

## What Means Social Media in Authoritarian Regimes and For Authoritarian Regimes?

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### Abstract

*New technologies are important challengers for societies and states. There are many examples in human history that technologies changed the way of thinking, the way of administration, and daily life. However, in the 21st century, new information and communication technologies are changing all these institutions very quickly. Moreover, it is difficult to follow all the updates. The digital divide is a real big challenge in people's lives and futures. Therefore, the importance of the digital divide becomes more visible through modernization and digitization. Although people want to follow the developments in the digital area, it is not easy when there is a digital gap. Hence, liberation technologies help people to stay up to date. It also expands a person's rights and freedoms, so it can be seen as a threat by autocratic regimes. During the Egyptian Uprisings, social media became the main tool of citizens using liberation technologies. There was a mass protest from near and far, hence, a resource model of political participation was used to understand the high level of participation in uprisings. The resources were time, money, and civil skills. When the Egyptian uprising has resulted in the resignation of the president, Hosni Mubarak, social media played a key role in achieving important successes for citizens of Egypt. Consequently, the impact of social media in authoritarian regimes was discussed.*

**Keywords:** Digital Divide, Liberation Technology, Social Media, Egyptian Uprisings, Democratization

### Introduction

In the contemporary era, in favor of modernization and digitalization, liberation technologies became more significant. Through the advantages of digital information and communication technology, people started to be more aware of their freedom. However, the existence of digital inequality is an obstacle to the potential of digital information and communication technology. Several digital divide scholars suggested that internet access describes first-level digital divide, internet skills, and usage represent second-level digital divide, and finally, a third-level digital divide includes

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the tangible outcomes of the internet. In authoritarian regimes, liberation technology can be considered a threat for central powers because it expands a person's rights, freedoms, and privacies. Privacy is an important determinant of freedom of expression. Communication platforms encourage people to share information that would have been private in the past. When people focus more on their freedom of expression, their privacy stays in the background. Many communication platforms have third-party agreements, which can cause a problem between government and citizens when the topic comes to privacy. However, people still use those platforms under the term of freedom of expression. Privacy is also engaged with digital inequality. People, who are aware of their skills, pay more attention to their privacy. Authoritarian regimes seek to collect pieces of information about their citizens, thus when people give less importance to their privacy and start to share more things about themselves, it will be useful for autocrats. From past to future, mass communication played a key role in controlling citizens by the government. Specifically, autocrats tried to control media by using censorship. However, sometimes, democratic regimes also want to increase their control on communication platforms, so social media could lead democrats to act like autocrats. After the liberation of technology, old media, which includes newspapers, radio, and television, lost its importance in the face of the advantages of digital information and communication technology. However, such quasi-Orwellian control continued in new media. The Arab Spring is a social movement by its nature. Starting in December 2010, the anti-government protests shook Tunisia, spread to several Arab countries, and resulted in regime changes of these countries, known as the Arab Spring. Pro-democratic protests spread rapidly due to social media, significantly contributing to the mobilization of resources. This paper will focus on the specific case, which is the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, in the following question: What is the impact of social media in authoritarian regimes? A resource model of political participation will be used due to measuring its importance. The resources are time, money, and civil skills. The organizational power of social networks caused a huge threat to the Egyptian government. The internet allows communications that help the society to find resources and allocate them for several purposes including political or social changes and this smart technology could be seen as important resources for the successful organization and implementation of social movements. In response, to this threat, the government tried to find the solution by, firstly, the access to social media like Facebook and Twitter. As a result, the government shut down the internet in the country. However, these restrictions were not enough, so the Egyptian uprising has resulted in the

resignation of the president, Hosni Mubarak. Social media played a key role in achieving important successes for the citizens of Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

