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A COMMUNICATIVE TURN OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ARAB UPRISINGS: SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE RISE OF THE CITIZEN 2.0*

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Feride Aslı Ergül Jorgensen
Ege Üniversitesi
İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi
ORCID: 0000-0003-2665-0602

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Abstract

This article argues that one of the most important reasons of the pronounced inability of the International Relations discipline to adapt to the rapidly changing world is that the concept of communication remains marginal in the discipline. The article suggests that the limits can be overcome if more attention is given to the role of ordinary individuals, or citizen 2.0, who by means of social media increase their influence. In this context, it is important to understand that a change in communication technology implies not only the facilitation of communication methods but also vital changes in political and social structures. Notably, a fluid society emerges at local, (trans-)national and international levels, a society in which ordinary individuals gain the power of informing, influencing and activating societies. A discipline that aims at understanding "relations" among states should not remain indifferent to such changes. The article uses the case of the Arab Spring as a turning point, which is claimed to be the first time a social movement efficiently applied user-based communication tools. Analyzing the so far neglected communication theories and the empowered new citizen 2.0 within this perspective, will contribute to the empowerment of the discipline and make it more "up to date".

Keywords: Communication theories, International relations, Social media, Citizen 2.0, Arab Spring

Uluslararası İlişkilerde Arap Ayaklanmaları Bağlamında İletişimsel Dönüşüm: Sosyal Medya ve Vatandaş 2.0'ın Yükselişi

Öz

Bu makale, Uluslararası İlişkiler disiplininin hızla değişen dünyaya uyum sağlayamamasının en önemli nedenlerinden birisinin iletişim kavramının disiplinde marjinal kalması olduğunu savunuyor. Makale, sıradan bireylerin veya sosyal medya aracılığıyla etkisini artıran vatandaş 2.0'ın rolüne daha fazla dikkat edilirse sınırların aşılabileceğini öne sürüyor. Bu bağlamda, iletişim teknolojisindeki bir değişikliğin sadece iletişim yöntemlerinin kolaylaştırılmasını değil, aynı zamanda siyasi ve sosyal yapılarda da hayati değişiklikleri ifade ettiğini anlamak önemlidir. Sıradan bireylerin, toplumları bilgilendirme, etkileme ve harekete geçirme gücüne sahip olduğu; yerel, (trans-) ulusal ve uluslararası düzeylerde akışkan bir toplumun ortaya çıktığı gözlemlenmektedir. Devletler arasındaki "ilişkileri" anlamayı amaçlayan bir disiplin, bu tür değişikliklere kayıtsız kalmamalıdır. Makalede, ilk kez bir toplumsal hareketin kullanıcı tabanlı iletişim araçlarını verimli bir şekilde uyguladığı iddia edilen Arap Baharı vakası bir dönüm noktası olarak kullanılıyor. Şimdiye kadar ihmal edilen iletişim teorilerinin ve güçlenmiş yeni vatandaş 2.0'ın bu çerçevede analizi, disiplinin de güçlenmesine ve biraz daha "güncel" olmasına katkı sağlayacaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: İletişim teorileri, Uluslararası ilişkiler, Sosyal medya, Vatandaş 2.0, Arap Baharı

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A Communicative Turn of International Relations in the Context of the Arab Uprisings: Social Media and The Rise of the Citizen 2.0

