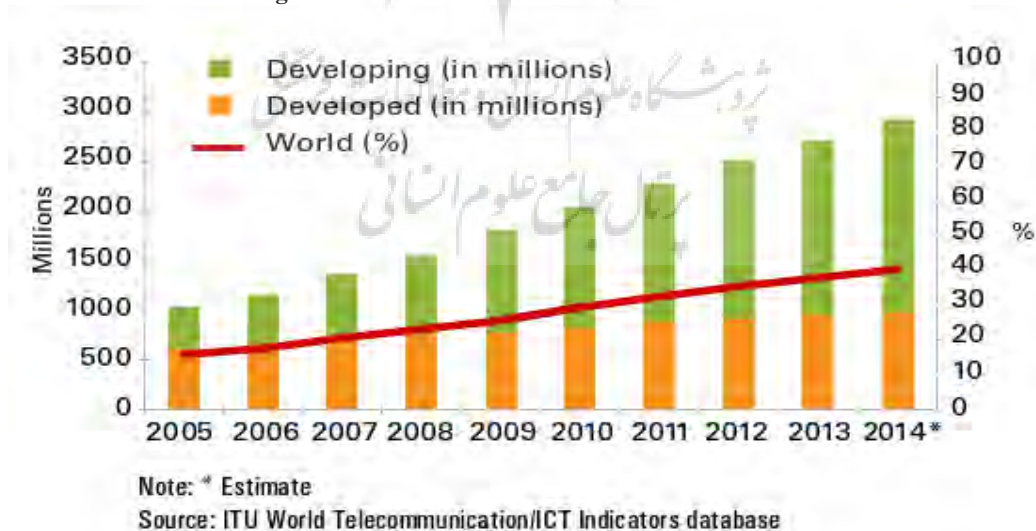
This research is descriptive-analytic in terms of its method, and data gathering procedure is based on library findings. The data analysis and conclusion will be done using qualitative method.

### Theoretical concepts:

Societies ability or disability to dominate technologies that have a strategic importance in each historical period, characterize their destinations, to the extent that while technology do not characterize the historical evolution and social changes, but the existence (or lack) of technology shows societies capacity to change the situation (Castells, 2005:32). In recent years, Internet users have been raised (see figure. 1). However this growth is unequal (see map.1) and some geographical regions are developed faster than the others (see figure.2). Growth in internet users introduced the concept of 'Digital Citizenship'. "Digital citizenship" means the ability to participate in society online.

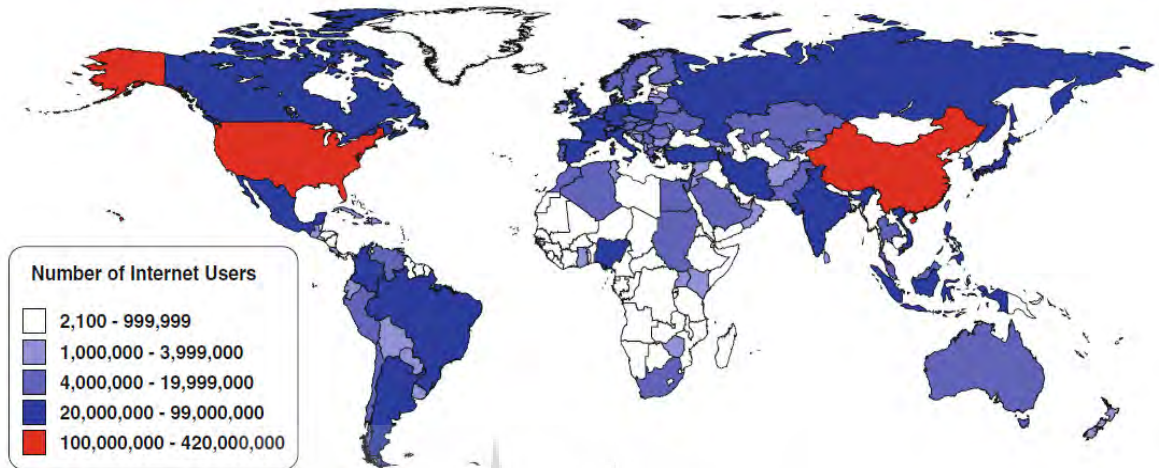
What, however, does it mean to invoke the notion of citizenship in relation to the use of a technology? More than half a century ago, British sociologist T. H. Marshall defined citizenship as endowing all members of a political community with certain civil, political, and social rights of membership, including "the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society" (1992, 8). In much the same way that education has promoted democracy and economic growth, the Internet has the potential to benefit society as a whole, and facilitate the membership and participation of individuals within society. We contend that digital citizenship encourages what has elsewhere been called social inclusion (Warschauer 2003, Cited in Mossberger et al, 2008:1). We define "digital citizens" as those who use the Internet regularly and effectively—that is, on a daily basis (Mossberger et al, 2008:1).

