Egypt's 18-Day Revolution: New Media, Old Struggle.

Rania Saleh

***Abstract*—The Egyptian revolution of January 2011 against President Hosni Mubarak has been dubbed "the Facebook revolution". Whilst it is true that online social media played a major role in the events of Egypt's "Arab Spring" this paper shows that a broad range of media, both old and new, played significant roles in political mobilization. People used many forms of cultural messages to express demands, mobilise for action and boost morale in their struggle against the regime. In return, the regime deployed its own media strategy, including both control and closure of media. In this paper, I examine the roles of three diverse media forms: satellite TV, political cartoons and social media, exploring their capacity in mobilizing people for or against the ruling regime. I also consider the role of cultural forms such as protest songs as expressions of inspiration, nostalgia and solidarity. The paper shows that whilst TV was an important channel through which the regime communicated its messages to the public, TV also served as a platform for debate which stimulated opposition. Newspaper cartoons and social media, in contrast, were media largely dominated by opposition voices. Noting the failure of Mubarak's closure of the internet and mobile phone networks to stop revolutionary action, the paper concludes that no single form of media played a determining role in the revolution. Rather, it was interaction between a diverse range of media, from satellite TV and Facebook to placards and protest songs, which coordinated action and imagination during the revolution.**

***Index Terms*—Egypt, January 25th Revolution, media, Mubarak, protest songs.**

I. Introduction

The three Egyptian presidents, Hosni Mubarak, Anwar Sadat, and Gamal Abdel Nasser, met together in the afterlife. Mubarak asked Nasser, 'How did you end up here?' 'Poison', Nasser answered. Mubarak then turns to Sadat: 'What about you?' 'An assassin's bullets', says Sadat. Sadat and Nasser then turn to Mubarak: 'and what about you?' To which Mubarak replies, 'Facebook'! This joke was widely circulated in Egypt immediately after Mubarak stepped down as President on February 11, 2011. The joke indicates the salience of the role social media played in the mobilization and organization of the Egyptian revolution. The impact of social media should not be overestimated, however: other means of communication also made significant contributions. What is perhaps most significant about the use of social media in the Egyptian revolution is how it changed the dynamics of social mobilization, by introducing speed and interactivity that were lacking in traditional mobilization techniques.

Manuscript received November 30, 2017; revised May 1, 2018. This work is a part of an ongoing PhD dissertation, supported by a full Chinese Government Scholarship (2013-2018) within the School of History and Social Development, Shandong Normal University, China.

Rania Saleh is with the Shandong Normal University, China (e-mail: rania_mr@hotmail.com)

A number of studies have focused on the role of social media in the Egyptian uprising, such as the Chebib and Sohail's [1] examination of how social media facilitated and accelerated the Egyptian revolution, the Lim's [2] exploration of the role of social media in Egypt in relation to social networks and mobilization mechanisms, and the work of El-Tantawy and Wiest [3] on social media's capacity for large-scale mobilization.

The reputation of the January 25th Revolution as a 'media revolution' is, then, in many ways warranted. The capacities of new media to confer agency on oppositional movements is prominent in the emerging historiography of the 2011 'Facebook Revolution', as is apparent in the works of authors such as Barón, [4] and Khamis and Vaughn [5]. Whilst the label 'Facebook Revolution' is not unjustified, however, it is incomplete. Tufekci and Wilson [6] point out that social media comprise just one fraction of a new system of political communication that has developed in the Middle East and North Africa. The connectivity infrastructure should be analyzed as a complex ecology rather than in terms of any specific platform or device. In fact, a range of media, both digital and traditional, from word of mouth to cinema and television, played a role in both the build-up to the Egyptian revolution and the event itself. In this paper, I provide an overview of the ways a diverse range of media utilities were used as tools during the period from January 1, 2010 to February 11, 2011 to mobilize and shape the processes of the Egyptian revolution. I focus on three media forms: Satellite TV, political cartoons and social media, exploring their capacity in engaging people, for or against the ruling regime.

A. Satellite TV

Television has been considered the central news medium in Egyptian society in recent decades and remains influential. A number of studies showed that television was the primary news resource through which Egyptians acquired knowledge about the uprising, and that new media played a lesser role than traditional media did in spreading the news about the nationwide protests. The Global Media Intelligence Report of 2011 [7] reported that 93.1% of the Egyptian population were TV viewers, 77.1% regularly viewed Satellite TV, 22.5% were radio listeners, and 16.4% were Newspaper readers. Tufekci and Wilson's survey [6] conducted from February 24-27, 2011, based on a snowball sample of 1,050 demonstrators in Tahrir Square, showed that social media played a secondary role in political mobilization. It found that nearly half the respondents first heard about the Tahrir Square demonstrations through face-to-face communication, about 28% through Facebook and 13% by telephone. In Brym et al's [8] survey of social media use during the revolution, about 70% of respondents in the sample relied on television, compared to about 12.5% who relied on newspapers and only 9% who relied on new

communications media. In the atmosphere of political ferment during this period, political talk-show TV programs attracted large audiences. As soon as programs concluded, they were immediately published on the internet platform, YouTube, and then viewed and shared by thousands of users through Facebook, and Twitter.

In this paper, I focus on a number of popular TV talk show programs, such as *Masr El-Nahardah* (Egypt Today) on Egyptian National TV, *Al-Ashira Masa'an* (10 p.m.) on Dream TV, and *El-Haqiqah* (The Truth) on Dream TV, alongside TV news coverage of the revolution by networks including National Egyptian TV, ON TV, and *Al-Jazeera*.