## **Theoretical Framework**

### a) Resource Model

Although political participation is not always easy, people want to participate in political life. Brady et al. tried to analyze why citizens participate in political life by inverting questions to why people do not take part in politics. They found three possible answers: “they cannot; they do not want to; and nobody asked” (Brady, Schlozman & Verba, and 2010: 488). The first answer refers to a lack of fundamental resources, which are time, money, and civil skills. “Time to take part in political activity, money to make contributions, and civic skills (i.e., the communications and organizational skills that facilitate effective participation)” (Brady, Schlozman & Verba, 1995: 271). The second answer refers to a lack of interest in politics. Therefore, if citizens do not have any concern about public issues, they do not want to participate in political life. The final answer refers to the isolation of citizens from political life. All responses help to answer questions about political participation. However, Brady et al. focused on the role of resources by mixing all three answers and moving beyond the “SES model”, which is “beyond explanations of political activity based on one or more of the components of socioeconomic status: education, income, and occupation” (Brady, Schlozman & Verba, 1995: 271). Social networks are important instruments to mobilize resources, for in-stance, the extensive use of social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook in the Arab Spring confirms the capacity of social networks as an instrument to mobilize resources. According to Brady et al., focusing on resources in consideration of the SES model helps to show various modes of political activity. Specifically, they tried to explain, “Not only why some individuals are more active and others less but also why certain kinds of people engage in particular kinds of political activity” (Brady, Schlozman & Verba, 1995: 271). Therefore, the resource model can give us a powerful explanation of political participation. Time, money, and civil skills are important resources in political participation. Time can be used for political actions such as community meetings or working in campaigns. Money can be donated to candidates or political parties. Hence, if someone has more time and/or money, it leads to more political participation. In addition to this, money can be saved or transferred, but time is unchanging. Everybody can have or lose money during their life, but time is not an increasing or decreasing tool.

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<sup>2</sup> The social movement is an organized campaign of a significant group of people aiming at social change or opposing the change of a particular aspect of society.

Civil skills are as important as other resources. It is an important determinant beyond time and money. Citizens, who are aware of their skills, take part in political areas because of their mindfulness. These citizens have also high self-esteem, so they can easily cooperate with other people, arrange meetings, and organize important events. Civil skills are learned at early ages and at home, then, it is improved at schools and this learning process never stops after the schools. Nevertheless, resources are not equally distributed. Some people have better conditions than others. If people have money and/or time, it is easy to share it, but for civil skills, the situation can be different because civil skills are ever-growing, they can be improved perpetually. Consequently, the resource model helps people to understand that resources are the fundamentals of successful collective action.

b) Liberation Technology

*“Liberation technology enables citizens to report news, expose wrongdoing, ex-press opinions, mobilize protest, monitor elections, scrutinize government, deepen participation, and expand the horizons of freedom [...]. Liberation technology is any form of information and communication technology (ICT) that can expand political, social, and economic freedom”* (Diamond, 2010: 70).

Day by day, the World becomes more modern and in return, the digitalization process gains more importance for people, hence the internet and its instruments grow in importance. However, in authoritarian regimes, central powers try to limit and control this technology due to maintain their impacts above citizens and identify their dissenters. In addition to this, in democratic regimes, people are free, sovereign and they control governments. Therefore, usage of liberation technology started to be the key factor for governments. “Today, information and communication technology (ICT) is deeply intertwined with almost every aspect of economic and social activities, and it continues to hold the promise of tremendous innovation and growth opportunities going forward if the right enabling conditions are put in place” (European Commission, 2013). Associated with digitalization, digital information and communication technology becomes more advantageous for people. On the other hand, the existence of digital inequality is an obstacle to the potential of digital information and communication technology. In the third “Falling Through the Net” report from the US Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the digital divide was defined as “the divide between those with access to new technologies and those without” (US Department of Commerce, 1999), therefore the term of the “digital divide” became significant. Several digital divide scholars suggested that internet access describes first-level digital divide, internet skills, and us-age represent second-level digital divide, and finally, a third-level digital

divide includes the tangible outcomes of the internet. There are a lot of different ideas about describing the digital di-vide, nevertheless, the advantage of the internet is an undeniable fact for everybody. In addition to this, the internet has a dark side in terms of pornography, hate speech, support for terrorism, etc. Fake news is another element of the dark side of the internet because fake news is the most dangerous. It spreads rapidly and affects people's minds easily. Thus, usage of the internet is double-edged. However, everybody is free to communicate and share their thoughts on the internet. Everybody was born with some rights, and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 19, it was clarified. "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (United Nations, 1948).