Introduction

This article claims that the discipline of International Relations (hereafter IR) is inadequately up-to-date with the world rapidly changing with new communication techniques. Using the liberal theory approach, it underlines the importance of the new rising actor (ordinary people or the citizen 2.0), who now, with the developments in communication technologies, has the capacity to influence national and international politics. In IR that aims to understand "relations" between states, in a narrow sense, and between states and societies, in a broad sense, there are already some liberalist efforts at overcoming the classical perspective of focusing mainly on states as the main actors. However, the fact that it ignores actors other than international organizations or multinational corporations, especially the new actor that fundamentally affects the international conjuncture is among the important factors for the discipline's inadequacy. As the new communication technologies make the power of producing and distributing information available to everyone, all social media users now have the potential to influence societies. The development of communication methods has brought transformation to social learning and movements that cannot be downgraded to mere technical issues of speed or capacity of data exchange. In the virtual world of internet, formal boundaries have gradually lost their meaning and, social structures are more transitive and fluid. Faster and cheaper communication brings transcendence between local, national and international levels. This transcendence is especially visible concerning contemporary social movements. The Arab uprisings of the early 2010s have a special place in this picture, since they pioneered the efficient use of social media and with echoes in other continents. Although the political and economic factors explaining the events may be similar to previous experiences, it can be noticed that social media was the triggering factor for the formation of the widespread social movements, that is, not just a communication tool. Therefore, this article suggests that the discipline of IR should widen its scope and reconsider the Arab Spring from the perspective of communication theories

and redefine the position of the new citizen 2.0 in world politics, not least in order to keep up with the pace of the world.

In the IR literature, it is possible to find some publications about the connection between communication tools and politics. For example, Victoria Carty and Francisco G. Reynoso Barron (2019) analyze how the dynamics of cyber activism turned into social movements. Another contribution focuses on how the Syrian diaspora acted transnationally via the internet communication technologies to contest the Assad regime (Moss, 2018). Although there are more examples, scholars do not go beyond various general theories, that is, in contrast to reach the individual users who are the core of the matter, as suggested in this article. The connection established in these publications mostly does not consider communication to be more than an instrument. All social systems and orders are communicatively constituted. Communication is everywhere and everything depends on communication. As communication develops, social relations evolve. Social constructs are dependent on the efficiency of their communicative networks. The production, dissemination and use of new communication techniques transform the nature of social and political relationships within states, between states and also, between governing and the governed. There are now different and more complex communication technologies, which alter the world as we know it.

The relations between political actors and even the nature of politics change when the forms of communication change. It is now possible to carry, store and distribute enormous amounts of data at high speed and in a short time (McQuail, 2007: 46). This ability brings less hierarchical and more decentralized relations. Politics is no longer an exclusive area of statesmen or businessmen. Ordinary people can also be the epicenters of national and transnational decision making. Societies have changed with new communication methods, individuals have become more functional, new generations have learned a lot from their Facebook brothers and sisters and they are more eager to be audible and visible. More than being a media of connection, communication tools have become the source of power.

Moreover, the new media has changed the service, teaching and research aspects of IR as a profession (Carpenter and Drezner, 2010: 255- 272). They challenge the main subject-matter of IR, namely the state, and its unquestioned authority over people. Politics is no longer a secluded area of governments. The distinction of international/domestic has never been this much at stake. The rules of the game have profoundly changed with technological developments in communication and ordinary people are now equipped with the power to share, produce and distribute information. Information societies have created new linkages between governments and people. Moreover, the latter has become more influential in politics.

Within all these changes, we witness a new type of social movement, which is initiated, organized and run in cyber space by unseen actors. Different from many other social movements in the past where a limited number of leaders were followed by the masses, in these new social movements, everybody is capable of reaching anybody else. Normal individuals become the engine of these new social movements and thereby rise as a new type of citizen that takes an active role in politics. The speed, capacity and transnational impact of these protests are challenging governments and changing states, as observed during the Arab uprisings.

No social science can be separated from these new global dynamics, as we all live in this "global information age" (Simmons, 2011: 589). IR theories' state-centric focus makes it difficult to understand the complexity of this world and the new actor's capability to affect societies beyond state borders. In fact, our recent history shows how the limited perspective of IR is incapable of predicting and analyzing a world-scale movement where millions of people and dozens of states got influenced.

On 17 December 2010, the self-immolation of Bouazizi, a young Tunisian, to protest police brutality in the city of Sidi Bouzid, achieved legendary significance as the symbolic catalyst of dramatic events in the Arab region and then the world. When several hundred Tunisians gathered in the small city the following day, it was inconceivable that it would trigger a movement in which millions of people would participate and alter many things irreversibly. It should be noted that these events were first called the "Arab Spring", demonstrating the expectation of democracy in the Middle East, but as the civil wars in Syria, Libya and Sudan erupted, the events were called "uprisings", if not "winter" (Totten, Schenker & Abdul-Hussain, 2012; Brody, 2012).

