

## **The Role of Social Network Platform in Egyptian's Political Upheaval in January 2011**

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Received: November 2, 2016      Accepted: November 23, 2016      Online Published: December 1, 2016

**Abstract:** Social network platforms are tools, which are not just utilized for entertainment, but also serve as a multiple purposed tool in other areas, including politics. Egyptians have utilized these tools to communicate, coordinate, and bring about mass protests, since 2010. Drawing on the theoretical concepts of the public sphere and communicative action of Habermas, with the new public sphere and network society this paper examines the role of SNSs during the Arab Spring in Egypt. The lit review assumes that SNSs are causes of political upheavals. The article, however, argues that the SNSs are simply an instrument for communication and mobilization of people in the Egyptian 25<sup>th</sup> January political uprising.

**Keywords:** Social Network, Public Sphere, Communicative Action, Arab Spring, Egypt

### **1. Introduction**

In late 2010 and early 2011, waves of uprising swept the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). These chains of protests are called by various names, such as, “the Arab Spring,” “the Arab Awakening,” and “the Arab Revolt.” Egypt was one of those countries that underwent a profound political change during this period. The Arab Revolt was different from the wide-range of previous revolutions that occurred in the region, as these were centered on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The internet and new media platforms have played an unprecedented role which rendered the world into one small village. People, as a result, are no longer isolated as Social Network Sites (SNSs) inspire distinct individuals to come together for a common cause.

Social network sites have had a crucial role in mobilizing the public to participate in socio-political discourse which reshaped the political landscape of MENA. During the Arab Revolt, activists had utilized social media outlets, such as, Twitter, Facebook, and You Tube to announce mass protests. Facebook pages, for example, “We are all Khaled Said”, and 6<sup>th</sup> of April Youth Movement (6 AYM) declared initial protest in Egypt. This study focuses on the role of SNSs to urge political protests in the course of the Arab Revolt in Egypt, and the extent to which SNSs have driven the recent political upheaval in the country. The questions that are being posed here is, what exactly placed the power into the SNSs in the political upheaval? It also questions as to how effective the digital platforms have been in developing the public sphere all over the Egyptian uprising.

## 2. Research Questions

This paper is seeking to tackle some questions, such as how did SNSs lead the public to be involved in political discussion and mobilizing people all through the Arab Spring in Egypt? How did SNSs lead to the development of the new public sphere in Egypt and the Arab region? Did social network platforms serve as a tool or perhaps a cause of the political upheaval in Egypt?

## 3. Research Methodology

This study adopts the qualitative method using the secondary sources for the article were derived from library research facilities, books, journals articles and other published sources. The secondary data is suitable for this study, due to both natures of our inquiry, and the wealth of data available in this realm.

## 4. Literature Review

Since their launch, SNSs have actually been a subject of study. The swift utilizing and embracing of social network platform by a variety of internet users in the world has raised up several essential questions relating to the new media outlets. Take, for example, who have used them, just how, why, and what kind of activities practiced. Most of the studies have been devoted to a different features of SNSs, such as, entertainment, education, business, social relationship and social movements. Since the Arab Revolt, many discussions have been undertaken around the incredible significance of SNSs in organizing socio-political protest and online political activism.

There is quite a number of literature that are useful to this research. “*The Arab Uprising: What Everyone Needs to Know*,” by James L. Gelvin (2015), explains the role of popular uprising and symbolic action in MENA. He also focuses on several countries, mostly stressing on Tunisia and Egypt, with the motivations behind the revolutions, and how each government responded to mass protests. The concept of the “Arab Spring” was discussed and explained as to how this concept is fitted in depicting recent uprisings in the region.

This is not the first-time observers have used the term “spring” to describe political upheavals. The raft of revolutions that advocated liberalism and nationalism in Europe in 1848 earned the title “Springtime of Nations.” Furthermore, the short period in 1968 when Czechoslovakia flirted with liberal reform before Soviet tanks crushed Czech aspirations would forever be the “Prague Spring” (Gelvin, 2015).

There were clearly a number of demonstrations before the launching of SNSs, and people protested before the Internet came along. For instance, hardly anyone in East Germany in the nineteen-eighties had a phone—and they ended up with hundreds of thousands of people in central Leipzig and brought down a regime that all thought would last another hundred years. Those with any grievances will constantly find ways to communicate with each other. How they choose to do it is less interesting, in the end, than why they were driven to do it in the first place (Boyd, S., 2011).