Under the freedom of opinion and expression, sometimes people ignore their privacy. Eileen Donahoe (2017) emphasizes three characteristics that have been challenging from the beginning of the internet. First, "the extraterritorial mode of operation" (Donahoe, 2017). There are many social media platforms, which allow people to communicate globally. For example, "recent political campaigns have brought attention to the role of social media, particularly Face-book and Twitter, which are becoming common tools in these campaigns" (Swigger, 2013: 590). Thus, the importance of the digital divide and liberation technology are obvious. Liberation technology creates awareness for important events between citizens and if there is a digital di-vide in the country, people cannot follow those important events in the social areas. Second, "digitalization which is a corruption of privacy" (Donahoe, 2017). Privacy is one of the most important determinants in freedom of expression, assembly, and association because people cannot share anything before feeling secure. "Social media sites are specifically designed to encourage users to publish photos, personal information, and comments about their lives—information which would have been shared with only family or a few close friends a decade ago" (Swigger, 2013: 590). Hence, some people do not care about their privacy under the term of freedom of expression. The third characteristic constitutes the "basic trend towards privatization of governance" (Donahoe, 2017). The communication platforms became public squares for society. People come together and share ideas. However, the communication platforms are controlled by terms of service, community guidelines, and algorithms. Consequently, authoritarian regimes can use social media to collect information about citizens. Thereby, when privacy loses its importance, people can be tracked and monitored easily. Some researchers have distinguished privacy between social privacy and institutional privacy. "Social privacy refers to keeping things private within one's

social sphere [...]. Institutional privacy refers to keeping one's information away from governments and corporations. This crucial disconnect between types of privacy illustrates how a social norm can have a deleterious impact on respect for rights" (Swigger, 2013: 592). Although people think they keep their information private, communication platforms have some terms of services to collect all information. For example, in the case of some crimes such as national security or terrorism, there will be tension between the privacy of freedom and national security needs. Therefore, contrary to authoritarian regimes, it is not easy to optimize privacy and security in democratic regimes.

Nate Persily (2017) asserts that the internet has six potential threats to democracy. Firstly, "velocity of communication" (Persily, 2017). The speed of online communication is obvious. People can get information or share their ideas on the internet more quickly. Specifically, social media platforms like Twitter or Facebook allow people to share their ideas only by pressing a button. People just post something on social media, and it will go all around the world. Thus, it can be dangerous. For example, in the election period, if some people create fake news, it will spread rapidly and affect people's minds easily without questioning if it is true or not. Secondly, "virality of communication" (Persily, 2017). Everything on the internet can spread easily and become viral, for example, a speech or a video. It is just based on the effects on citizens' ideas about a topic. Thirdly, "anonymity" (Persily, 2017). There are a lot of anonymous users and bots on the internet, so it is easy to create fake news. However, anonymity can serve as a protection for dissenters in authoritarian regimes. Fourthly, the "echo chamber" (Persily, 2017). People have different ideas and thoughts, so they want to share their ideas with a community, to which they feel closer. Hence, the internet provides safe spaces for individuals, who share a common cause, but people cannot look from a different standpoint due to their echoed ideas. Finally, "the lack of sovereignty in regulating the internet" (Persily, 2017). The Worldwide web has no ownership of the internet, so each country has a risk of cyberattacks. Finally, "the problem of monopoly" (Persily, 2017). On the contrary, of old media, there are many communication platforms in new media, so each of them has its own rules to control media. These are challenges of the internet, and they require careful regulations. "To combat these problems, governments and platforms have arrived at a suite of reforms that explicitly or implicitly regulate speech ("The Seven Ds"): deletion, demotion, disclosure, delay, dilution, deterrence, and digital literacy" (Persily, 2019). Nevertheless, freedom of access is still the most important challenge for the digital world because of internet filtering and surveillance by autocratic regimes. As it is seen, liberation technology has some threats to democratic regimes as in authoritarian

regimes. “Mobilizing against authoritarian rule represents only one possible “liberating” use of digital ICT” (Diamond, 2010: 71). Digital information and communication technologies serve people in terms of transparency, accountability, and deterring abuses of human rights. The online world is not always sufficient alone and becomes more powerful with some tools of traditional media.