Although the emergence of social movements can be explained by socio-economic discomfort, in fact, they are characterized by the unique way in which they were organized. It was mainly through social media that people conversed, motivated and convinced each other to take to the streets; and this occurred in a very short time span, sometimes within or even minutes. Millions followed the events, not only via their TV screens, but also via their smartphone devices or personal computers. People listened and mimicked each other in different cities. Similar slogans were echoed all around the world. The new communication techniques made their speed, caliber and impact immense.

International Relations has not only failed to predict but also to analyze these developments. Abrupt changes within the region and the global echo surprised IR scholars, similar to the rest of the global community. Concepts such as "dramatic change" or "unexpected rebellion" frequently emerged in many IR studies, which indicate that scholars were caught off-guard by the events.

Nevertheless, rather than being defined as a failure, this unpreparedness could be seen as an opportunity to understand that the world has changed and consequently, the tools of IR should be reconsidered in terms of how sensitive they are to observe this "change".

The central role of the nation-states, the very actor of IR, is fundamentally challenged, as people are empowered more than ever. This is not necessarily a new phenomenon, since liberal theories have emphasized globalism and the new actors other than states, such as international organizations or multinational corporations, for a considerably long time. However, in today's cyber world, it is not necessary to be a powerful politician, a CEO of a multi-national corporation or even to be visible in order to be an actor. The internet has the power to transform an ordinary person into a potentially prominent figure of global change. It is time for IR to start analyze "relations", as given in its name, by integrating communication. The sensibility problem of IR in regard to "change" may find its answer in a new direction; communication theories. As James Der Derian underlines, IR is "slow" to grasp such change (Der Derian, 1992: 129,130). There is a necessity to read the flexibility and fluidity of the world. Pace displaces the space. IR scientists are slow to understand the "immaterial" change, says Der Derian and continues: "(t)hey/we have lost the alacrity and celerity to keep up with events engendered by a rapidly moving aesthetics of information" (Der Derian, 1992: 135). Although this critique was made decades ago, it still remains valid. Today, it seems even more problematic for IR to follow the pace of the world with its classical understanding. In this article, we claim that dynamism and velocity can be re-integrated to the discipline by communicatively constituted perspectives.

To discuss its argument, starting with the descriptive method, this article will open up the main actor concept of the discipline to discussion within the framework of the analysis of liberal discourse. It goes beyond the classical liberal criticism and highlights a different actor that has not received much attention until now. It will follow the deductive method by identifying this actor in the examples of social mobilization that has started to be seen recently. The article will start with conceptual and theoretical definitions, then continue with the analysis of important empirical examples and finally conclude with some general observations. The introduction section, in which the basic arguments are given, will be followed by the analysis section, where the concept of communication is discussed from different aspects. In this section, we will try to explain how the developments of communication technologies affect social institutions, and how communication has become a social phenomenon rather than a technical issue. The concept of social media that emerged with the development of user-based communication will also be discussed in this section. In the next section, the issue of why and how communication, conceptually and theoretically, remain marginal

in IR will be examined on the basis of actor diversity. The study will continue with the analysis of social movements that can change social structures. The change in the nature of social movements will be highlighted with the inclusion of social media and the new actor, citizen 2.0. Then, we will look into the Arab uprisings, which can show how social movements gain a different character with communication tools. After discussing the effects of the uprisings on different parts of the world, the study will be completed with an analysis of how citizen 2.0 can be evaluated within the IR discipline.