B. Political Cartoons

Satirical political cartoons appeared in Egypt almost as soon as printing presses made newspapers available in the late 19th century. The flourishing of the art of cartooning in Egypt may be seen as an extension of the culture of political-jokes which remains pervasive in Egyptian society. Jokes have been used by Egyptians as a safe way to break tension, or to express rejection, opposition or anger. According to former Interior Minister, General Hassan Abu Pasha, political joke-telling in Egypt tends to increase in times of crisis, and Abu Pasha considered political jokes to be of such significance in gauging public opinion that he ordered the State Security Service to observe and analyze such jokes [9]. Abu Pasha further asserted that the bread riots of January 1977 could have been prevented if the Council of Ministers had taken reports on jokes by the State Security Service seriously [9]. Rifaey [10] suggested that Egyptian history can be traced through political cartoons, an observation I echoed in a later publication [11] in which I further suggested the use of cartoons as a teaching tool in history classes. And in a subsequent publication [12], I introduced the political cartoons and their role in major events in Egypt from the Urabi Revolution of 1881 and to the January 25th Revolution of 2011. In a forthcoming study [13], I examined the ways cartoons engaged in political discussions within the broader political and cultural context, and how they both reflected and contributed to the popular discontent which ultimately led to the fall of the Mubarak regime.

In this paper, I focus primarily on 297 political cartoons that were published between January 1 and February 11, 2011, in four daily newspapers: *Al-Ahram*, a semi-official newspaper founded in 1875, *Al-Wafd*, a partisan newspaper belonging to the New Wafd party, founded in 1984, *Al-Masry Al-Youm* an independent newspaper founded in 2004 and *Al-Shorouk*, an independent newspaper founded in 2009.

C. Social Media

According to Egypt's 'ICT Indicators in Brief', the number of Internet users in Egypt in January 2011 reached 22% in January 2010, and 30% in January 2011 [14]. According to CAPMAS, Facebook is the most popular website in Egypt, having about 4.2 million users in 2010 [15]. By 2011, Facebook reached five million self declared Egyptian users, the most of any Arab country. Of those 5 million, 3 million are under the age of 25 [16].

The number of Twitter users in Egypt, between January 1, 2011 and March 30, 2011, was 131,204 (0.15% of the total population), producing an estimated 24,000 daily tweets [17]. The most popular trending hashtags across the entire Arab region in the first quarter of 2011 were: #egypt (1.4 million mentions), #jan25 (1.2. million mentions), followed by #libya (990,000 mentions) and #bahrain (640,000 mentions) [18]. In this paper, I consider posts on popular Facebook pages such as 'We all are Khaled Saeed', 'My name is Khaled Saeed', and the 6 April Youth Movement, and at various tweets, particularly these connected to the hashtag (#Jan25). I also explore online content that was popular before and during the revolution, including protest songs.

II. Before the Revolution

The January 25th Revolution of 2011 that ended the 30-year of Mubarak's regime was in fact the culmination of years of activism, including Internet activism. The last few years of Mubarak's rule witnessed an escalation in protests around issues including low wages, corruption, electoral fraud and police brutality. During 2010, ahead of the presidential election scheduled for September 2011, protests increased against Mubarak running for another term or the rumored possibility of a transfer of power to Mubarak's son, Gamal. Widespread feelings of depression amongst Egyptians resulting from their poor life and work conditions were reflected in media such as political cartoons [12].

The Mubarak era saw the birth of a range of resistance movements. The Egyptian Movement for Change, known as "*Kefaya*" (Enough), founded in 2004, opposed the continuation of the regime or the passing of power to Mubarak's son. The 6 April Youth Movement came to public attention when it played a leading role in organizing a general strike on April 6, 2008 in solidarity with the *Mahalla* spinning workers, who were striking against low wages and the deterioration of their working conditions [12]. The National Association for Change was formed in 2010 by Mohamed El-Baradei, the former UN nuclear chief and a potential candidate for president, calling for a political system based on democracy and social justice. Moreover, two Facebook pages, 'We are all Khaled Said' and 'My name is Khaled Said', played a major role in organizing demonstrations against police abuses in general, and the killing of a young Egyptian, Khaled Said, on June 6, 2010 by two plain-clothes policemen in particular.

Two developments during early 2011 played a role in mobilizing Egyptians in potential opposition to the Mubarak regime. As worshippers at New Year's Eve service at the Al-Qiddissin Coptic Church in Alexandria, a bomb outside the church killed at least 25 and injured scores [19]. This attack drove hundreds of angry Christians to clash with police [20], seen by many Egyptians as tools of the regime, chanting "O Mubarak, the heart of the Copts is on fire [21]." As an immediate response to show solidarity with Egyptian Copts, hundreds of Christians and Muslims, including politicians and activists, also protested, denouncing the attack, carrying banners displaying the Islamic Crescent alongside the Christian Cross as a symbol of unity between Egyptian Muslims and Copts, and chanting "No police state: No religious state: We want Egypt to be a secular state" [22]. These demonstrations articulated a widespread feeling that the regime did not put

enough effort into preventing sectarian strife or terrorist attacks.