Figure1: Worldwide Diffusion of the Internet: 2005-2014



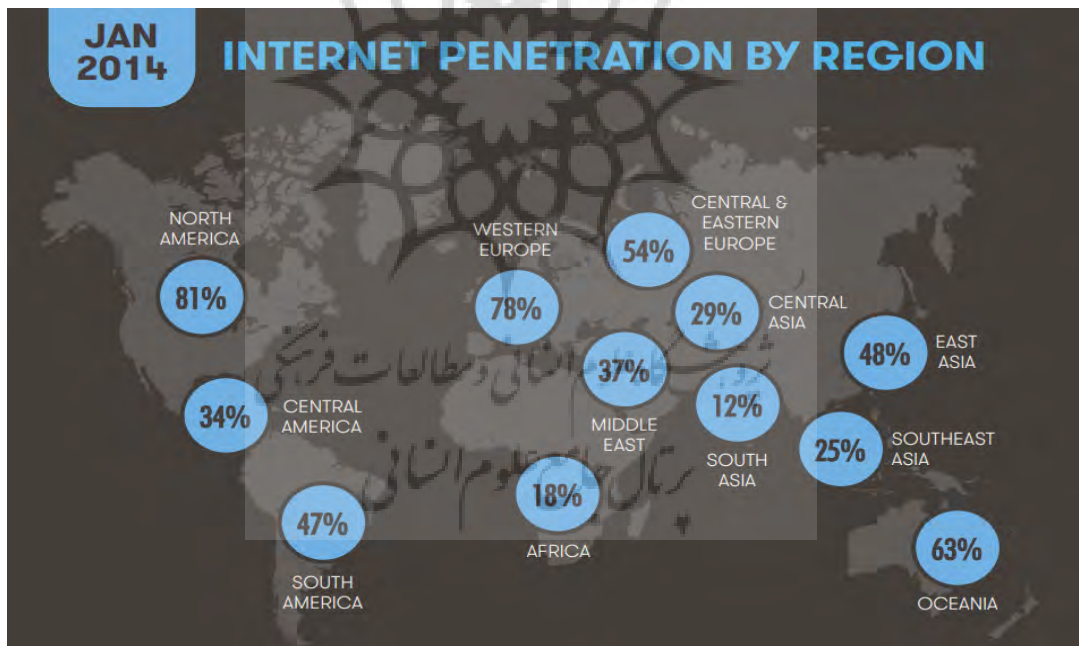
Source: sourcedigit.com, 2014

(Map1): Distribution of Internet Users in World



(Source: Warf, 2010:2)

Figure2: Internet Users in the World Distribution by World Region-2014



(Source: we are social, 2014)

Cyberspace is a heavy concept and has been defined variously by organizations and individuals (Trias and Bell, 2010:98). The investigation of cyberspace needs to present a useful definition. Primeval

combination of cyberspace comes from *cybernetics* phrase that derivation of Greek word "κυβερνήτης" (en.wikipedia.org, 2011) which in synonym with governor and pilot (dictionary.reference.com, 2011).

The free dictionary defines cyberspace as an electronic medium between computer networks for on-line communications (the free dictionary, 2012). Cyberspace phrase for the first time was used in a science fiction story, *Cyberpunk* by William Gibson; while before him, this word was described in Werner Wing's short story "True Names" and "Web of Angels" novel by John M. Ford (Thill, 2009).

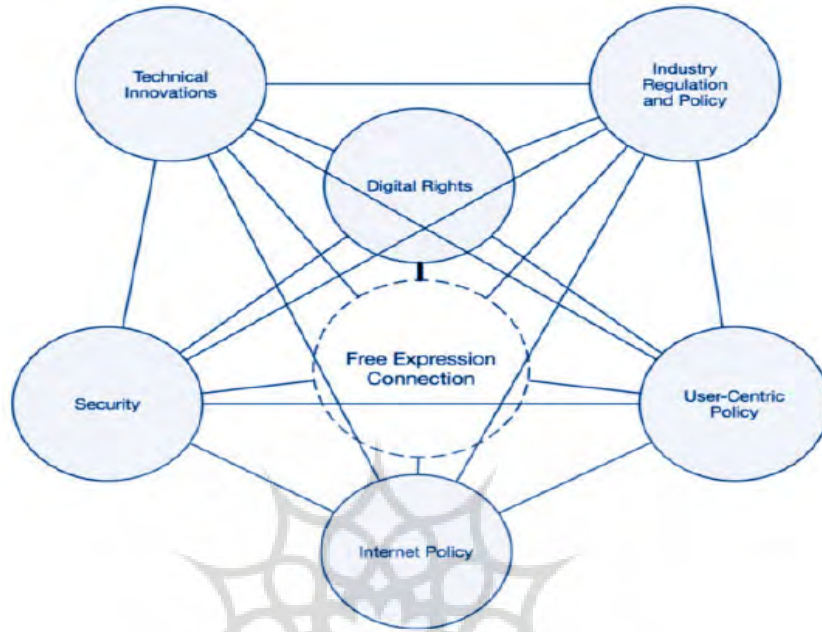
We can see the function of two issues in cyberspace which are typical of modernism: increase in use of technology and grassroots thanks to social networks. While cyberspace depends on increase in use of new communication technologies, but many scholars believe that cyberspace has taken the identity in the shadow of internet user's social activities. Based on Star and Farmer Virtual space is defined by creation social interactions than technology disembarks, and obtain environment of many commons along impresses and influence ability on each other is central index of Virtual Space (Wardrip-Fruin and Montfort, 2003:664). Influence and reciprocal impact can be defined in the framework of individual's social life. Influence is a kind of relation aimed at change in someone's behavior via a communicational process (Riviere, 2007:32). Behavioral change includes change of opposition thoughts, silent citizens and even challenge of the other rivalries which can include special governments and states. *Zapatistas* armed movement in the 90<sup>th</sup> early was the first sample of using media by government's oppositions. *Zapatistas* success indebted to their communication strategy, we can nomination them as first communicational rebel movement. While avoiding to driving in bloody war, they tried to broadcast their