*“It is tempting to think of the Internet as unprecedented in its potential for political progress. History, however, cautions against such hubris. In the fifteenth century, the printing press revolutionized the accumulation and dissemination of information, enabling the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, and the scientific revolution. On these foundations, modern democracy emerged. But the printing press also facilitated the rise of the centralized state and prompted the movement toward censorship”* (Pool, 1983: 251).

*“The role of media – both traditional and ICT – directly concerns the latter challenge to the authoritarian rule: dealing with political opposition from outside the regime. If the political opposition is allowed to freely circulate ideas that are at odds with the regime and recruit followers, the position of current power holders would be compromised”* (Rød & Weidmann, 2015: 339).

Therefore, the authoritarian regimes always seek a way to control old and new media instruments, which have some potential roles to trigger citizens through mass communication. The main method is the using censorship to the media. In authoritarian regimes, controlling the media is the most important way to strengthen the rule of dictators. “The digital censorship is not limited to filtering out regime-critical content and identifying dissidents; it can also be used to spread messages in favor of a regime, thus increasing pro-government mobilization and support” (Rød & Weidmann, 2015: 339). For Example, during the coup attempt in Turkey in 2015, the junta regime used WhatsApp for communication with a subsidiary program, which is By-Lock. In response to this, the president of Turkey called on citizens to take to the streets against attempted coup through FaceTime. Both in old and new media, authoritarian governments can easily use instruments of both media for controlling the population. Mass communication is very essential for authoritarian regimes because it serves the government’s purposes as a propaganda tool. If a government controls mass communication, controlling citizens becomes easier. There-by, censorship is an important tool for authoritarian regimes. In the meantime, a government can control what citizens should see and what they should not see.

Accordingly, liberation Technology seeks to break the chains of old media has and serves as a widespread mass communication to the population. In this context, firstly, the internet can bring together foreign information and ideas easily and transmits

this information and ideas to other people very quickly. Consequently, citizens in authoritarian regimes can learn real information from outside of the country and adapt themselves to these developments. For example, Twitter is a social media platform, which allows its users to send and read messages with up to 140 characters. A user can easily express himself and reach hundreds or even thousands of followers. “Users are thus not just passive recipients but journalists, commentators, videographers, entertainers, and organizers. Although most of this use is not political, the technology can empower those who wish to become political and to challenge authoritarian rule” (Diamond, 2010: 71). Secondly, the internet can be dangerous in authoritarian regimes’ domestic control. The informed citizens, who are informed in the digital areas, can use this information to facilitate the organizations or protest against authoritarian regimes.

*“The Internet can in these situations be a powerful tool for opposition elites seeking to spread their political agenda and/or organize antiregime demonstrations. In these accounts, the Internet should increase both international and domestic flows of information and thus make it more difficult for the dictator to solve the problem of authoritarian control”* (Rød & Weidmann, 2015: 339).

“Liberation technology is also “accountability technology,” in that it provides efficient and powerful tools for transparency and monitoring” (Diamond, 2010: 76). Through digitalization, digital cameras, and websites, which allow sharing of videos, become significant. Filming and posting these videos on online platforms help people to find out what is happening around the world. Finally, autocrats sometimes may permit limited freedom of the press despite the potential dangers of free media. The main reason was governments want to check on the effectiveness of their policies. Gorbachev’s Dilemma is practicable for explaining this situation. After facing certain problems in the economic area, the Soviets tried to find some solutions in this economic race against the western block. Gorbachev’s glasnost policy was the most important step. “The restructuring is progressing with great difficulty. We have no opposition party. How then can we control ourselves? Only through criticism and self-criticism. Most important -through glasnost. Democratism without glasnost does not exist. At the same time, democracy without limits is anarchy” (Gorbachev, 1986: 20).

Eventually, the most powerful effects of the digital revolution have been facilitating large-scale popular mobilizations in authoritarian regimes. Huhtinen, Aki-Mauri & Rantapelkonen Jari (2016) and Diamond, L. (2010) study the importance of devices, which have internet access, and SMS based on the book "Smart Mobs" by Howard Rheingold. These devices will help people to connect to social media rapidly and anywhere. “In January 2001, Philippine president Joseph Estrada “became the first head of state in history to lose power to a smart mob,” when tens of thousands and then,



within four days, more than a million digitally mobilized Filipinos assembled at a historic protest site in Manila” (Diamond, 2010: 78). Since then, liberation technology serves as a political instrument for citizens and has increased in importance.

