The ‘Facebook’ revolution: Fuelling the ‘Arab spring’?

Pippa Norris
Harvard University & the University of Sydney

www.pippanorris.com
Structure

I. Theoretical framework
   • Distinctive impact of social media on protest activism?
   • Or multiple determinants of internal conflict?

II. Regional evidence
   • Penetration of social media in Arab region

III. Survey evidence
   • World Values Survey 2005-7 in 55 nations
   • Compare users of internet, TV/radio, and newspapers
   • General impact of internet on democratic deficits

IV. Conclusions and implications
I: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
‘Arab Spring’

• Tunisia – Jan 2011
• Egypt – Feb 2011
• Libya – Sept 2011 (?)
• Continuing unrest in...
  – Syria – President Bashar al-Assad
  – Yemen – President Ali Saleh
  – Bahrain – Sheik Al Khalifah
Social media and the Arab spring

- Did social media act as a vital catalyst for protest activism?
- Or has the impact been exaggerated?
  - Role of Facebook, Twitter, text messaging, mobile phones, videos and photos, micro-blogs, internet, crowd-mapping
  - Impact of social media reinforced by youthful populations in Arab states
  - Interactive mobilization – announcing protest activities, events, networking organized opposition
  - Information reinforced via traditional news media at home and abroad, hybrid-journalism
  - Information also diffused by personal networks
  - Yet mostly popular speculation – little hard evidence of impact
Model for role of social media in protest activism

**DEMAND-SIDE:**
Rising public aspirations for democracy, due to growing cognitive and civic skills and evolving self-expression values

**INTERMEDIARY**
Critical coverage of government by social media

**SUPPLY-SIDE:**
Failure of performance of the state to match public expectations.

**DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT:**
Disparities between the perceived democratic performance and public aspirations

**CONSEQUENCES:**
For political activism, compliance with government, and democratization

Source: Pippa Norris Democratic Deficits (Cambridge 2011)
Yet many other deep drivers of protest and conflict

- ‘Greed and grievance’ (Collier)

1. **Type of regime**
   - Liberal democracy and state capacity

2. **Economic conditions**
   - Lack of development or a rapid downturn

3. **Elite divisions**
   - Shift in support of the army and other powerful forces

4. **Social structure**
   - Ethnic divisions and polarization by religion, language or identity; age profile of population

5. **Geographic location**
   - Instability and diffusion from neighboring states

6. **Physical and population size**
   - Challenges span of control from capital city

7. **Resource curse**
   - Corruption, clientalism and state capture

8. **Colonial legacies**
   - National borders and state capacity
The shoe thrower’s index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arab League* index† of unrest</th>
<th>2010 or latest available year, 100–most unstable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit; UN; Transparency International; Freedom House; The Economist

Weighting: 35% for the share of the population that is under 25; 15% for the number of years the government has been in power; 15% for both corruption and lack of democracy as measured by existing indices; 10% for GDP per person; 5% for an index of censorship and 5% for the absolute number of people younger than 25. Source: Economist Intelligence Unit

http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/03/arab_unrest_0
II: REGIONAL EVIDENCE OF USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ARAB STATES
Varied levels of internet access