messages using mass media (Castells, 2006:108).

In throughout of Africa and Middle East were not unitary nation sign rather stand persons in power (Bozeman, 2003:202). Increase in public awareness and access to the information and social networks in some countries like Egypt that have been governed by oligarchies, have raised some political challenges. These improvements in public awareness challenge oligarchy systems and have raised people demands for political participation more than past.

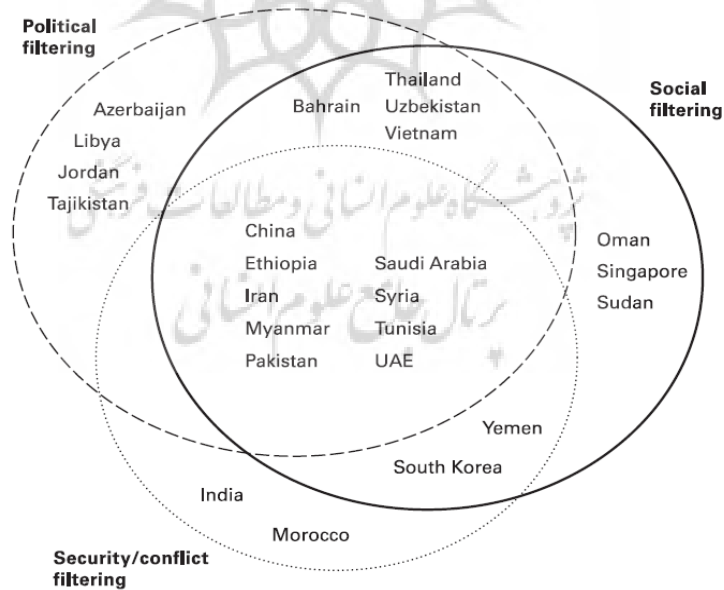
Habermas fellow thinkers believe that not only there is no doubt about more quantities information production in radio and TV, but also this matter has not resulted in more qualities in information or audience choose right (Webster, 2005:193). Although, TV growth has raised information and news broadcasting, but governments still in developing countries have a central role in media. In such situation, independent media and internet act as an alternative media for people. Opportunities and utilities that may find in Virtual Space have caused governments control and censure internet web-sites. Governments use the following excuses to confine citizens' activities: maintenance of traditional social values, political stability and national security (see figures 4 and 5).

**Figure 4:** The Ecology of Freedom of Connection and Expression



Dutton et al, 2011:75

**Figure 5:** Elements of Censure in Internet



Faris and Villeneuve, 2008:26

Today, conflict between political forces, political and social competitions and challenges between governments and citizens are shifted from societies to the Virtual Space and inspire individuals to use Social Digital Media (SDM). Social Digital Media is defined as a group of internet-based users that make the creation and exchange of produced content of users possible. The most of hopes to Social Digital Medias results from its ability to be used in political goals: Social Digital Media allow people to talk about public issues, to join to the forces that control official acts and to mobilize protests against governments, with the least inexpenses (Breuer, 2011:2).

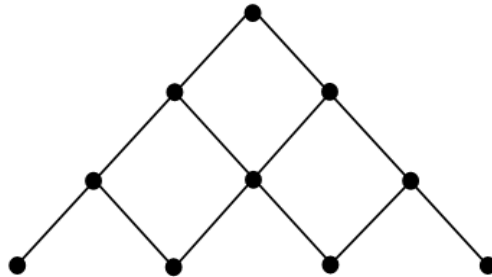
Virtual Space give opportunity to people to organize and form groups who have the same ideas and interests to face with governments by new challenges, because in combination with other technologies, internet has had ability as weapon (Deuber, 2009:6). In some societies that government uses all devices to repression the citizen, virtual space has been transformed to an environment to face with the government.