At the same time, the majority of Egyptians were closely following the uprising in the neighboring country, Tunisia. When Tunisian President, Ben Ali, fled to Saudi Arabia on January 14, after 23 years in power, Egyptians received news with surprise. Facebook immediately exploded with scores of jokes. One of the most frequently shared questioned: "Why do the Tunisian youth demonstrate in the streets? Don't they have Facebook?" This joke suggests that Egyptian social-media users were becoming uncomfortably aware that online protests alone could change little [23]. Many Egyptians also jokingly (or seriously) expressed jealousy that it was not Egypt, which had long seen itself as the leader of the Arab world, which had been the first to oust a dictatorial ruler, but Tunisia, seen as a comparatively marginal region [24].

Such jokes motivated many young activists to take the same path as Tunisians in seeking to force real change. Activist Wael Ghonim, the secret administrator of the Facebook page 'We are all Khaled Said,' posted on the page: "Today is the 14th January…25th is Police Day and it's a national holiday…if 100,000 take to the streets, no one can stop us…I wonder if we can??"[25]. More than 50,000 followers reacted immediately by clicking 'yes'. The 6th April Youth Movement agreed to his plan and, through its Facebook page, also called Egyptians to join the protests on January 25. Online posters, banners, and videos were disseminated through Facebook, e-mails and blogs, whilst the hashtag #Jan25 was used to mobilize protesters on Twitter [2].

National Police Day is a public holiday, a remembrance of Egyptian police officers killed on January 25th, 1952, by the British attack on the police station of Ismailia, when they chose to resist rather than surrender their weapons. The police thus became an emblem of heroic resistance and the incident incited anger and riots against the British throughout Egypt. However, in the half-century that followed, public perceptions of the police have changed dramatically. Thus, the choice of January 25th as the start of the revolution has changed the meaning of the national holiday. Feelings of ambivalence are generated when Egypt celebrates both National Police Day and the January 25th Revolution that erupted against the police forces on the same day.

Cartoonist Helmy El-Tony published a cartoon in *Al-Ahram* (January 18th 2011) linking events in Tunisia to Egypt. El-Tony drew a portrayal of the Tunisian poet, Abu Al-Qasim Al-Shabbi (1909-1934) alongside the famous opening lines of one of his poems: "If, one day, the people wills to live, then fate must obey." Abu Al-Qassim Al-Shabbi died young in the early 1930s, but his poetic legacy remains influential throughout the Arab world. These opening lines have been chanted, recited and written on signs and walls in Egypt and elsewhere during the Arab spring [26].

The same day, a 26-year-old Egyptian female activist, Asmaa Mahfouz, uploaded a video of herself to YouTube and Facebook, calling on Egyptians to join her in protest at Tahrir Square on January 25th [27]. On January 24th, she released another video calling people to join her in the protests 'tomorrow,' emphasizing that this would be just a start towards achieving real change [28]. The original audience for her videos was those within Mahfouz's own social network, but the re-posting of her video to YouTube allowed to reach a different and much larger audience [29].

On the night of January 24th, a new Facebook page was launched by a group of young professional Egyptians sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood. They called themselves, *Rassd*, an Arabic word that means 'monitoring.' The page was intended to be devoted to citizen journalism specifically aimed at monitoring elections using both its own amateur journalism as well as citizen journalism contributions [25] (p. 119). The *Rassd* Facebook page soon became one of the main sources of instant protest updates via text, audio, and video [30].

It is important to mention that not all Egyptians at this time opposed Mubarak: on the contrary, he had many supporters including significant numbers of older Egyptians and poorer Egyptians, as well as prominent society figures, artists, and film stars. Whilst some were personally loyal to the President, others worried about potential instability if he was deposed [31]. During 2010, *Al-Ahram* published a number of pro-Mubarak cartoons, including one congratulating Mubarak on returning home after undergoing gall-bladder surgery in Germany, and another favorably appraising his inauguration speech at the People's Assembly after the 2010 parliamentary elections. Such cartoons could not be seen in opposition or independent newspapers [13]. In general, Mubarak's supporters have been less represented in media than those who opposed him.

III. During the Revolution

The January 25th Revolution sparked by young Egyptians was famously "leaderless," but nevertheless coalesced around united demands including the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak and his immediate circle. Even though protests were bloodily suppressed by State Security forces, young Egyptians insisted on acting peacefully. Their courage in facing security forces greatly influenced people from outside their immediate circles, who reacted by joining them. Furthermore, these young protesters had no affiliations to political parties, or personal ties to prominent politicians. Their calls for three basic rights became the revolution's slogan: Bread, Freedom and Social Justice.

In his work on Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt, Walter Armbrust (1996) notes that "popular culture has been linguistically important in Egypt because it has historically been a qualitatively different vehicle for establishing national identity than official discourse" [32]. As explained in the work of Valassopoulos and Mostafa [33], word (such as slogans, chants, songs, and poetry), and images (such as pictures, satirical cartoons, video clips, and graffiti-art) both relied on popular motifs to create a revolutionary culture, and popularized the Egyptian revolution, making it effectively a transnational movement. The Egyptian revolution involved a complex of popular culture through which people used all forms of cultural material to express their demands, create solidarity and boost morale in their battle against the regime.

A. Opposition Media Tactics

During the revolution, activists depended heavily on internet based social networks, particularly Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, as means for communication and mobilization. During the protest, one Egyptian activist tweeted succinctly, "We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world" [34]. The protesters tended to tweet or post using the English language in order to reach an international audience. This method proved effective, as many tweets by activists were rapidly retweeted by large numbers followers and so caught the attention of global media.