Sources: World Development Indicators; www.Freedomhouse.org
## Limited Facebook penetration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of Facebook users (4/3/2011)</th>
<th>Population*</th>
<th>Facebook penetration (%)</th>
<th>Number of New Facebook users since 1/5/2011</th>
<th>Growth in number of Facebook users since 1/5/2011 (%)</th>
<th>New Facebook users since 1/5/2011 (as % of population)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>1,947,900</td>
<td>35,953,989</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>560,820</td>
<td>40.43</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>302,940</td>
<td>822,510</td>
<td>36.83</td>
<td>25,480</td>
<td>9.18</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comoros</td>
<td>9,080</td>
<td>706,622</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>44.59</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>52,660</td>
<td>893,843</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>6,660</td>
<td>14.48</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>6,586,260</td>
<td>85,950,300</td>
<td>7.66</td>
<td>1,951,960</td>
<td>42.12</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>723,740</td>
<td>32,266,577</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>326,600</td>
<td>82.24</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>1,402,440</td>
<td>6,598,615</td>
<td>21.25</td>
<td>313,640</td>
<td>28.81</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>795,100</td>
<td>3,116,748</td>
<td>25.51</td>
<td>165,420</td>
<td>26.27</td>
<td>5.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>1,093,420</td>
<td>4,287,610</td>
<td>25.50</td>
<td>113,940</td>
<td>11.63</td>
<td>1.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>71,840</td>
<td>6,670,928</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>-182,300</td>
<td>-71.73</td>
<td>-2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>61,140</td>
<td>3,440,053</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>22,300</td>
<td>57.42</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>3,203,440</td>
<td>32,770,852</td>
<td>9.78</td>
<td>724,500</td>
<td>29.23</td>
<td>2.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>277,840</td>
<td>2,964,059</td>
<td>9.37</td>
<td>65,010</td>
<td>30.55</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>595,120</td>
<td>4,542,824</td>
<td>13.10</td>
<td>124,720</td>
<td>26.51</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>481,280</td>
<td>1,571,520</td>
<td>30.63</td>
<td>-30,780</td>
<td>-6.01</td>
<td>-1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>4,092,600</td>
<td>26,777,613</td>
<td>15.28</td>
<td>845,620</td>
<td>26.04</td>
<td>3.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>21,580</td>
<td>9,605,189</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>14,820</td>
<td>219.23</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>443,623</td>
<td>44,103,535</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>101,780</td>
<td>29.77</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>356,247</td>
<td>23,008,268</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>102,918</td>
<td>40.63</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>2,356,520</td>
<td>10,476,355</td>
<td>22.49</td>
<td>535,640</td>
<td>29.42</td>
<td>5.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>2,406,120</td>
<td>4,811,345</td>
<td>50.01</td>
<td>291,480</td>
<td>13.78</td>
<td>6.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>340,800</td>
<td>24,943,950</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>161,380</td>
<td>89.95</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Arab Social Media Report Dubai School of Government http://www.dsg.ae
Although growth of Facebook users

Note: 2011: During the 2011 Protests, 2010: Similar Time Period in 2010
Source: Arab Social Media Report Dubai School of Government http://www.dsg.ae
Limited Twitter penetration

Source: Arab Social Media Report Dubai School of Government http://www.dsg.ae
Innovative crowd-mapping e.g.

http://syriatracker.crowdmap.com/
Crowd-mapping e.g.

Source: VOA Middle East Voices: Behind the Wall- Syria
III: WORLDWIDE SURVEY EVIDENCE: WVS 2005-7
Countries surveyed at least once in the World Values Surveys
99 countries, containing almost 90 % of the world’s population (2007)

www.worldvaluessurvey.org
Types of media users

• Media Use Scale: newspaper, radio/TV, magazine, books, internet

“People use different sources to learn what is going on in their country and the world. For each of the following sources, please indicate whether you used it last week (1) or did not use it last week (0) to obtain information.”

(read out and code one answer for each):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Used it last week</th>
<th>Did not use it last week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V223. Daily newspaper</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V224. News broadcasts on radio or TV</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V225. Printed magazines</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V226. In depth reports on radio or TV</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V227. Books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V228. Internet, Email</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V229. Talk with friends or colleagues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Limitations

• No measure of specific types of social media
• No direct evidence of contents and frequency
Measures

• **Democratic aspirations:**
  – “How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically? On this scale where 1 means it is “not at all important” and 10 means “absolutely important” what position would you choose?”

• **Democratic satisfaction:**
  – “And how democratically is this country being governed today? Again using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that it is “not at all democratic” and 10 means that it is “completely democratic,” what position would you choose?”

• **Democratic deficit:**
  – Gap between aspirations and satisfaction

Source: Pippa Norris *Democratic Deficits* (Cambridge 2011)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic characteristics</th>
<th>Democratic aspirations</th>
<th>Democratic satisfaction</th>
<th>Democratic deficit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>1.32***</td>
<td>.362**</td>
<td>-.956***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (male=1)</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>-.208*</td>
<td>-.237*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income 10-pt scale</td>
<td>.315***</td>
<td>2.27***</td>
<td>1.92***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education 9-pt scale</td>
<td>1.50***</td>
<td>-.428***</td>
<td>-1.87***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic knowledge</td>
<td>3.92***</td>
<td>.549***</td>
<td>-3.42***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper use</td>
<td>.564***</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>-.470***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television and radio news use</td>
<td>1.10***</td>
<td>.733***</td>
<td>-.349**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet use</td>
<td>.368***</td>
<td>-.484***</td>
<td>-.831***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATIONAL-LEVEL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. respondents</td>
<td>52,522</td>
<td>51,713</td>
<td>51,277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. nations</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pippa Norris *Democratic Deficits* (Cambridge 2011)
IV: CONCLUSIONS
Conclusions

1. Research on ‘Arab spring’ is work in progress
2. Much speculation about impact of social media in this process, but may be exaggerated
3. Evidence from region: limited but growing use of social media; may ‘activate the active’
4. Evidence worldwide: Internet users typically display larger democratic deficit, with consequences for protest politics