Social Networks such as Facebook, twitter, etc. present possibilities for data production, transformation, consumption and so important of all, namely social interaction. To explanation the relationship between Cyber Space and movements, at first we should study the role of relation in protest movements. In the past, civil resistance was guided by elites, leaders sited on the peak of movements and people were formed movement's body. In the conventional movements elites who had the leadership of movements were placed on the top of pyramid, and grassroots were placed in the base of the pyramid. These movements were faced with a crucial

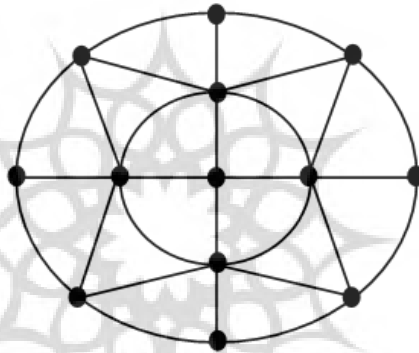
danger: eliminating leaders which leads to eliminate movement (see figure. 6), like eliminating Malcom X in 1965 (Evanzz, 1992:295) and Martin Looter King in 1964 (Pepper, 2003:159). Civil resistances in last decade due to public awareness have experienced a special transformation: shifting from the head of movement to the center. This transformation creates high level of accessibility for leaders and supporters, because by forming semi-central leadership more people would connect with the leadership (Figure 7). Because physically eliminating is not proper way for governments, security forces has replaced physical eliminating with the arrest of leaders and leadership cores and pressure leaders into migrating abroad, the typical example in this regard is *Myanmar* and the opposition party *National League for Democracy*.

Twitter's pitch is to answer the simple question, "What's happening?" Its pitch is "share and discover what's happening right now, anywhere in the world." A person can do that from a computer, cell phone, or handheld de-vice. This is exactly what happened last June 2009 in Iran. As the unrest and protests grew against the reelection win of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, another protest popped up in the "Twitterverse". Tweets from Iran marked with the **hashtag #cnnfail** (CNNfail 2009) began attacking the global news brand for being an early absentee in reporting the protests (now, 2010:99). Protest organization in Virtual Space has eliminated protests' central cores because these movements' supporters are dispersed in different geographical regions, and governments do not access to all protesters (see figure 8).

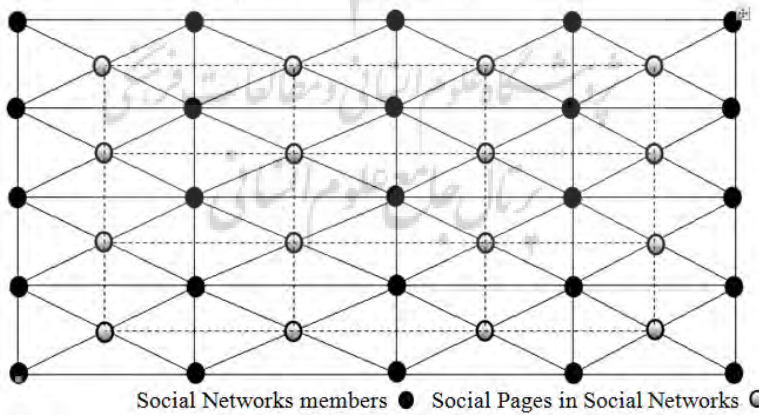
**Figure 6:** Traditional Movements Form



**Figure 7:** Movements Form after World War II



**Figure 8:** Movements Form in Social Networks



**Research Findings:**

For politicians public participation is central to success. In Egypt, political activists could not make a connection

between democracy and public interests. In recent years, labor protests have been transformed to usual happenings. Those

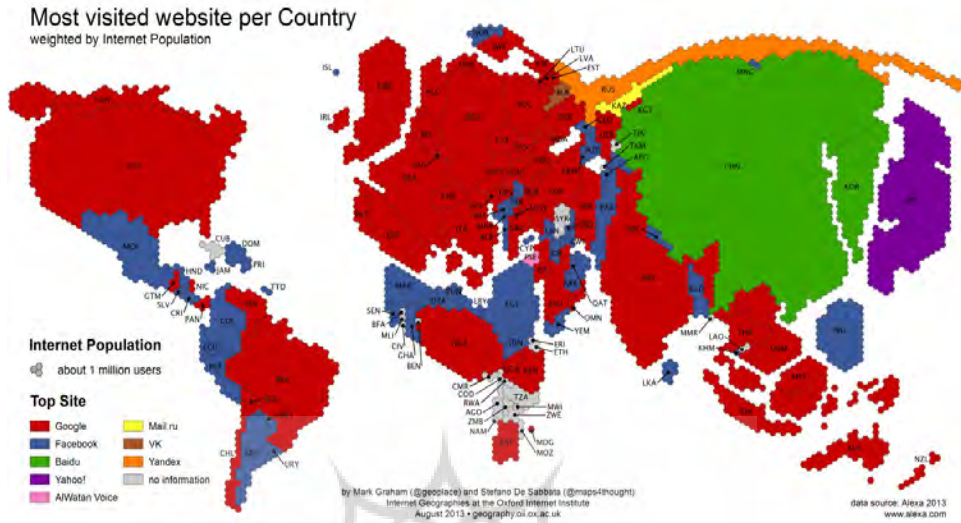


protests organized by secular youth groups like Kefaya and 6 April Movements which demand democracy (Zunes, 2011:12). Protests in 2008 in Egypt showed that the formation of movements requires a powerful inducement. The Tunisian protesters' success in designation of Tunisia president and murder of Khaled Said were the later inducements to Egypt movements. Social networks under the title of *We Are All Khaled Said* were created, and then a group with this name was created in June, 2010. Government believed that they can control the protests by arresting virtual space activists, but work group in social networks did not let police to control protests, Wael Ghoneim arrested in 27 January 2010, but protests developed increasingly (Crisis Group, 2011:1).