Tufekci (2008) also advocates the causal role of SNSs, and she criticizes Gladwell’s underestimation of SNSs. Tufekci supports the weak tie (online relationship) theory of Mark Granovetter, which advocates the causal relation of political upheaval and the use of social media. Tufekci also argues that the weak ties can be attached to our stronger ties (offline relationship), and that is when real change - potentially

large-scale global change - can take place. Social movements that can make socio-political upheaval would still require people who interact with each other regularly, and trust and depend on each other in somewhat dense networks. The real change also would come only if we can make friends we care about everywhere and we make bridge ties that cover the world in a web of common humanity (Boyd, 2011).

Another important literature that frames Egyptian Revolution in terms of the vital inclinations in the Egyptian society, and its economy in the past decade is *"The Journey to Tahrir: Revolution, Protest and Social Change in Egypt"* by Sowers and Toensing (2012). The ousting of Mubarak indicated the launching of the revolutionary restructuring of Egypt's political and social order. According to the author the mass movements, however, began long before 2011. The political and social movements under the rule of Mubarak began way back in 2003, orchestrated by dissident groups and anti-war protests against the US invasion of Iraq (Sowers & Toensing, 2012). Likewise, there are detailed arguments on political participation *prior* to the January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution, especially on how the regime managed the defraud election process.

Farhad Khosrokhavar in his 2012 work, *"The New Arab Revolutions that Shook the World,"* highlights the role of Al-Jazeera in the uninterrupted coverage of the Egyptian Revolution. The regime responded by closing its office, removing it from the local media, and arresting its correspondents. Al-Jazeera was not only active on the screen, but it also combined its service to the new media tools. People relied on it resoundingly, and it was among the top 20 most visited sites in almost all the region (Therme & Khosrokhavar, 2012). This feature has made Al-Jazeera more influential than initially expected. The combination of traditional podium with the new media, indicates how digital platforms can be expressed as a new public sphere. According to Khosrokhavar, the two main mutual points between the Arab Spring and the Iranian Green Movement in 2009, were the facts that they were leaderless, and both put heavy reliance on new forms of media platforms (Therme & Khosrokhavar, 2012). However, the role of SNSs (mainly Twitter) in mobilizing and coordinating the Green Movement protests in 2009, appears to have been significantly overstated, with its primary effect being on external perceptions of the protest instead of on internal political organization or mobilization (Lynch, 2011).

*"Social Media in the Egyptian Revolution Reconsidering Resource Mobilization Theory"*, (2011), by Nahed Eltantawy and Julie B. Wiest, seeks to open dialogues regarding the adaptor of resource mobilization theory to explain social movement and its influence by analyzing the use of digital media in the Egyptian socio-political change. In Egypt, the Internet-based communication technologies have provided a significant resource for social movements through mass communication (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011). The communication infrastructure has had a close link with social and political movements, which has generated political upheaval in the country, alongside other socio-economic factors. Since the late 1990s, service delivery was privatized and by 2000, there were 68 private companies providing Internet services using Telecom Egypt's infrastructure. In 2002, the regime introduced the Egyptian initiative, a free Internet project sponsored by the regime via a partnership between Telecom Egypt and the private sector. The Internet penetration rate in Egypt grew from less than 1% in 2000, to 5% in 2004, to 25 % in 2009 and, most recently in 2012 it reached 40%. There are currently over 200 Internet and data service providers in Egypt, which is making the country one of the cheapest in terms of access to the Internet in Africa (Sedra, 2013). Thus, the source of mobilization (the Internet) makes clear that both the availability of resources (which is considered as virtual-activism via utilizing SNSs) and actors (who

are Egyptian young activists), eventually led to the effective mobilization of the public, in addition to bringing political change about, and as a result could be a symbol to others in the region (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011).

*“Tweeting Toward Freedom?”* 2011, is another related literature by Wilson Quarterly. This work underlines the role Tweeter lays in the political upheaval in the region. According to the article, SNSs had a leadership role in the recent events. It mentions the role of the Egyptian Google marketing manager Ghonim, and explains how he reflected on the deposing of Mubarak, when he said, “Everything was done by the people for the people, and that’s the power of the Internet” (Quarterly, 2011). Furthermore, scholars like M. Gladwell advocate the role of SNSs in recent political mass movements as well. Gladwell argues that the online tools, especially Facebook, further enhanced participation in social movements. Clay Shirky also suggests that we would examine the capability of SNSs to boost civil society, and how over time, power could shift away from regimes to the publics, which social media have to be transformative tools in this realm (Quarterly, 2011). In light of this, it is obvious as to how effective the role of social media was in supporting the public during the new MENA change in promoting democracy.