New State of Communication: Social Media

To understand the new communication technologies, we need to take a step back and examine how these technologies have evolved over time. Since the inception of print technology with Gutenberg's Bible in the 1450s, communication has developed through various phases. Every invention in communication technologies has a profound impact on connecting continents, shrinking the world and reducing the significance of distance. Sidney Morse, the inventor of the Morse alphabet (1938), wrote to his brother "not only the greatest invention of this age, but the greatest invention of any age…The surface of the earth will be networked with wire, and every wire will be a nerve. The earth will become a huge animal with ten million hands, and in every hand a pen to record whatever the directing soul may dictate!" (Brooking and Stringer, 2016). As Morse predicted, the telegraph enabled rapid transcontinental news reporting, which was essential for the development of the modern world as we know it. It linked countries, continents and peoples. The inventions continued with the telephone (1875), phonograph (1877), radio (1906), broadcast TV (1926), basic internet protocol – Transmission Control Protocol, TCP/IP (1978), personal computer (1981) and finally, mobile devices and smartphones (2000s) (for details, see: Rogers, 1986; McQuail, 1987; Heywood, 2011).

These developments can be classified under three information revolutions characterizing the society, as well. The first revolution emerged with the invention of the telegraph, telephone and radio, as boosters of industrialization. Television, early generation computers and satellites represent the second communication revolution, which also included visual transmission in addition to sound. The third revolution came with the information age. The so-called new media, notably mobile phones, cable and satellite television, cheaper and more powerful computers and most importantly, the internet, are by their nature transnational and operate regardless of borders. This, in turn, has facilitated the growth of transnationalism, thus reducing the capacity of states to control what their citizens see, hear and know (Heywood, 2011: 138-140).

As the communication technologies develop, scientific inquiry about it also developed. At the beginning, information technologies and mathematics were the areas in which communication was studied. It was believed that communication was an area of machines, numbers and engineering. However, after the 1920s, the social sciences started to include communication as a social process. Claude Elwood Shannon and Warren Weaver introduced communication theory to the social sciences based research on psychology and sociology (Shannon and Weaver, 1949). Today, communication studies is a social science that benefits from different methods of empirical and critical analysis to develop a body of knowledge about the agencies and interactions between social beings, at micro or macro levels (Craig, 1999). As a social process, communication is mainly happening between the sender and the receiver. W. Bradbury and Sandra L. Vehrencamp define communication as: "The process of communication involves two individuals, a sender and a receiver. The sender produces a signal which conveys information. The signal is transmitted through the environment and is detected by the receiver. The receiver uses the information to help make a decision about how it should respond." (Brandbury and Vehrencamp, 2001 [1998]: 12). David Kenneth Berlo's classical sender-message-channel-receiver model (Berlo, 1966), which was popular in the 1960s, was further developed by Robert T. Craig with eight basic elements of communication theory: Source, Sender, Channel, Receiver, Destination, Message, Feedback, and Positive and Negative Entropic Elements (Craig, 1999).

One of the first media theorists, Harold Innis, went beyond classical explanations and developed a model that not only focused on communication, but also the relationship between social change and communication technologies. According to him, all media are biased and have an impact on the perception of time and space (Innis, 1999). Marshall McLuhan, the famous electronic media theorist, claimed that technological mediation of societies is a state of culture. Additionally, he stated that new communication techniques are not only a simple means of connecting people, but also accelerate and enlarge the scale of human functions, create new societies and shape history (McLuhan, 1951). His popular statement "the medium is the message" indicates that the importance of a new medium of communication lies in its capacity to change the general patterns of social affairs. Therefore, the medium is more important than the text, which shapes and controls humanity (McLuhan, 1964). In other words, the communication technique is critical in social constructions.