Egypt's Government had central role in media policy. To access news and information, people used non-governmental resources, international media and cyber space. Internet made an opportunity to protesters in Egypt. For Egyptians people, Cyberspace provided a tool to communicate that helped them to organize protests in Virtual Space. The new communicational functions of the internet have prepared a cheap tool for sharing ideas, information, pictures and texts in throughout of the world. In the political and humanist terms, in totalitarian societies which existing news agencies cannot access to special events and report them, internet is transformed to an alternative media and sometimes is used to organize movements (Moloney Figliola and others, 2009: 2), as a woman who participated in Egypt movements said: *we used Facebook for planning protests, twitter for coordinating and YouTube for talking with the world* (Howard, 2011).

*Face book* allow adding 5000 friends and transforming data, pictures and texts. The social network in Egypt had been the most popular in compare to other social networks like Google+, YouTube etc. (see map. 2). Protesters in Egypt by means of these abilities organized movements and could overcome obstacles. Page *6<sup>th</sup> April youth Movement* (shabab 6 April) on face book had 307427 followers with 41651 shared texts and 1364 pictures and videos. *Elshaheed* page gathered 187491 followers with 232557 shared texts and 2561 pictures and videos. *We are all khaled saeid* page had 178095 followers and *news of 6<sup>th</sup> April youth* page gathered 91738 followers with 19176 shared texts and 11765 pictures and videos.

Map2: Most Visited Website per Country



Source: Graham and De Stabata in the Atlantic, 2013

*Twitter* is a *micro blogging* device and makes massaging possible through text messages in internet and mobile. It is famous for its self-contained 140-character tweets. Twitter's pitch is to answer the simple question, "What's happening?" Its pitch is "share and discover what's happening right now, anywhere in the world." A person can do that from a computer, cell phone, or handheld device (snow, 2010:97). In Egypt, Twitter is used in great scale by activists to broadcast news related to the protests and happenings occurred in streets.

Two weeks prior to Mubarak resignation, Howard et al, (2011, 17) find that 34 percent of the Tweets on the topic of political change in Egypt were coming from people who lives abroad, but as public engagement with political protest

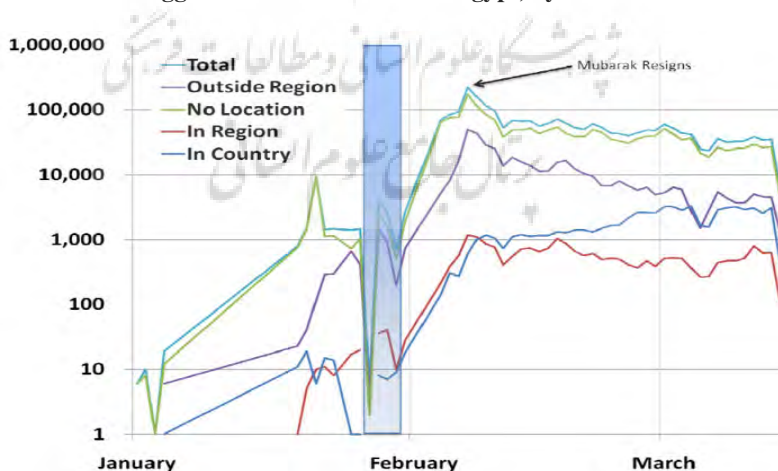
grew in a week prior to his resignation, the relative contribution of outsiders dwindled to just 12 percent. In other words, the vast majority of Tweets were coming from people who either were in country, in the region, or had refused to give their location information (a common strategy for political protesters). Over time, the number of Egyptians in Egypt Tweeting about politics surpassed the number tweeting from elsewhere in the region.

**Table 1:** Online Structure of Egyptian Political Parties, Before and After Revolution

Political Party, URL	Before Revolution			After Revolution		
	Pages	Unique External Links	Volume (MB)	Pages	Unique External Links	Volume (MB)
April 6 Youth Movement, 6april.org	...	...	...	378	8	48
Communist Party of Egypt, cpegypt.tk	1297	248	62	3379	9	190
Egyptian Greens, egyptiangreens.com	441	2	16	527	2	17
Kefaya Movement, harakamasria.org	4372	90	24	4522	78	25
National Association for Change, taghyeer.net	1983	2	35	...	...	...
National Democratic Party, ndp.org.eg	1343	11	43	...	...	...
New Wafd Party, alwafdparty.org	78	000	9	2015	11	165
Progressive National Unionist Party, al-ahaly.com	1583	12	22	323	7	7
Socialist Labor Party, el3amal.net	304	7	2	615	6	4
Muslim Brotherhood (Arabic), ikhwanonline.com	6123	66	13	7948	67	459
Muslim Brotherhood (English), ikhwanweb.com	4372	896	196	4579	739	386