The researchers contend that the social revolutions in the pre-Internet era suffered from lack of communications and organizational mechanisms. However, SNSs solve this problem, and also bring a net development for democracy almost as much as the printing press did. It can also be noticed that SNSs might not always succeed. It can be refers to SNSs as a double-edged sword, mainly when the regime used it for surveillance of any political activism by dissident groups. Therefore, new media can also be utilized to spy on or to suppress oppositions by cracking their email accounts or observing their activities, which could paralyze the social and political cyber activities. The Arab regimes could take advantage of SNSs to monitor political activities. Though, the monitoring of political activity on digital media would encourage people to be very creative and adopt various ways of communication. This is quite correct when it comes to discussing the internet which was blocked during the Egyptian revolution.

So far, we discussed a quite number of literatures that focused on the casual role of social network platforms in the recent political upheaval in the region. However, this paper tires to work on a different direction of the SNSs character. Beside its critical role in the Egyptian revolution, social networks sites were more a tool for the protestors than a cause. It can be argued that the main causes of revolution in Egypt was a socio – political and economic reasons, and the digital media was played an instrumental role for the public. For instance, Alaa Al Aswany in *“On the State of Egypt: What Made the Revolution Inevitable”* (Al Aswany, 2011), conducted one of the important works in this field. The writer argues some critical issues, such as economic stagnation, poverty, police brutality and political factors in the Egyptian community were substantial reasons in mobilizing the public that led to the ousting of Mubarak.

The government had spent almost double amount of budget annually for the Ministry of Interior compared to the Ministry of Health. Furthermore, *“The Struggle for Egypt: From Nasser to Tahrir Square”* (Cook, 2011), is also a book edited by Steven A. Cook, which discusses Egyptian political history since 1952. The grasping of Egyptian political history since 1952 is critical in figuring out the political situation in the country. The book provides valuable insight into the details regarding certain real domestic issues, such as corruption and repression, which defines Mubarak’s presidency.

## 5. Theoretical Framework

There are several theories that are applicable to the study of utilizing SNSs as a vehicle of mass mobilization plus organization. This study primarily focuses on the usage of SNSs for mobilization, organization, and creating awareness among the people. In order to figure out the role of SNSs, the research shows how the public sphere can be manifested in online activities.

Jürgen Habermas in 1962 wrote, *“The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere.”* He chronicled a historical rise and fall of the public sphere in bourgeois society during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He also advanced a normative model of the public sphere as a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed (Grbeša, 2004). Habermas’ principle underscored the position of individuals, and he believes that free individual undertake the deliberation, argumentation along with reach a consensus, which help to make up the public sphere. This sphere serves as an arena between the public and private life, otherwise, it is a sphere which mediates between society and state (Habermas, Lennox & Lennox, 1974). Habermas believes that this kind of space between civil society and the state, in which vital open dialogue of issues of general interest has been institutionally guaranteed. For Habermas:

*“The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor.”* (1991, p.27).

In other words, this social space between the state that is referring to public institutions and organizations, and the private sphere that is indicating family life, social and economic relations, which is seen as an adequate space to express frank and plausible debates in shaping public opinion. For Habermas, the value and the quality of any democratic community is based on the capacities of individual and private citizens to deliberate and communicate rationally (Habermas, 1991). Habermas discusses the growing, and the end of the bourgeois public sphere based on rational-critical argument and dialogue. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the bourgeois public sphere appeared as an unbiased social space against the utter will of monarchs. Whereby, this space was autonomous of the public authority and made up of private people gathering together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state (Grbeša, 2004). This sphere is distinguished from the state and its institutions, and it is separated from the economy as it is not a space for market relations.

The public sphere is a discursive arena, in which people take part in the rational debate, and in doing so, they withstand the overtaking of the state and the economy on their private lives. It is therefore, is a vital part of the life in which people interconnect and make sense of their lives, and political discourses. Here, it is understood as a form of communication arena that is not utterly defined in terms of interests (Bolton, 2005). It is accordingly, a center of political participation and political activities. The democratization in that way, is linked to political participation as a center of any democratic community, with the basic element in individual self-development.