Hundreds of thousands of Egyptians gathered in public squares throughout the country, chanting in unison, 'the people want the regime to fall', '*irhal'* (Go), etc. The majority of the independent TV talk shows had correspondents on Tahrir Square, talking to protesters, estimating the numbers, and assuming them to be in millions [31] (p. 2). They tried to show some balance by inviting guests or receiving calls that expressed different opinions, for and against the protests. On January 25th, the TV talk show, *Al-Ashera Masa'an* broadcast footage of the protesters who, on different occasions, chanted for 'Bread, Freedom, Human Dignity', against the emergency law, and against the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP). One of the program's guests asserted that what was happening was a result of the way the NDP handled the 2010 parliament elections [24].

The 'Friday of Rage' on January 28th was a turning point. Many protesters were killed across the country by police forces, but later in the day, the police forces suddenly and mysteriously withdrew, disappearing from the streets. How this withdrawal was instigated and coordinated is still not fully understood. That evening, the first military vehicle appeared in in front of the Egyptian Radio and Television Building, known as Maspero, to announce the deployment of the army on the streets. The army was welcomed by many protesters who chanted 'The People, the Army: One Hand' [35]. The army imposed a curfew in the cities of Cairo, Alexandria and Ismailia. The initial response to the army by the crowds of protesters was spontaneous, expressing solidarity with the troops, and showing an expectation that the army would also show solidarity with them. At that moment, the mainstream media were still struggling to keep up with events, assess possible outcomes, and consider what position they should take. Ultimately, the mainstream media divided between those who remained loyal to Mubarak, and those who threw in their lot with the opposition.

Most of the Egyptian cartoons that appeared during the revolution supported the protests; particularly those that were published in opposition and independent newspapers. Moreover, several cartoons expressed support for the army and depicted it as the guardian of the revolution.

The protest music broadcast on social media or performed at Tahrir Square during the revolution was tied to the social movement. Ted Swedenburg [36] observed that musicians in Tahrir Square for the usually performed a repertoire with which the crowds could sing along, a body of songs that connected to a history of struggle. The purpose was to move the crowds, including the musicians themselves, into an affective state, whether of anger, mourning, nostalgia, or determination

Egyptian popular singer Mohamed Munir's song *Ezzay* (how), was supposed to be released in December 2010 but had been banned by the government. The song was eventually released during the revolution, of which it became the emblem. According to Munir, the song is about the unrequited love between Egypt and its citizens. It expressed Egyptians' desire to change, to live in a better place, and to fight the corruption that surrounded them [37]. The opening lyrics read:

How do you accept this for me, my love [Egypt]
To be in adoration of your name
When you continue to confuse me
And you don't even feel my goodness, how?
I have no motive in my love for you
But my faithful love has brought me no salvation
How can I be the one to hold your head up high
When you continue to hold my head down low
How? [38]

'*Sout El-Huriyya*' (Voice of Freedom), composed by the Cairokee band in collaboration with Hany Adel, lead singer of the Wust El-Balad band, is also one of the earliest songs filmed during the protests in Tahrir Square, and has been widely disseminated through social media within and outside Egypt. It has also aired on major Egyptian and global TV stations including the BBC, CNN and Al-Jazeera. The song's lyrics captured the sense of optimism and hope that prevailed during the revolution [33], urging people not to back down, but to continue until their dream came true.

Qoum ya Masri (Rise you Egyptian) was composed by the veteran Egyptian singer and musician Sayed Darwish (1892 – 1923) during the 1919 revolution against the British colonization of Egypt and the exile, by the British, of the Egyptian leader, Saad Zaghloul. Darwish's song, *Biladi Biladi Biladi, Laki Hobbi wa Fouadi* (Oh My Nation, I Grant You All My Love and My Soul), was also composed and sung during the 1919 revolution, and became the Egyptian national anthem after the 1952 revolution. Both songs were sung and played daily on the streets and squares across Egypt during the 18 days of the revolution. Like Tunisian Poet Al-Shabbi, Darwish died very young but his songs remain popular across the Arab World, with their messages of patriotism and resistance to oppression.

Rami Essam, a young rock singer from the city of Mansoura, was at Tahrir Square with his guitar from the first days of the January uprising. Essam has been dubbed, the 'Singer of the Revolution' (36). He has composed music and sung revolutionary slogans which had been created by the protesters themselves, such as "*Al-Sha'b Yureed Isqat al-Nizam*" (The People Want to Bring Down the Regime), "*Irhal*" (Go), and "*Howwa Yemshi, Mish Hanimshi*" (He Must Go, We Will Not). His songs immediately became popular at Tahrir, and through YouTube, he rapidly acquired a global reputation [36].

Another anecdote showing the dramatic influence of mainstream media on public perceptions is the representation of the January uprising martyrs' narrative, which was influential in reinvigorating public support for

the revolution. On February 7, 2011, Wael Ghonim, the secret administrator of the Facebook page 'we all are Khaled Said', appeared for the first time in public in the TV talk-show, *Al-Ashera Masa'an*. Ghonim had just been released, having being in secret detention since January 28th. Before the end of the program, photos of the martyrs killed in the early days of the revolution were displayed. Once Ghonim saw the photos, he broke down in tears, and was unable to continue the interview [39]. This moment was seen as significant in engaging much of the Egyptian population, helping to draw hundreds of thousands of people to the square in support of the revolution.