### **The Egyptian Uprisings and Role of Social Networks**

In 2010, two Alexandria police officers beat a young man, named Khaled Said, to death. When Khaled was at cybercafé, police officers asked him for tribute money and when said did not have money, they started to beat him. “Perhaps most interesting was the fact that there was nothing unique about what happened to Said. Indeed, stories of police brutality, torture, and deaths of detainees abound in Egypt” (Halverson, Ruston & Trethewey, 2013: 318) Malcolm Smart, the director of Amnesty’s International’s the Middle East and North Africa Programme, described the situation as “a culture of injustice and impunity” (Al-Jazeera, 2010) [Accessed on July 21, 2020]. Photographs of Khaled’s dead body were shared online, and it was the spark of the Egyptian uprisings.<sup>3</sup>

*‘News of Saeed’s disturbing death quickly gained momentum through social media. Websites, blogs, and videos, including a Facebook page entitled Kuluna Khaled Saeed (‘We are all Khaled Saeed’), anonymously administered by Google executive Wael Ghonim, were created to express outrage and call for change’* (Halver-son, Ruston & Trethewey, 2013: 318).

“It became and remains the biggest dissident Facebook page in Egypt with more than 473,000 users” (Priston, 2011). The Facebook page and other social media platforms became Public Squares for the remembrance of Said, and the reason for his death. The role of social media facilitated communication and getting information for citizens. Protests and strikes in Egypt started on January 25, 2011. This is an important date because it represents National Police Day. When every-thing began on January 25, the Police were aware of the protests that will take place in Tahrir square. However, they underestimated the power of social networks and found thousands of people demonstrating in the Tahrir square while they were expecting few groups. The

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<sup>3</sup> “The term was introduced by Eugene H. Methvin as the title for an article in the National Review (December 4, 1987. The article starts: One swallow does not make a spring. And one prompt TASS report of rioting in Central Asia does not make a free Soviet press. But among Kremlin watchers it is certainly a noteworthy occurrence—as if, say, a California condor showed up at Capistrano” cited in Egorov, Guriev & Sonin (2009). Why resource-poor dictators allow freer media: A theory and evidence from panel data. American Political Science Review 103(4), 645

<sup>4</sup> Glasnost was the policy, which was implemented by Mikhail Gorbachev as a political tool for increased government transparency in the Soviet Union when there was less censorship and greater freedom of information.

organizational power of social networks posed a huge threat to the government, thus they wanted to find solutions by firstly blocking access to social media, and eventually resulted in shutting down the internet all around the country. However, citizens tried to find some solutions to bypass it. Additionally, January 25 is also known as the Day of Anger because protests triggered various opposition groups in Egyptian society including feminists, secularists, anti-capitalists, etc., and brought them together against the government.

As it is stated above, time is one of the fundamental resources. If people have time, they can take part in political activity. During the Egyptian protests, people tried to use their time effectively. January 28 is also another important day for understanding the importance of time. On that day, people started to gather due to Friday prayer, which is very significant for the Muslim community. People prayed together then started to protest. They used their times coordinately. “The Egyptian revolution began on Facebook with a call to protest in Cairo’s Tahrir Square. Protesters used Twitter to maneuver around police and reach the area. People arrived at the location expecting to see a few hundred like-minded individuals. Instead, they found a few hundred thousand” (Kredell, 2011). This situation, somehow, refers to the second fundamental resource, money. If people do not have money, they could not buy primary sources of digital information and communication technologies. However, the importance of civil skill is unrepudiated. During the protests, social media played a significant role for the citizens, and it helped people to dismantling fear barriers against the government.

*“Around 20 million people in Egypt, or about one-quarter of the country’s population, are on the Internet. Early in the political unrest, the Egyptian government at-tempted to block Facebook and Twitter, then took the unprecedented step of shutting down Internet access in the country altogether. The cyberspace blackout lasted a week but could not thwart the revolution. President Hosni Mubarak stepped down a week later”* (Kredell, 2011).