All through the 18<sup>th</sup> century, because of special historical situations, a new civil society appeared, which was crucial for developing the bourgeois public sphere. This sphere includes certain key elements, such as organs of information and political dialogue (magazine, newspapers, journals, now: ICTs and SNSs), institutions of political dialogues (parliaments, political clubs, literary salons, coffee houses, at the moment cyber-café, chat rooms, online groups), and other public spaces where socio-political argument happens. These spaces existed between the private realm and the sphere of public authority, and were independent of government and market forces (Habermas, 1991).

This particular area would be conceptually distinct from the state; it is a place for creation and exchange of opinion that is principally critical of the state. And so, the public sphere is governed by an open doctrine of a free and open space to conduct arguments regarding all issues, which generally concerns a varied dialogue and argument, and can be employed to find a public interest. The public sphere is so presumed to be protected by freedom of speech, liberty of press and assembly, equality in communicative interaction and participation in the political discourse without restrictions (Bohman, 2008).

For that reason, the public sphere is recognized by its conversational dimensions of the public, the result being a model of the public sphere that is discourse-based. The private citizens come together to discuss and deliberate on mutual concerns in a space that is free from the power and control of the regime, huge economy (capitalism), along with other associated institutions. In this space, political dialogue and public deliberation are possible, leading into the formulation of public opinions, political movements and activities (Habermas, 1991). The collective action is thus, considered as a substantial part of the public sphere. Though, Habermas believed that the vast economics, governmental organizations and political elites are capable of taking over the public sphere and manipulate citizens, which turn to the production of a passive citizen, making them contented with being a primary consumer of goods, services, and political administrations.

In addition to Habermas, Western societies experienced large industrialization and population development, and the scale and scope of social and political communications have markedly been altered; systematized not around face-to-face and small-scale communications, but via a gradually commercialized print and audio-visual media systems. Then, the press itself is vulnerable to the degree that it turned out to be commercialized, which started in earnest in the mid-1800s (Benson, 2009). The public sphere seemed to be thus transformed, coming from a community forum for reasonable controversy into a system for advertising instead.

Despotic regimes have also constantly worked to stay in power through dominating the tools of public sphere, and monopolizing traditional print and mainstream media. However, they failed to control the Internet and SNSs since, these tools have provided a remarkable vehicle of communicative action, and delivered a technological infrastructure to the public and social groups. The fundamental element of modern democratic revolutions has been the existence of an independent public sphere where citizens can meet to discuss politics relatively free from state interference. In Egypt, one can argue that new media is surging to constitute this alternative public sphere.

Habermas requires an equal chance of communicative exchange between social actors and the removal of all barriers. In the technological sense, Internet and SNSs infrastructure helps fulfill this requirement.

Egyptians have taken advantage of such technological infrastructure, and much of the anti-regime collaboration occurred virtually; this was started once the regime privatized the internet sector, and ended its monopoly over the internet service, which lastly turned into the street protests. Despite its seemingly firm stance, both traditional and digital media eased debates, promoted various views, dialogs and sensible criticisms, which have been missing for so long in the Arab public sphere.

## 6. Egyptian Upheaval

In early 2011, waves of protests swept the region, which started from Tunisia and later extended to other countries in the region. In Egypt, the protest started on January 25<sup>th</sup>. One of the early catalysts for the January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution in Egypt was a “We are all Khaled Said” Facebook page. This platform turned out to be a focal point around which 470,000 “fans” organized their dissidence (Mainwaring, 2011). This page also had encouraged the public to go to the streets and express their dissatisfactions. Some argue that without social media, the Egyptian Revolution would have never occurred. This is advocated by Ghonim, the anonymous administrator of “We are all Khaled Said,” in his book *“Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People Is Greater Than the People in Power”* in 2012. Ghonim argues how the Internet played a role in Egypt, associating it with the Facebook page defending Khaled Said. The page that attracted several hundred thousand people into liking it within a few months, was seen to be instrumental in inspiring the political upheaval, which led to the ousting of Mubarak, as Ghonim claims that his computer keyboard turned into a machine gun, firing bullets with every keystroke (Ghonim, 2012).