The photos of the martyrs are usually referred to on all types of media as '*El-ward illi Fattah fi ganayin Masr'* (The flowers that bloomed in the gardens of Egypt). It is a line from a poem, linked to the student movement of the 1970s, by popular Egyptian vernacular poet, Ahmed Fouad Negm (1929-2013), and sung by Egyptian blind musician and composer Sheikh Imam (1918-1995). This duo inspired generations of Arab youth and their works became an emblem of opposition and resistance in the Arab World [40]. This part of the poem, along with photos of the martyrs, first appeared in *Al-Masry Al-Youm,* and quickly became an icon of the revolution, often being raised in Tahrir Square [41]. *Bladi ya Bladi, ana bahibbik ya Bladi* (Oh My Nation, I Love You So Much) is a song that was also composed during the revolution, as a reaction to the killing of protesters and in celebration of the memory of the martyrs. This song was based on an earlier song written by the great Egyptian poet Fouad Haddad (1928-1985) and set to music by the veteran Egyptian musician Baligh Hamdi (1931-1993) in celebration of the memory of the martyrs, mostly children, of the Bahr El-Baqar massacre committed by the Israeli armed forces in 1970 during the War of Attrition between Egypt and Israel. Once again, Egyptians aligned themselves with past generations of musicians, reframing old songs in a new struggle for dignity and justice.

There are some important media-related external factors that cannot be ignored in understanding how the revolution was triggered. During the early stage of the revolution, the Wikileaks website released significant numbers of documents, revealing corruption and brutality by Arab leaders through the eyes of US diplomats. Whilst corruption and brutality was not news to Egyptian citizens, its validation by external non-state actors offered protesters a feeling of vindication and a further source of legitimacy [42]. In an interview with *The Hindu*, Julian Assange, founder of Wikileaks, stated that "the revolution in Egypt occurred as a result predominantly of these young people being organized. We did feed in very specific cables into the situation and poured as much oil on to this fire as we could by releasing hundreds of cables about the Egyptian regime… [43]."

In the realm of mainstream media, Al-Jazeera, in its coverage of the Egyptian revolution, took a very clear pro-opposition stance, urging Egyptians to remain strong and to continue their mission. Much of Al-Jazeera's coverage during the Egyptian revolution was influenced by information and footage coming from citizen journalists on the ground [44]. Al-Jazeera often spoke to the opposition, with would-be leaders such as Al-Baradei, activists and protesters, who helped in inflaming the Egyptian street. In order to encourage the submission of content by those on the ground, Al-Jazeera network published a webpage specially designed to upload videos and images taken by citizens [45].

Moreover, during the early days of the revolution, cartoons by Brazilian cartoonist, Carlos Latuff were rapidly disseminated among Twitter and Facebook users, and held on banners at rallies during the protests. Although Latuff was not known to the majority of Egyptians before the revolution, his cartoons had great appeal amongst protesters. Latuff has been called 'the cartoonist of the revolution'. In an interview with Reuters, he said: "It's not the social platforms that make revolutions, it's the people. Twitter, Facebook, just like a camera or Molotov cocktails, are just instruments, equipment [46]."

B. The tactics of the Mubarak regime

State-owned media coverage of the revolution, along with that of some privately-owned TV channels, was strongly slanted against the protesters, which drove many people to switch to independent or international media in search of more trustworthy news. Egyptian National TV showed the scene in Tahrir Square, but from afar, or showed calm scenes with no signs of major protests. For many Egyptians, this approach was reminiscent of the ways dominant media outlets had misled them in the past. In 1967, *Sout Al-Arab* (Voice of the Arabs) radio misled Egyptians into thinking that their forces were winning the June Arab–Israeli war. Since then, Egyptians have long referred to official discourses as *kalam garayid* (newspaper speak), in which the media, for the sake of political stability, accepted government propaganda [47]. The State media also focused more on pro-Mubarak demonstrations, which called on anti-Mubarak protesters to postpone their protests, giving the government an opportunity to implement promised changes which might satisfy their demands without causing radical instability.

Later, on January 25th, all state-owned and privately-owned TV news-shows released a statement by the Ministry of Interior, which claimed that thousands of Muslim Brotherhood (MB) members were among the protesters, although the MB had previously announced that they would not participate on the protests on January 25th [24]. Immediately after the statement was released, the MB denied these claims and stated that they did not participate in the protests in Tahrir Square on that day [48].

On February 6, ABC's Christiane Amanpour interviewed General Omar Suleiman, the vice-president, who met with opposition parties and political movements, including the MB, for a national dialogue. This was the first time that the MB, which was banned in Egypt, had been included in official negotiations. Suleiman claimed that an Islamic current was behind what was going on in Arab countries, asserting that what the young protesters were doing stemmed less from their own ideas than from foreign indoctrination. Suleiman added that he believed in democracy but that democracy could only exist in Egypt when people had a culture of democracy [49].

It seems clear that the regime's attempt to link the protests to Islamist movements were designed to dissuade

Christian and secularist Egyptians from joining the protests for fear that it might lead to an Islamist takeover. On February 9, in an interview with CNN, Ghonim stressed that the MB was not involved in any way in the organization of the revolution. The MB leaders themselves officially announced that they were not going to participate but if young members wanted to join, they would not tell them 'no' [50].

In an attempt to stop the growing unrest, late on Thursday night, January 27, Mubarak's regime shut down the internet and cut off mobile connections. Surprisingly, this did not prevent people from mobilizing for the 'Friday of Rage' the following day. In fact, that day witnessed larger number of protesters than had turned out on the previous days. The Friday of Rage showed that Egyptians remained connected to each other even without social media. It also demonstrated a level of commitment to the revolution, regardless of obstacles. Furthermore, the desperation which was apparent in the regime's willingness to effectively close down Egypt's economy indicated that the regime was crippled, which motivated protesters to redouble their efforts.