When Hüsnü Mübarek, who had been a ruler of the country for 30 years, resigned, pro-tests were over. From the beginning of the protests to the resignation of Mübarek, social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, played significant roles. “Facebook played a central role in the Egyptian revolution which was later dubbed the ‘Facebook revolution’. Even the youth who participated in the ‘Jan 25’ event was called Shabab el-Facebook (Facebook youth), and Esraa Abdel-Fattah, from the Kefaya movement, became known as ‘Facebook girl’” (Shehabat, 2015: 18). Without Facebook or Twitter, to facilitate communication and thus organize the protests, it would be more difficult to organize these activities; even though the message was organized, it would not reach as many people as it is possible to reach through social

networks. Radsch (2008) believed the core of the Egyptian Revolution began in the world of the digital blogosphere. He advocates three stages, which emerge in this blogosphere and turn into political confrontation against the state. The classification is as follows; firstly, “the Experimentation stage” Radsch (2008), where early adopters became bloggers. Secondly, “the Activist stage” Radsch (2008), where those bloggers eventually became activists, and finally “the Diversification and Fragmentation phase” (Radsch (2008), where different online and offline community members were able to start several social movements. The growing usage of social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, triggered the government to take a step for taking measures against them. As a beginning, the Egyptian authorities blocked social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, and then they ordered all major telecommunications providers to block Internet access for citizens. As a result, 93 percent of Egypt's Internet platforms and networks were shut down upon the Egyptian authorities' requests. Keeping in touch through social media was crucially needed to bypass government restrictions and spread information to counter security forces' actions.

When the Egyptian authorities banned the internet and all social media platforms, citizens started to find some solutions and the protest became alive despite the lack of communication via social media. Firstly, citizens started to use a virtual private network (VPN) which is a set of technologies that allow people to create their private network. Certainly, it was under the favor of civil skills of citizens and even it can be related to the third level of the digital divide because citizens were aware of their skills, and they got benefit from them. Many citizens kept in contact with their relatives and/or friends, who live outside of Egypt, thus they were able to stay connected to the internet. Hence, protestors stayed informed and updated by means of continued communication. According to the resource model, the effects of money can be seen in some situations, for example, in the poor settlements, where the accessibility of the digital information and communication technologies was lower than the other places, instead of the internet and its tools, short message services (SMS) were used to keeping contacts. Another solution was meeting in mosques. After shutting down the internet, the Egyptian government restricted citizens' communication spaces. However, the activist started to gather in mosques. They were prayed together then started protesting again. People used their times coordinately. Especially, on Fridays, which is a very important day for the Muslim community due to praying together, crowded communities came together. The final and most important solution was "Speak2Tweet". This is a communication service that allows Egyptians to call a specific number and deliver their message, which would be tweeted instantly with the hashtag #Egypt. This service was introduced to the Egyptians with the help of Twitter, Google, and Say Now.

The main reason was helping people to stay connected when the internet connection is unavailable or specifically was shut down by the totalitarian regimes. Through Speak2Tweet, an internet connection was not required for sharing tweets. Additionally, people can easily access the messages which were sent by other people, by either calling the same phone numbers or going to the direct link; [twit-ter.com/speak2tweet](http://twit-ter.com/speak2tweet). Usage of social media, accordingly civil skills of people, has significant importance. Fawaz Rashed, who is one of the protestors, said that “we use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world” (Rashed, Twitter, 2011) [Accessed on July 23, 2020]. “The western world was quick to celebrate the success of new media, and the idea of the Arab Spring as a “Facebook Revolution” spread as fast as the tweets. One Egyptian couple even named their baby Facebook” (Reardon, 2012). This situation also indicates that citizens became aware of the importance of social media. They started to make themselves heard to the whole world in favor of Tweets, Facebook posts, and Youtube videos.

*“During the week before Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak’s resignation, for example, the total rate of tweets from Egypt — and around the world — about political change in that country ballooned from 2,300 a day to 230,000 a day. Videos featuring protest and political commentary went viral — the top 23 videos received nearly 5.5 million views. The amount of content produced online by opposition groups, in Facebook and political blogs, increased dramatically”* (O’Donnell, 2011).