Source: Howard et al, 2011:18

**Logged Number of Tweets on Egypt, by Location**



Source: Howard et al, 2011:17

**YouTube** occupied the third stage for protesters in Egypt. Individuals used phone

cameras to record films from events that happened between governmental forces

and protesters. 16-20<sup>th</sup> May, 2011, the most prominent videos loaded into YouTube with the keyword "Egypt" were hand coded for author, viewing, and creation date information (Howard et al, 2011:27). The most viral videos on YouTube are identified in Table 2, which are ordered by the number of views and date of uploading. These videos were uploaded in YouTube and were used by news agencies in international Medias like *Euro News, BBC, and CNN* etc.

After beginning political movements in Egypt, Government tried to block phones,

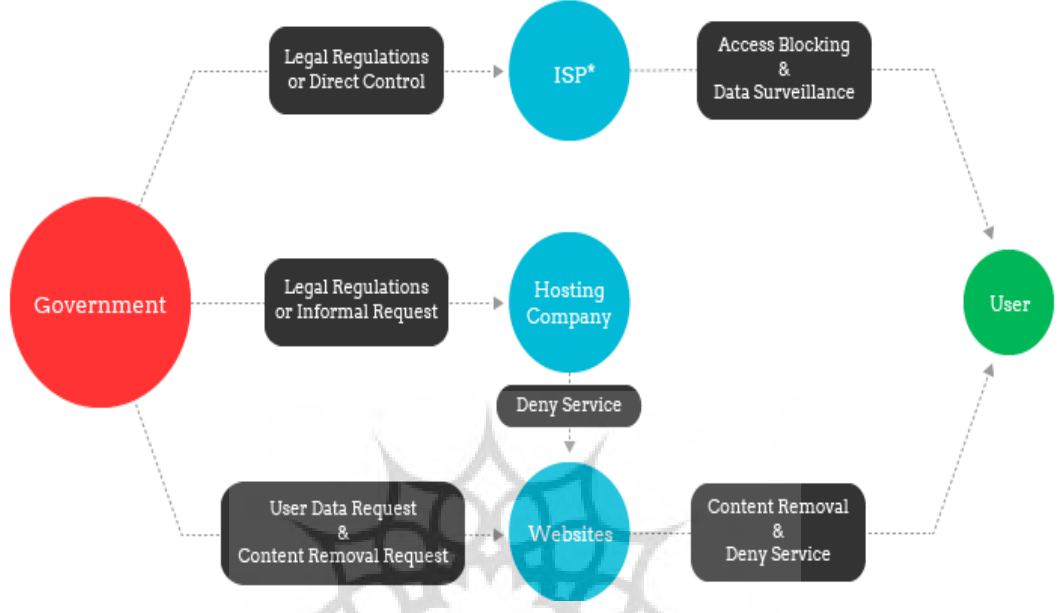
censure web-sites' contents, and arrest cyber activists. All of the government has developed a subtle and sophisticated system to establish broader of control within the international Cyber Space (see Figure 9). Egyptian activities in internet were monitored by government via tools that were made by *Gamma Corporation (UK), Amesys (France), VAS Tech (South Africa) and ZTE (China)* (Wikileaks.org, 2011).

**Table 2:** Viral Video Content from Egyptians, By Upload Date and Number of Viewers

Title	Channel	Views	Date
Protest in Egypt - Jan 25, 2011	Lukasjakubicka	676701	25-Jan-11
Day of anger in Egypt	Reuters Video	217518	25-Jan-11
Egypt's Protests Day of Anger Riots 25 Jan 2011 Demonstrations Rare Raw Footage	Aus Network	110162	25-Jan-11
The Most AMAZING video on the Internet #Egypt #jan25	hadi15	2127384	27-Jan-11
Man Shot in Egypt	NeroAlex1988	154823	27-Jan-11
Egypt Unrest: Video of police killing teen protester, riots aftermath	Russia Today	397099	28-Jan-11
25th Jan. 2011 – Storyful - Egypt Cairo uprising protest video - Mohamed Ibrahim Elmasry	Storyful	285628	28-Jan-11
Demanding change in Egypt	AlJazeera English	111908	28-Jan-11
Egyptians renew protests after curfew	AlJazeera English	106191	28-Jan-11
Juju's message to Mubarak	Oneholysinner	275302	29-Jan-11
Video of Egypt's bloody clashes as protesters defy curfew in Cairo	Russia Today	204736	30-Jan-11
Video of fighter jets & choppers over Cairo as military tries to take control	Russia Today	16422	30-Jan-11
Egyptian Revolution 2011 COMPLETE. World MUST MUST watch this. Freedom for All!	Eyeinsidefilm	484043	1-Feb-11
'March of Millions' in Cairo as Egypt riots death toll reaches 300	RussiaToday	123965	1-Feb-11
Video of fierce Egypt clashes as pro-govt crowds attack anti-Mubarak protesters	RussiaToday	322708	2-Feb-11
Fourth Horseman (death) Egyptian riots. Full Original Video	PunkersTV	1551796	3-Feb-11
The fourth horseman (of Death) at the Egypt protests	FoiledToaster	150532	3-Feb-11
Hosni Mubarak, a citizen of the people of Egypt at the end of wisdom	Shaghelhom	139526	4-Feb-11
Riz Khan - Tariq Ramadan and Slavoj Zizek on the future of Egyptian politics	AlJazeera English	107769	4-Feb-11
US Intervention: Pentagon sends warships to Egypt	otraverdad1	281201	7-Feb-11