Some State and independent media during the revolution spread a wide range of conspiracy theories to discourage people from joining the mass demonstrations, and to ruin revolutionaries' reputations. This included accusations of foreign affiliations and hidden "agendas" behind the mass demonstrations in Tahrir Square and other sites, and the claims that some political activists and movements, notably the April 6th Youth Movement, had received foreign funds to destabilize the country. On January 24th, Khairy Ramadan, host of the TV talk show *Masr El-Nahrda* (Egypt today), started his talk by warning people of a hidden purpose behind the call for protests on January 25th. He suggested that the organizers had chosen the Police Day national holiday with the intention of provoking clashes, which would be less likely on any other day. Ramadan also asserted that a number of incidents of misbehavior by policemen did not mean that all police were bad [51]. On January 26th, Tamer Amin, another host on the same TV program, attempted to redress the balance. He stated at the beginning of the program that what was going on proved that all political parties, including the NDP, had lost connection with the people. If people could find a channel to express their demands through political parties, they would not take to the streets [52]. Ghonim noted, in his book, that some comments on his Facebook page and elsewhere labeled him an agent of the United States and Israel [25]. The TV program, 48 Hours, hosted by Said Ali and Hana' El-Samry, was widely criticized for hosting an activist who claimed that she, along with others had received training in the USA by Americans, Israelis and Qatarians through the Freedom House organization to overthrow the regime in Egypt, and that they had been paid a large sum of money in order to incite the January 25th Revolution [53]. Later, a number of independent newspapers and online social networks revealed that the young woman who appeared on this program was, in fact, not an activist but a journalist and her story was entirely fabricated, as a result of which, she was dismissed by the newspaper for which she worked [54].

Between January 28 and February 10, Mubarak delivered three speeches. Although each speech includes promises of immediate implementation of some of the protesters' demands, these concessions were regarded by the protesters as too little, too late. This problem was described earlier on January 25th by General Fouad Allam, the former deputy head of Egypt's State Security Investigations Service. He criticized the regime for being too slow to introduce political reforms, asserting that the right political decision usually came only after events had already exploded out of control. He suggested a number of economic and political reforms should be immediately considered and taken seriously to assuage the anger in the street [24]. He did not appear to have the ear of Mubarak or his counselors, however, as no such far-reaching reforms were introduced.

There is a general agreement that the second speech by Mubarak on February 1st was the most influential. Mubarak's delivery was emotionally-charged, speaking of his love for Egypt and vowing to stay in the country until his death. His speech touched the heart of many Egyptians, particularly the silent majority or *hizb el-kanaba*. *Hizb* in Arabic means a party, while *kanaba* means a couch, literarily means people who preferred not to leave their couch. This term was widely used after the uprising began to refer to a wide spectrum of Egyptians who did not take part in the revolution, but who were following the news, worried and confused. Their main concern was for the stability of Egypt.

On the following day, thousands of pro-Mubarak supporters took to the street to show solidarity with Mubarak. However, a few dozens of 'pro-Mubarak thugs' riding horses and camels headed to Tahrir Square and attacked the anti-Mubarak protesters, in a scene reminiscent of the Middle Ages. This event has become known in Egypt as the "Battle of the Camel," in which protesters went head to head with Mubarak loyalists in a fight that lasted well into the next day, leaving about 11 dead, and over 600 injured, but turning the tide of public opinion irreversibly against the Mubarak regime [55].

Following the revolution, many people expected immediate reform of the state media. As a result, leading figures within the state media's institutions have been replaced, including the chairmen and the editor-in-chiefs of the official newspapers. Earlier, after Mubarak stepped down, *Al-Ahram* newspaper (February 16, 2011) issued an apology to its readers, confessing to what it called "unprofessional and unethical coverage" of the January 25th revolution. Labib El-Sebaie, the new chairman of *Al-Ahram*, on April 10th, 2011, once again apologized to the young revolutionaries for *Al-Ahram's* coverage during the revolution during which he said it had lost its sense of belonging to the readers.

IV. Conclusion

During the 18 days of the revolution, every form of media played a role, either for or against the ruling regime. Mainstream media were predominantly used in favor of the Mubarak's regime, attempting to discourage the growing unrest, while continually promising to implement the people's demands. In contrast, social media were dominated

by young protesters who used them successfully as a tool of mobilization and as their own tool with which to record the revolution, and so be able to feed other local and international media. Thus, the relationship between those in the street and the media was two-way: the people fed news to the media as much as they reverse. The technology of social media gave the protesters significant control over what aspects of the story was aired, enabling them to get their messages distributed globally. Social media provided protesters with speed and interactivity that were lacking in traditional mobilization techniques.

However, the blocking of the Internet during the early stage of the revolution proved that Egyptians were not entirely dependent upon social media to remain connected. The fact that the revolution was not stymied, but on the contrary, continued to grow after the internet was cut off further shows that whilst social media may have facilitated the revolution, they were not a cause of the revolution. In this sense, the term 'Facebook revolution' is too strong. It was people who made the revolution, and when the tool of social media was no longer available, they found other ways to achieve their demands.

Cultural messages played a significant role in the revolution, in diverse forms including protest songs, political jokes, cartoons, street chants and placards. Some of these messages drew on past struggles for dignity and social justice by invoking musicians and poets of previous generations to mobilize the current generation in the present struggle.

