

Investigating the role of social networks in the political growth of developing societies

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Abstract: The rise and emergence of social networks under the formation of technological and media revolutions can be investigated as an influential parameter in changing the political relationship of government with the mass so that it has influenced the major issue of sociology, Socialization. In fact, this important phenomenon results in the change of vertical relationship of political ideologies, always represented as a monologue to force the mass to obey the rulers. The horizontal dialogue of social networks represented in Face book, Twitter and Messengers plays a great role in the destruction or deviation of development dimensions recognized by political systems as the dominant discourse. The upheavals of Eastern and Asian countries especially from 2008 to 2011 against totalitarian governments depict this effect outstandingly while other dimensions of this newly-emerged product of modern technology have been neglected. Seen from other way round, change in the method of fighting in the revolutions of the recent decades announces a paradigm shift from violent combats to civil disobedience based on the introduction of social networks and their spread. This paper reveals the fundamental changes in the informatics systems, public protestation and request for human's rights based on the recognition and spread of social networks in the Asian, American and European countries.

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Introduction:

The ever-increasing need to be spatially integrated and contacted – requisite of highly advanced societies – challenges people to find new ways of developing social ties and integration to solve the problems confronted. Less integrated within the local community than sedentary individuals, consolidated individuals have the challenge of maintaining their own social ties in a broader spatial range. On one hand, the spatial dispersion of friends and family is seen as an obstacle to the building of social ties, as it minimizes opportunities for sharing lasting, intimate relationships outside of the household. Additionally, getting knowledge through media and other technological products can change the relationship of power. New the privacy of rulers is being attacked by diffusion of information through nets and the hidden corners of life have become apparent.

The nature and hierarchy of power having been believed to be eternally constant now have undergone great upheavals all over the world. Dictatorships and traditional democracies which tried to maintain the vertical relationship of rulers and people established are confronting an uprising which is expanding through virtual world of internet and social networks. The influence of social networks in the popular movements in Bahrain, Egypt and Tunisia is inevitable while this challenge can shape a new

definition of power relationship based on a new discourse. The control and restriction of accessibility to internet and social networks may postpone the expansion of popular uprising against the oppressing rulers as in Bahrain but it can not ban or destroy the thought behind the social networks. This paper analyses the procedure of social network impact on people's communication and their relationship with the government while suggesting some advice to remove the drawbacks.

Social network analysis:

People have used the idea of "social network" loosely for over a century to connote complex sets of relationships between members of social systems at all scales, from interpersonal to international. In 1954, J. A. Barnes started using the term systematically to denote patterns of ties, encompassing concepts traditionally used by the public and those used by social scientists: bounded groups (e.g., tribes, families) and social categories (e.g., gender, ethnicity). Scholars such as S.D. Berkowitz, Stephen Borgatti, Ronald Burt, Kathleen Carley, Martin Everett, Katherine Faust, Linton Freeman, Mark Granovetter, David Knoke, David Krackhardt, Peter Marsden, Nicholas Mullins, Anatol Rapoport, Stanley Wasserman, Barry Wellman, Douglas R. White, and Harrison White expanded the use of systematic social network analysis.^[1]

A summary of the progress of social networks and social network analysis has been written by Linton Freeman.^[7]

Precursors of social networks in the late 1800s include Émile Durkheim and Ferdinand Tönnies. Tönnies argued that social groups can exist as personal and direct social ties that either link individuals who share values and belief (*gemeinschaft*) or impersonal, formal, and instrumental social links (*gesellschaft*). Durkheim gave a non-individualistic explanation of social facts arguing that social phenomena arise when interacting individuals constitute a reality that can no longer be accounted for in terms of the properties of individual actors. He distinguished between a traditional society – "mechanical solidarity" – which prevails if individual differences are minimized, and the modern society – "organic solidarity" – that develops out of cooperation between differentiated individuals with independent roles.

Georg Simmel, writing at the turn of the twentieth century, was the first scholar to think directly in social network terms. His essays pointed to the nature of network size on interaction and to the likelihood of interaction in ramified, loosely-knit networks rather than groups (Simmel, 1908/1971).

Overlap between multiple social network services.