Deen Freelon (2011), who is the associate professor in the School of Media and Journalism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, emphasized total tweet counts overtime for the TwapperKeeper archives of the Egyptian uprisings according to the hashtag of #egypt in the graph (annex 1). However, the focus of Freelon (2011) was whether these tweets were published by the people who lived in Egypt and joined protests against the governments, or people from abroad, who had no fears to be taken under custody or facing the security forces. The results were predictable. “The major spikes are driven by individuals from outside of both the country and the broader Arabic region (who are almost certainly responding to media reports). It is only when outside attention dies down that local and regional voices even begin to achieve parity with their international peers” (Freelon, 2011). Consequently, citizens who are aware of their civil skills played key roles in the Egyptian uprising.

Annex 1: <http://dfreelon.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/nEgyptTweets1.jpg>

## **Conclusion**

The world is renewing and developing constantly. People want to follow these developments and try to avoid lagging. In favor of tools of digital information and communication technology, people became more aware of their freedom, power, and especially capabilities. Moreover, liberation technologies facilitate awareness of people and expand freedom of people in such areas; political, social, and economic. However, it is not easy to have these technologies because several digital divide scholars suggest that there are digital divides between communities. Digital divides include three different levels; internet access describes the first-level digital divide, internet skills, and usage represent the second-level digital divide, and finally, the third-level digital divide includes the tangible outcomes of the internet. Hence, it is not always enough to have tools of digital information and communication technology. People should be aware of their skills and get benefits from those skills. This is also important when the authoritarian regimes use some limitations because more skilled people can easily bypass these limitations and keep in touch with the online community. At the same time, when people stay online, they make compromises from their privacy gradually because many online communication platforms encourage people to share their private information. Therefore, when people started to share about themselves, the privacy of people remained in the background. The communication platforms also have some third-party agreements, so authoritarian regimes can easily abuse these agreements and take possession of citizens' information. Privacy is also engaged with digital inequality. People, who are more aware of their online skills, can easily control and pay more

attention to their privacies. Thus, I believe that people should learn how to secure their privacy when they start to use social media. The internet has some bad sides as much as it is good sides. Fake news, hate speech, pornography, and support for terrorism are some of the examples of the bad side of the internet. Digital information and communication technology facilitates people's lives, but it can be so dangerous at the same time. Fake news can grow easily and affect many people in a short period. The speed of online communication is obvious, so everything can spread and be-come viral in record time. It was not that much easy in the traditional media because traditional media is not complex as digital information and communication technology. However, the effects of the authoritarian regimes remain the same along with censorship and other limitations. This study would mainly focus on the importance of social media as an organizational tool during the Egyptian revolution. The starting point of the Egyptian uprisings was the photographs, which includes Khaled Said's death body, shared on the internet. It is well known that social networks played a key role to gather and inform people. Whether the social networks exist or not, citizens always tried to find other ways to communicate with each other. In addition to this, it is obvious fact that social media facilitates the process. Nevertheless, the authoritarian regimes try to prevent citizens to learn information, which can trigger public opinion and have a strong effect on citizens. Censorship is the most frequently used method by autocrats, but when they started to lose their power against the public community, they started to ban social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, which played very important roles during protests. On top of that, the government shut down all social media connections in the country. After that event, the civil skills of people gained more importance. According to the resource model, time, money, and civil skills are fundamental resources. Nonetheless, time and money did not play key roles during the Egyptian uprisings. Civil skills played a major role. However, protesters' willingness to use their time and money to change their current regime is still important. Additionally, the first-level digital divide was important, but the second level and third level of the digital divide are the determinants of the Egyptian uprisings. The use of social networks is indeed crucial for communications to mobilize the people or point out reasons and create aware-ness for the people's knowledge so they can mobilize as well. The effect of social media brought together various opposition groups against the authoritarian regime. Consequently, the resource model proves its importance. First, if people do not have time, protests would not start. Even if started, without participation due to lack of time, it would not continue. Secondly, money helps people to organize some important events. If they do not have money, they could not meet. Although the first meeting was in Tahrir square, many people came to this place from all around the country. Thus, the money helped people to gather. Finally, the importance of civil skills is obvious. If people do not know how to use digital information and communication technology, they could not be informed. Everything started through social media. The death body of Said was published on

social media, then the Facebook page was created, and people started to be aware of something. To conclude, I think that the role of social media in authoritarian regimes is significant because it helps people to be informed and updated even in hard conditions.

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