The continual failure of the government to respond to people's concerns when they were raised by the mainstream media led many people to wonder whether Mubarak read newspapers or even watched TV. The slowness of the regime response led to escalation of opposition which it was ultimately unable to control. State or elite-dominated media did not directly take part in mobilizing young Egyptians, but they did have a significant impact on shaping the process of the revolution. Whilst the propaganda they disseminated did not ultimately save Mubarak's regime, it did affect the image of the protesters, particularly in the post-revolution era.

In conclusion, the revolution was more than a Facebook revolution. By using different media forms with different cultural messages, which linked to each other in complex ways, Egyptians succeeded in making their voices heard worldwide. In singing songs and quoting poetry from long past struggles and distributing them through 21st century media, and in uploading their own videos to supply the needs of global news networks, Egyptians creatively drew on a wide range of media forms to support their political aspirations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the China Scholarship Council, whose financial support made this study possible. As this paper is a part of an ongoing PhD dissertation, I would like to express my sincere thanks to my PhD supervisors, Zhao Wenliang and Chen Haihong, for their continuous encouragement and support. I am also grateful to Gordon Ramsey, professor of anthropology, for his constant support, and for his language editing of this manuscript.

REFERENCES

[1] N. K. Chebib and R. M. Sohail, "The reasons social media contributed to the 2011 Egyptian revolution," *International Journal of Business Research and Management (IJBRM)*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp: 139-162, 2011.
[2] M. Lim, "Clicks, cabs, and coffee houses: social media and oppositional movements in Egypt, 2004–2011," *Journal of Communication*, vol. 62, pp. 231–248, 2012.
[3] N. El Tantawy and J. B. Wiest, "Social media in the Egyptian revolution: reconsidering resource mobilization theory," *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 5, pp. 1207–1224, 2011.
[4] L. F. Barón, "More than a Facebook revolution: social movements and social media in the Egyptian Arab Spring," *Journal of International Review of Information Ethics (IRIE)*, vol. 18, pp. 84-92, 2012.
[5] S. Khamis, P. B. Gold, and K. Vaughn, "Beyond Egypt's 'Facebook revolution' and Syria's 'YouTube uprising': Comparing political contexts, actors and communication strategies," *Arab Media & Society*, vol. 15, pp. 1-30, 2012.
[6] Z. Tufekci and C. Wilson, "Social media and the decision to participate in political protest: observations from Tahrir Square," *Journal of Communication*, vol. 62, pp. 363-379, April 2012.
[7] *The Global Media Intelligence Report: Middle East and Africa*, eMarketer Team, pp. 1-55, September 2013.
[8] R. Brym, M. Godbout, A. Hoffbauer, G. Menard, and T. H. Zhang, "Social media in the 2011 Egyptian uprising," *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 65, no. 2, pp. 266-292, 2014.
[9] K. Gabr, Karam, "Security reports on jokes! (Al taqarir al amniyya aan el nokta!)" *Rose Al Youssef*, Issue 3642, March 1998.
[10] T. Rifaey, "Illustration of the transitional period in Egypt during 1919-1924: political cartoons in Egypt's revolutionary history," M.A. Thesis, Dept. Arabic Studies, American Univ., Cairo, Egypt, 1997.
[11] R. Saleh, 'Making history come alive through political cartoons', *International Journal of Comic Art*, vol.12, pp. 552-564, 2010.
[12] R. Saleh, *The Political Cartoons: From the Urabi Revolution until the January 25th Revolution* (*El-karikatir al-siyasi min thawrat Urabi wa hatta thawrat 25 yanayir*); Cairo: Geziret El-Ward, 2014.
[13] R. Saleh, "'Let them entertain themselves': The fall of the Mubarak regime seen through Egyptian political cartoons," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 54, no. 3, pp.494-520, 2018.
[14] *ICT Indicators in Brief*, Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, Arab Republic of Egypt, March 2011. [Online]. Available: www.egyptictindicators.gov.eg
[15] "Internet users in Egypt reach 31 million," *Ahram Online*, Feb 4, 2013. [Online]. Available: http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/63999/Business/Economy/Internet-users-in-Egypt-reach--mil
[16] C. Malin. Egypt Facebook demographics. (2011). [Online]. Available: http://www.spotonpr.com/egypt-facebook-demographics/
[17] *Arab Social Media Report*. [Online]. Available: https://icannwiki.org/Arab_Social_Media_Report
[18] *Facebook Usage: Factors and Analysis*, Arab Social Media Report, (2011). [Online]. Available: http://www.arabsocialmediareport.com/UserManagement/PDF/ASMR%20Report%201.pdf
[19] A. A. Masa'an. Dream TV. (2011). [Online]. Available: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=1fBFmEpPgdY
[20] A. A. Masa'an, Dream TV. (2011). [Online]. Available: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=FnwU24kLeWE
[21] Egypt bomb kills 21 at Alexandria Coptic church. [Online]. Available: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12101748
[22] A. Hassan, "Egypt: hundred protest to denounce terrorist attack on Coptic Christians," Babylon & Beyond, *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 2011.
[23] M. Aouragh and A. Alexander, "The Egyptian experience: sense and nonsense of the Internet revolution," *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 5, pp. 1344-1358, 2011.
[24] A. A. Masa'an, (2011). [Online]. Available: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=KbsGScEptT8
[25] W. Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People is Greater than the People of Power*; New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012.
[26] G. Raphael, "Al-Shabbi's 'The Will of Life'," *Jadaliyya*, May 2, 2011.
[27] A. Mahfouz. (2011). Available: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=WxG9gomNGsQ