When Ghonim called for protests on Facebook, numerous people replied to it immediately and made a decision to move out to the streets in a peaceful protest set on 25<sup>th</sup> of January. Demonstrators protested against poverty, lower wage, lack of employment, corruption, human rights abuse, price increase, and the repressive governance of President Mubarak. The demonstration on 28 January were brutally suppressed by the security forces, and produced a huge number of deaths and injuries among protestors. The protest was not high-handedly managed by the police, because they had not assumed such massive amount of protestors would turn up. Based on the report of Amnesty International, the excessive use of tear gas, water cannon, along with rubber and plastic bullets had led to the killing of at least 840 people, and injured over 6,000 during the Egyptian Revolution (Mungin, 2012).

Egyptians decided to remain their sit-ins like Tahrir Square. The revolution took three weeks, with each Friday showing objective slogans of the protestors, such as “The Friday of Anger” on January 28, “The Friday of Departure” on February 4<sup>th</sup>, and “The Friday of Crawl” on February 11 - that day on which Mubarak relinquished power. Throughout these three weeks, people communicated both in traditional and virtual manner to set up plans to keep protests for the next day, during their 18 days sit-ins.

“We are All Kaled Said,” was not the only page that called for protests, but there were also other pages, such as, “The April 6 Youth Movement” and “El-Baradei for Presidential”, which also played a pivotal role. Several social, political and economic issues, such as, the lack of transparency, social disruption and injustice, violation of human rights, abuse of public and personal liberties, on top of lack of political reform had been central factors that would determine the Egyptians to build these kind of platforms expressing their dissatisfaction and fury, and motivated them ultimately to undertake their revolution. The Egyptian Revolution was named the “Comprehensive Media Revolution”, or “Internet Revolution”

due to the utilization of several traditional and new media platforms in the uprising that was led by the Internet and SNSs.

In addition, Western media addressed these events as a “Twitter Revolution” or “Facebook Revolution,” due to the remarkable role of SNSs in the Arab Revolts. On the other hand, Gelvin believes that, that is misleading, and attributing the Arab Revolt to the new media outlet minimizes the role of groups that took part in the protests. The writer also believes that there was no necessary link between internet usage and politics in Egypt prior to the revolution, though, this seemed to be oversimplified the role of SNSs. Gelvin argues that, 60% of youth internet users spent their time chatting, 20% surfed for pornography; 12% conducted business or research, and only 8% followed political sites (Gelvin, 2015). As a result, it can be considered that SNSs had a significant role in the mass protests, but still, it did not cause the uprisings.

Social network sites inevitably, had a great role in promoting the public to be involved politically, specially, the Facebook pages, because they have the power of capturing public attention for mutual concern. Facebook users, for example, have a “News Feed” to observe their peculiar connections and remain updated about what is going on with them. Facebook permits users to form and to join groups based on mutual benefits, too (Valenzuela, 2013). Hence, those who join social movements and political groups online can receive mobilizing information that they may not obtain elsewhere, and thus encounter more chances to engage in political activities. At the same time, increased participation in online social networks typically helps to build trusting relationships among members, further enhancing the potential of social media to increase their engagement in protests and other political behaviors, and provide much more possibilities to be involved with politics, so, it has a great role in politicizing citizens in modern societies.

Therefore, the root of the Egyptian revolution was not in SNSs, but as Tariq Ramadan mentioned it came from the West, when young cyber dissidents in the country were signing up for training courses on the use of SNSs in non-violent protests in the U.S funded by the American administration, and/or major private companies, which started to organize lectures, seminars, and set up networks that provide training for young leaders, especially in the use of new media outlets. They were given the instructions on using of SNSs, of which, certain outstanding members of 6 AYM had participated. The youthful bloggers and cyber-activists represented the driving force of the mass protests. Youth trained to utilize the digital mediums offered by the Web exploited the resources of the Internet and SNSs to greater influence. The youthful protestors started their training many years before the revolution and applied their experiences in many protests to galvanize the public against socio-political issues (Valenzuela, 2013). The revolution in Egypt, hence was seen to have nothing to do with SNSs as a cause, as political and economic problems were the vital motives for the public to *pour in to the streets*.