Source: Howard et al, 2011: 29

**Figure 9: How is the Internet Being Censored?**



Youyuxi.com, 2011

*CNN's* impact on global news and foreign policy led to a theory among political communication scholars called the *CNN effect*. George Washington University scholar Steven Livingston (1997) describes the CNN effects as follows: “1) a policy agenda-setting agent, 2) an impediment to the achievement of desired policy goals, and 3) an accelerant to policy decision making.” The instantaneous aspect of global media today can light a fire of public outrage at government, as it did following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, or extinguish policy options, as happened after the broadcast footage of insurgents dragging the bodies of American soldiers through the streets of Mogadishu in 1993 (Snow, 2010: 98). When neutral media can inform in a way that put governments under pressure, consequently the process of decision-making would be affected by

grassroots expects and interests. This issue was exactly happened in Egypt's cities in 2009 under the effect of Cyber Space and international Medias.

Political role-playing needs awareness of citizen-rights and also responsibilities. On the other hand, being as an active citizen is complex and time-consuming because of the following reasons: Firstly, it requires being sufficiently informed about different internal and external issues in the world, about the whys and the wherefores of the government function, about language know-how in both illuminate and obfuscate political realities, and also about identifying the ways in which reliable information can be accessed and comparing sources to identify rivalries.

Secondly, active citizens need to reach at a level of growth that can judge about who and what can be trusted. Can a party or politician be trusted more than others? Are elected representatives and

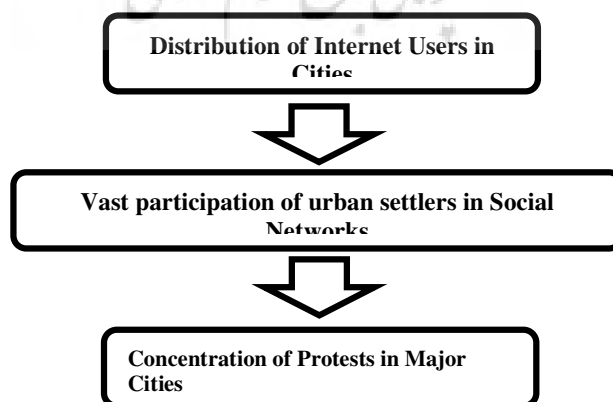
government able to do what they promise at the election times? How far can be depended friends, neighbors and strangers upon engagement in the collective action that may bring desired changes? Can be trusted the existing constitutional system to materialize the interests of all people, or should active citizens think about different issues related to the system and engage with the related roles?

Thirdly, active citizens need to be heard and materialize their presence which includes skills and useful resources to develop networks of collective self-organization, contribute to the political discourse and make a tangible impact upon the ways in which political power is exercised (Coleman and Blumler, 2009: 42). People in poor societies and in moment of difficulty do not revolts and even when they revolt and form evolutionary movements could not reach to power, unless they could use opportunities for overthrowing the government (Foran, 2009: 33). Each nation has the right to criticize, protest and even revolve to create a desired governance structure (Mojtahedzadeh, 2002: 82). Protesters in Egypt, who were aware of their rights and responsibilities, on the one hand knew the

society needs, and from the other hand were expecting opportunity to reach at democracy. We should not limit all those opportunities to Cyber Space, because it was one of the required tools. Approximately 20 percent of Egypt population has accessed to the internet and in last five days of revolution internet was blocked in all parts of the country. Government tried to control protests by blocking internet; but in a response anti-government forces encourage people to participation in movements by networked-models in the streets. Moreover, international media 24/7 were effective through reporting events from Egypt to all around the world and helping movement followers to conflict with the government.

43.5 percent of Egypt population (now its population is about 82 m) lives in cities (UNDP, 2012). Like other developing countries, most of the internet users in Egypt are settled in cities. Multitudes of demonstrations were reported from major cities that Virtual Space is accessible to the public. Hence, Egypt revolution is one of the revolutions that began and formed in cities and it is characterized by urbanity (see figure 10).

**Figure 10:** Process of Focusing Protests in Cities by means of Virtual Space



In comparison with the former movements, protest movement in Egypt had two special characteristics:

First, eliminating the leadership from protest campaigns and forming the social integrated practice; the issue has three important consequences:

1. Creating flexibility in movement in comparison with other movements and decreasing in the risk of elite inversions.
2. Networked structure of these movements helps protesters to be unknown and creates some problem for governments to identify the core of the movement.
3. Lack of special leadership lead to a great challenge: lack of codifying a comprehensive plan for the future.