[28] A. Mahfouz, (2011). Available: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=hKgN6A0UWCU
[29] M. Wall and S. El Zahed, "'I'll be waiting for you guys': A youtube call to action in the Egyptian revolution," *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 5, pp. 1333–1343, 2011.
[30] Y. Elsayed, "Revolutionary media on a budget: Facebook-only social journalism," *Arab Media & Society*, vol. 17, pp. 1-27, Winter 2013.
[31] A. R. Sedky, *Cairo Rewind: The First Two Years of Egypt's Revolution (2011-2013)*; Canada: Friesen Press, 2013.
[32] W. Armbrust, *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
[33] A. Valassopoulos and D. S. Mostafa, "Popular protest music and the 2011 Egyptian revolution," *Popular Music and Society*, vol. 37, no. 5, pp. 638–659, 2014.
[34] K. Wahba, "The Egyptian revolution 2011: the fall of the virtual wall – the revolution systems thinking archetype," presented at the 29th International System Dynamics Conference, Washington, DC, USA, July 24-28, 2011.
[35] On Ent. ONTV. [Online]. Available: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=NJetoJlQQPA
[36] T. Swedenburg, "Egypt's music of protest from Sayyid Darwish to DJ Haha," *Middle East Report*, vol. 42, pp. 39-43, Winter 2012.
[37] B. Eyre. Revolution Songs. [Online]. Available: http://www.afropop.org/1976/mohamed-mounir/
[38] L. Sanders IV and M. Visonà, "The soul of Tahrir: poetics of a revolution," in *Translating Egypt's Revolution: the Language of Tahrir*, S. Mehrez, Ed. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, ch. 6, 2012, pp. 213-248.
[39] A. A. Masa'an, [Online]. Available: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=K689F4PNvVo
[40] R. Abou-El-Fadl, *Revolutionary Egypt: connecting Domestic and International Struggles*; UK: Routledge, 2015.
[41] A. M. El-Azab, "4373 headlines reflecting years of hope, resistance, and freedom (4373 aanwanan tosaggel sanawat el-aamel wa el-moqawma wa el-horiyyah)," *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, June 4, 2016.
[42] S. Mabon, "Aiding revolution? Wikileaks, communication and the 'Arab Spring' in Egypt," *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 10, pp. 1843–1857, 2013.
[43] N. Ram, "WikiLeaks has provided the critical climate for political reform: Assange," *The Hindu*, April 12, 2011.
[44] W. L. Youmans, "Al-Jazeera English's Networked Journalism during the 2011 Egyptian Uprising," in *Social Media and The Politics of Reportage: The 'Arab Spring,'* S. Bebawi and D. Bossio, Ed. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, ch 3, pp. 56-79.
[45] V. Sarnelli, "Tunisia, Egypt and the voices of the revolution in al Jazeera English," *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research*, vol. 6, no. 2 & 3, pp. 157-176, 2013 .
[46] S. Grudgings, "Rio cartoonist inspires Arab rebellions from afar," Reuters, August 29, 2011.
[47] N. Sakr, *Transformation in Egyptian Journalism*, London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2013.
[48] H. El-Waziry, Hany, "MB responds to the statement of the Ministry of Interior: We didn't participate in the protests of the Tahrir Square (El-Ikhwan raddan ala bayan el-dakhliyyah: lam nosharek fe mozaharat midan el-Tahrir)," *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, January 24, 2011. Available: http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/638114
[49] ABC. [Online]. Available: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=RT9ObTQ3Fjc
[50] CNN. [Online]. Available: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=WkrBPL84eGk
[51] Masr El-Nahrda EG. [Online]. Available: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=rGowzeYjlu8
[52] Masr El-Nahrda EG. [Online]. Available: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=TMiMxB1SEAE
[53] B. El-Sary. [Online]. Available: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=Qlh_U-p7Qno
[54] M. Abu El-Fotouh, "Ban the journalist who claimed that she was training in the USA to down the regime (Waqf al-sahafiyyah allaty ida'at talaqiha tadriban fi amrica li'isqat al-nizam), *Al-Shorouk*, 2011.
[55] Y. Fathi, "Egypt's 'Battle of the Camel': The day the tide turned," *Ahram Online*, February 2, 2012.

Rania Saleh is an Egyptian writer and lecturer. She is currently a PhD candidate in world history, School of History and Social Development, Shandong Normal University, China. She holds a Master's degree in journalism and mass communication, School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, The American University in Cairo, Egypt, June 2004.

She is a writer (2003 – present). Her works have been published in a number of prestigious Egyptian newspapers and online news networks. She is a LECTURER, her research and teaching interests include media, political communication and transitions, cultural studies, graphics and advertising campaigns. Her publications include: "'Let them entertain themselves': the fall of the Mubarak regime seen through Egyptian political cartoons," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 54, no. 3, pp. 494-520, 2018. *The Political Cartoons: from the Urabi Revolution until the January 25th Revolution* (*El-karikatir al-siyasi min thawrat Urabi wa hatta thawrat 25 yanayir*), Cairo: Geziret El-Ward, 2014. "What Inflamed the Iraq War? The Perspectives of American Cartoonists," *International Journal of Comic Art*, Vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 746-788, Fall 2008. Her website: www.raniasaleh.net