The graph illustrates regarding the objectives of using SNSs (Facebook) in Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions (Mourtada & Salem, 2011):

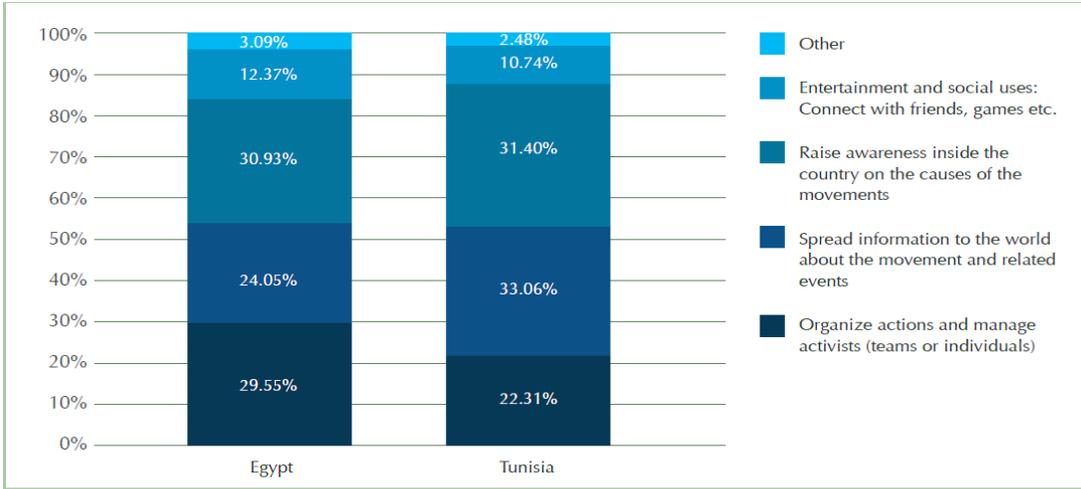


Figure 1: The Main Usage of Facebook in the Civil Movement and Events in 2011

In the graph above it can be noted that, 33.06% (Tunisia) and 24.05% (Egypt) of Facebook users utilized it to spread information. Similarly, 22.31% (Tunisia) and 29.55% (Egypt) of users used it to organize actions and manage activists (teams or individuals). In addition, Tunisia and Egypt were analogous in terms of accessing their news and information about the uprising in 2011, as displayed in the following graph (Mourtada & Salem, 2011).

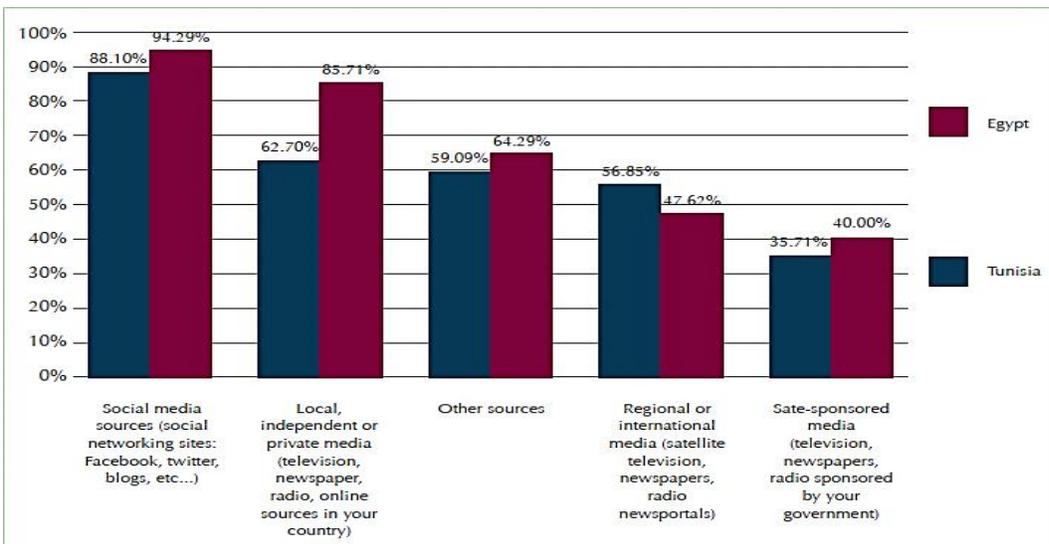


Figure 2: The Graph Indicates a Question, Where the Person Get the News/ Information on the Events During the Civil Movements.

Therefore, people could use SNSs as a modern public sphere to exchange their views on various socio – political and economic, even religion as it can be seen from the following graph (Kohut et al., 2011).

### Arab Publics Share Views about Politics, Community, Religion Online

	% Saying they use social networking sites*	Do you ever use social networking sites to share your views about... **		
		Politics	Community issues	Religion
	%	%	%	%
Lebanon	34	68	81	8
Tunisia	34	67	82	63
Egypt	30	63	74	63
Jordan	29	60	80	62
<b>21-nation median</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>14</b>

\*Based on total sample.