Second, recent revolution in Egypt was based on communicational technologies like Cyber Space, international media and mobile:

1. Lack of political freedoms and media censures in totalitarian states inspire citizens to refer foreign media and internet web-sites to get the latest news.
2. Increase in mobiles sets quality, increase in use of mobiles, decrease in the cost of conversation via mobile have made individuals as citizen-journalist that record events and report them.
3. New ability of phones to connect with social networks online e.g. Face book, Twitter and YouTube. This allows mass communications, upload and download of multi-media files about social and political events.

### Conclusion:

Civil resistance in Egypt that occurred in 2011 had potentials to be formed, because political and economic situation resulted in dictatorship and high economic corruption. However, in the protests formal parties

were not as major actors in contrast to youth people who organized movement and guided people. For the first time, we were not witnessed an integrated body in leading the protests and any political negotiations between protesters and government. The revolution is characterized by believing in collective action and using social networks to making- decision. The typical examples are the names which were selected for special days of protests, avoiding violence and also ignoring the differences of the protesters.

Expansion of the internet and Social Networks in societies which use these alternative media as conflict tools has challenged dictatorship states which confine the liberty. Governments try to censor internet in order to block distribution of critical contents in Virtual Space. The case of Egypt shows that censor of internet cannot be successful, namely it is not the case all the time, because movements that begin in Virtual Space reflects the situation and policies which are dominant in the related society. By shifting protests to the public space, movements find distributive nature, and disperse throughout the country. However, communication and Virtual Space are not enough to shape movement, because injustice, corruption and lack of freedom are prerequisites to start the changes. Based on our findings movements like that of Egypt might be faced with the following situations:

1. depending on Cyber Space to organize protest movements, because; Cyber Space and Social Networks help to overcome limits in public space. Individual identities could be unknown in Virtual Space and Social Networks.

New generation of communication provide possibilities to use phones, Virtual Space and Social Networks as alternative media.

2. Eliminating individual leadership; Flexibility, mobility and decrease in risk of elites inversions.

Challenge security forces to conflict with networked structure of the movements.

Lack of codifying a comprehensive plan for the future

3. Securitization of the virtual Space; Increase in censoring Cyber Space and media, and limiting Freedom of the Connection.

Increase in the usage of new ways of espionage, control of citizen, identifying opponents and arresting them via Social Networks facilities.

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## تأثیر فضای مجازی بر انقلاب مصر

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گسترش زیرساخت های ارتباطی و افزایش میزان دسترسی اعضای یک جامعه به رسانه ها و فضای مجازی، بر نیازها، مشارکت سیاسی و تعامل شهروندان با فضای سیاسی محلی، ملی و بین المللی تاثیر گذار است. امروزه شهروندان کشورهای مختلف بوسیله امکانات و زیرساخت های فناوری ارتباطات بر میزان آگاهی خود می افزایند و به نشر و پیگیری اخبار و اطلاعات در فضای مجازی و رسانه های ارتباطی می پردازند. آنها دیگر همانند گذشته در برابر رسانه ها منفعل عمل نمی کنند، بلکه با مشاهده و ارزیابی شرایط کنونی کشور خود به مقایسه کیفیت زندگی و آزادی های قانونی خود با مردم سایر کشورها می پردازند. در ماه های پایانی سال ۲۰۱۰ میلادی اعتراض هایی در کشورهای تونس، مصر، بحرین، لیبی و سوریه بوقوع پیوست که تا پیش از آن کمتر کسی به احتمال شکل گیری آنها اندیشیده بود. نقطه اشتراک همه این اعتراض ها شروع آنها از فضای مجازی بود. در حرکت های اعتراضی که در منطقه و به طور خاص در دو کشور تونس و مصر به وقوع پیوست، معترضان با استفاده از فضای مجازی به ایجاد هماهنگی و ارتباط میان یکدیگر جهت برپایی تظاهرات در مناطق و شهرهای مختلف بر علیه حاکمیت پرداختند. سازمان دهندگان اعتراض ها در کشور مصر با بهره گیری از ابزارهایی که مخاطبان آنها در سطح جهان در اختیار داشتند سعی کردند تا توجه زیادی را به حرکت خود جلب نمایند و در کنار آن مرجع سازماندهی اعتراض ها را از احزاب و نخبگان سیاسی به شبکه های اجتماعی منتقل نمودند. این تحقیق به منظور بررسی وقایع اخیر سعی دارد با مطالعه اسناد و گزارش های منتشر شده به این سوال پاسخ دهد که فضای مجازی در روند شکل گیری حرکت های اعتراضی کشور مصر در چارچوب چه فرآیندی و تحت تاثیر چه عواملی به ایفای نقش پرداخته است؟ یافته های تحقیق نشان می دهد که معترضان به فضای مجازی برای سازماندهی، هماهنگی و تبادل اطلاعات اعتراض ها در انقلاب مصر تکیه داشتند.

واژگان کلیدی: اعتراض، فضای مجازی، شبکه اجتماعی، قدرت رسانه