Many users have accounts on several different social networking sites.^[7] In November 2007, Alex Patriquin of Compete.com reported on the member overlap between various online social network services.^[8]

Social network and political development

Social network aggregation is the process of collecting content from multiple social network services, such as Face book. The task is often performed by a social network aggregator, which pulls together information into a single location,^[1] or helps a user consolidate multiple social networking profiles into one profile.^[2] Various aggregation services provide tools to allow users to consolidate messages, track friends, combine bookmarks, search across multiple social networking sites, see when their name is mentioned on various sites, access their profiles from a single interface, provide "life streams", etc.^[2]

Social network aggregation services attempt to organize or simplify a user's social networking experience,^[3] although the idea has been satirized by the concept of a "social network aggregator aggregator."^[4]

The formation of new ideological order helped to create a popular awareness in a horizontal scheme so that the governing regiment is forced to make some changes in its hierarchical power. Individuals in these

networks are less restricted in terms of their behavior than those out of networks, which are characterized by the collective nature of normative control.

They can change their arrangement easily and shape their position in volition without direct encounter with the rulers. The reinforcement of horizontal integrity is solely based on the amount and precision of information which is spread through the nets.

Recognition of social networks

With the start of popular uprisings in countries like Egypt, Libya and others, the power of informing through internet, mobile and social networks such as Face book and Twitter has been revealed. These uprisings were borne out of social networks and found their direction during the growth. The changes these networks have brought with are the main focus of this paper.

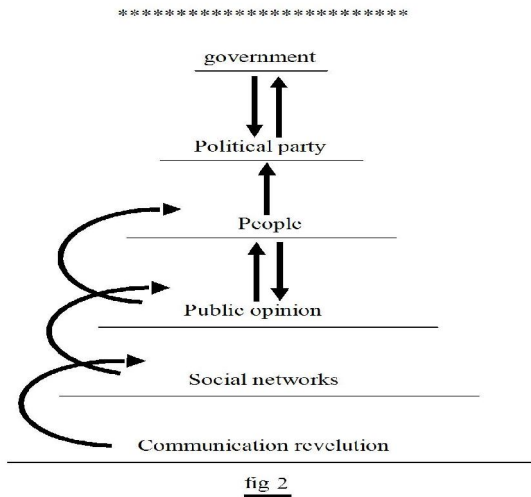
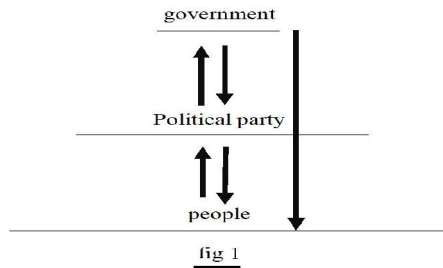
Philip. N. Howard, Washington University expresses his idea about this process. He believes that internet has changed the manner of political communication and became the issue of controversy between state and civil society from one side and between different movements of secularism and Islamism. Virtual societies, stemming from mass protestations, always act independently out of government control. Over time, more citizens learn to use internet and expand their skills to communicate. The content of traditional democracy is being modified and revised under the influence accessibility and of new social networks. The challenges posed by government have left us in a variety of issues such as Do the governments have right to restrict people's accessibility to internet and other media? Hilary Clinton pinpoints her idea as this. We witnessed a second trend in 2010. Some countries violate underlying freedom by suppressing the right to use internet some have censored the websites due to political reasons.

In some countries, democracy activists and independent web log writers experience the hacking of their emails. In Cuba, the government has prevented people from accessing internet to control the opposite groups online.

The new information technologies have made it possible for the citizens of non free countries to get news and information from international objective media. Therefore, totalitarian governments have created new challenges for governments so that the people could not promote their awareness to recognize the order hierarchy.

The ministry of state initiatives in 2008 September which set up a competition for 1600 people from 111 countries through You tube and Face book to express their opinions about democracy.

With all these optimistic points, it can be concluded that digital democracy is confronted with numerous threats. Poor people are deprived from the simplest access to digital media and can be influenced easily to obey the government commands. The early teachings to use internet are still out of reach and negative commands of government to stigmatize internet have reduced its social prestige.



Diffusion of information to the lowest layers of society can be the most important step the supporters of free information must take to facilitate the path to democracy. Free access to official documents is the next step which can be used as a pressure lever for people against dictatorship. The great drawback of social network is the issue of fragmentation in that the fields of membership in different sections of the society are unaware of each other's activity and the contact can rarely be found.

Conclusion

Power relationships have found different status and definitions due to the emergence of social networks. The tendency of people to share their ideas about the social events has shaped a new environment in which people see the other side of power hierarchy.

There is a great need for controlling and directing the trend of social networks by NGOs to teach people how to use them. Providing cheap technology for all poor people to enjoy social networks can shape a spread wave of awareness in society. Formation of power arrays is dependent on the strength and durability of social networks in the lowest level and intermediate levels of society, therefore it is suggested that more attention and funding are allocated to intermediate classes of society.

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