\*\*Based on those who use social networking sites. Pakistan not included in calculation of median due to sample size.

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Figure 3: Utilizing SNSs to Share View about Political, Religion and Community

In sum, from the presented data above it can be released that the SNSs in most of the Arab revolts generally, and in Egyptian's uprising particularly played an instrumental role to communicate and share views on numerous socio – political, economic problems. The key reason for Egyptian revolution was not social network platform, but some main political and economic factors are responsible, as they will be highlighting subsequently.

## 7. Motivations of the Egyptian Revolution on January 25<sup>th</sup> 2011

The key argument of this article is an instrumental relation between the January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution in Egypt and the social network platforms, for the sake of this argument some substantial reasons and motivation for Egyptian uprising will be illustrated below.

### 7.1. Demographic Factor

Egypt is the Arab world's most populous country. Its population grew by almost six times since the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and by almost three times from 1950 to 2005. Currently, with a formal population of 84 million, although estimates put this number at much higher, probably at 100 million due to conscription, many families had not enrolled the birth of their sons, which is what demographers termed as “youth bulge.” The youths aged between 15-29 makes up 30% of the Egyptian population (Gelvin, 2015). Youth (between the ages of 15 and 29) still make up 79% and 75% of Facebook users in Egypt, in 2010 and 2012 respectively (Mourtada & Salem, 2011). This simply illustrates how the SNSs, particularly Facebook, was dominated by youth. In such a way, it is not surprising that the most of the

active figures since 25<sup>th</sup> January uprising are among the youth. As a result, the infrastructure was designed for a considerably smaller population, leading to issues with energy, normal water, along with basic services. This generation does not want to suffer as their parents did.

## 7.2. Unemployment Factor

Unemployment remains a major issue to the Arab world, and youth unemployment is believed to hover around 25% of the unemployed across the region, whereas 30% of them are women. In Egypt, the level of youth unemployment was 43%, and almost 60% of youths aged between 18-29 were not in the labor force (in the case of women it was 83%), with young people having college degrees making up the highest proportion among the unemployed (Gelvin, 2015). In line with the statistics, workers' wages were actually low and nearly 43% of the workers in Egyptian cities worked in the informal economy, meaning they were neither organized, nor protected by labor rules (Bayat, 2002). This would be one of the reasons of unemployment throughout the country.

In Egypt, the number of jobs grew between 2000-2007, was 2% annually. However, overall unemployment rates hovered between 10-12% (other sources put unemployment as high as 15%), due to the fact that 700,000 youths were joining the Egyptian workforce every year, but, it is believed that only around 30,000 jobs are created every year (Bowen, J., 2013). The large population of unemployed youth was forced to work informal low paying job, create employment for themselves, or wait until the recession end and their older retire. The graph below details unemployment in Egypt (Miller et al., 2012.). The Y-axis represents the percentage of unemployment rate, while the X-axis represents the class unemployed in Secondary, Above Secondary and University or higher levels of education.

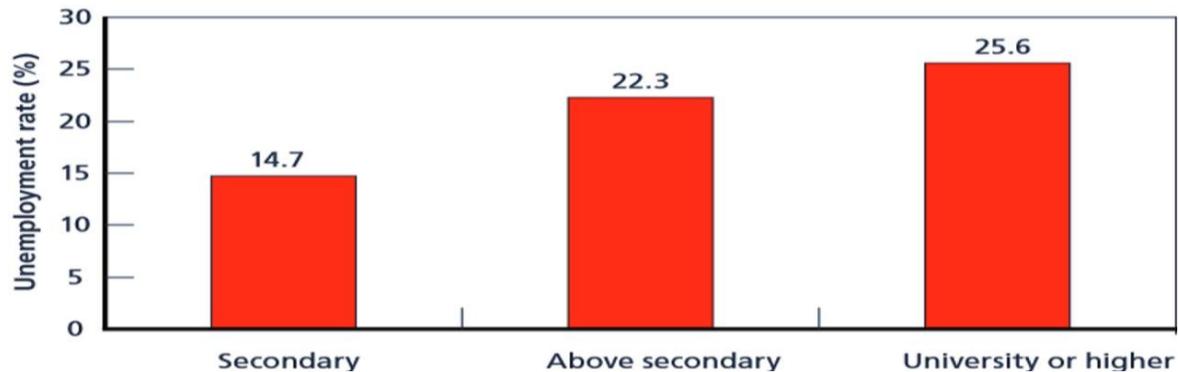


Figure 4: Youth Unemployment in Egypt by Educational Level (2008-2009)

The revolution is largely attributed to the rise of unemployment, and other problems such as low income, rising inequality, and the lack of health services.

### **7.3. Economic Factor**

Joseph D. Reid, an economic expert stresses on how specific economic interest play a role in motivating the public to revolt. He argues that an assortment of economic factors led to the American Revolution. Florin Aftalion also focuses on the theory that economic can provide a reasonable clarification to the occurrence of the French Revolution, as right before the revolution, France was in a serious economic crisis (Korotayev & Zinkina, 2011).

The down sides with Egypt, which turned into public turmoil are profoundly rooted economic concerns that could not be resolved for decades. Economic issues were visibly one of the drivers of the frustration that motivated the Arab Spring. Economic demands also played a major role, as economic stagnation was a prominent motive, with the most lucrative source for rent in the region is oil.

Adoption of the neoliberal economic policies by Egyptian regime, had led to the creation of hindrance to industrial laborers in the country. It also led to the expansion of the gap between the rich and poor, which fuelled the escalation of dissident movements in Egypt. Decreasing salaries for industrial wages were one of the main consequences of the neoliberal economic program undertaken by the Mubarak regime (Mitchell, 2002). Egypt has an inordinate dependence on rent unassociated with oil production. The sale of oil provided only \$11 billion to the national treasury of Egypt. Other sources of rent included the U.S Aid of about \$1.6 billion a year, and the Suez Canal tolls, amounting to about \$5 billion a year. In 2004, serious economic reforms were initiated, with the appointment of the Cabinet of Businessmen, which led to the effective control of 60% of the steel industry by friends of the President's son (Gelvin, 2015).

There was also a development on the economic front following the neoliberal privatization policy. The profits of economic development were basically captured by a small number of "haves," the small economic elites and those handful close to the President's family (Miller et al., 2012.). This led to Egyptians feeling the very real economic insecurity.

Neoliberalism was being utilized as a solution to those same problems. Though the IMF's Structural Adjustment Programme might have enhanced Egypt's macroeconomic state, at the micro level it led to less social mobility, and more poverty, along with growing gap between the rich and the poor (Rutherford, 2013). At the end of 2012, almost 44% of Egyptians were considered poor, which amounts to a total of 48 million people, with some 2.5 million people extremely insolvent to the levels that their incomes were incapable of covering basic needs like food. In addition, 12 million Egyptians lacked shelter, with 1.5 million of them living in cemeteries (Gelvin, 2012). These conditions led to a sensation of frustration among the people.

### **7.4. Political Factors**

Political activism and participations were tightly restricted. In Egypt, the Interior Ministry dealt with political participations, parties and organization's foundation by simply banning them. Egypt was one of the Arab countries (from a total of 17) that require newspapers to be licensed. However, a year prior to the uprising, only 11% of youths thought participation in government decision-making was a top priority for them (Gelvin, 2012). It would seem that they were denied their chances to fully exercise these rights.

Election rigging is also thought to be a really common practice committed by the Ministry of the Interior. The percentage of “Yes Vote” in favor of Mubarak shifted slightly over time, even though it always remained in the vicinity of 90%. Take for examples, in the 1981 Election, Mubarak won by a 98.460% majority, in 1987 by 97.120%, in 1993 by 94.910%, and in 1999, by 93.790% (Ghonim, 2012). Nonetheless, the first multi-candidate Presidential Election was held on September 7, 2005, resulting in the re-election of Mubarak, winning 88% of the vote (Sharp, 2006). Thus far, he had stayed in power for five terms, each of which lasted six years.

## 8. Conclusion

In the previous discussions have focused on the nature and the motives of the revolution in Egypt and how the theory of Public Sphere would be applicable. The Egyptian future now, and the role of SNSs is a subject of actual debate. Some might argue that the real reason for political upheaval in Egypt was utilizing of social network platforms. However, this paper could find that some other key reasons were motivated public to bring down the regime, such as corruption, unemployment, poverty, demographic growth and some political factors. As a result, the social network platforms, was at the heart of the Egyptian revolution in January 2011, which was more than a simple mere mechanism, yet less than a cause the political upheaval.

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