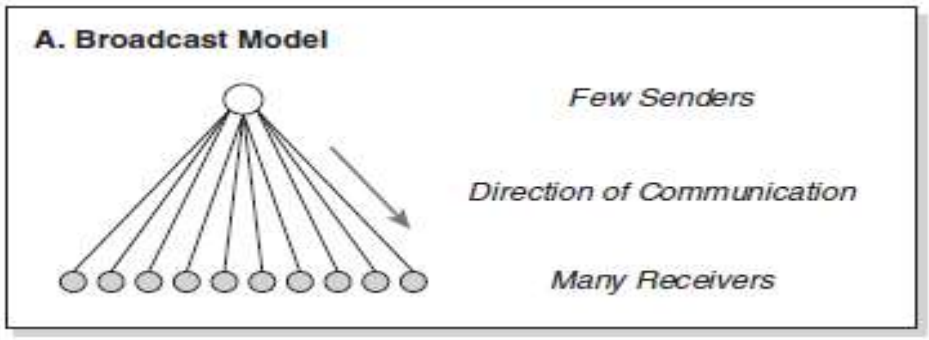
The complexity of communication studies was increased when Tim Berners-Lee links hypertext to TCP/IP (World Wide Web) and the internet connected the world more than had ever been predicted. The new internet model of media engenders a more active and critical subject. Its interactive, two-way communication model suggests a collapse of the distinction between consumers

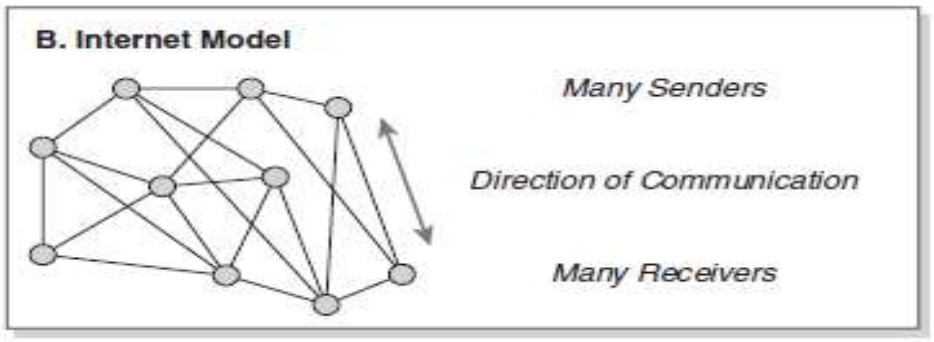
and producers of information. The more decentralized and less hierarchical networks allow the audience increased choice and the ability to 'answer back' or produce their own media (Miller, 2011: 12-13).

According to Mark Poster, one of the first digital media theorists, the "new media" mainly differs from the old broadcast media as the old was "passive" whereas the new media is highly "active". Indeed, he makes a direct connection between broadcast media with modernity, in the sense that it was part of the development of modern industrial capitalism and the nation-state. States are empowered by the ability to govern, inform and shape societies because of its direct access to the means of production and the hierarchy of broadcast communication (Poster, 1995). In terms of using the communication tools, small elites had the privilege of broadcasting and thereby sending one-way messages to the masses of receivers. Traditional model communication had a hierarchical nature, or at least represented the general interests of those in power, since it created hegemony, not least through the ownership and distribution of popular culture favorable to the status quo (Miller, 2011: 16). In fact, the status quo was on the side of states, not on the passive and hierarchically situated lower.

The difference between the old broadcast and the new internet model can be seen in the figures below. In the first traditional broadcast model, as in the central authority to periphery, communication mainly occurs in one direction from one sender to multiple receivers, whereas in the second one, internet model shows the complicated web of communication among many senders who are also the receivers, which means that the center-periphery distinction becomes fuzzy.

Figure 1 - Broadcast and Internet Communication Models





Source: Miller, V. (2011). Understanding Digital Culture, p.13.

Consequently, more information can be transmitted in less time between more people. Social computing has facilitated a new understanding of time and space. User-generated content has the capacity to change the sender-receiver model into a different aspect, where the "receivers" of the broadcast media can also be the producers, distributors and senders of information. This change is where we can see McLuhan's famous dictum "the power of media" turn into "the power of people" (Alikılıç, 2008: 1354).

Four characteristics define the new computer-based digital or internet model media. First, it has enormous capacity to carry, store, and deliver information at high speed. Second, the same channel can carry all known media forms in combination and at the same time. Third, the new technologies are essentially point-to-point rather than center-peripheral. Lastly, they have much higher interactive capability, which has the possibility to create a new kind of social collectivity - a "virtual community" (McQuail, 2007: 44). In other words, it is characterized by user-generated content, online identity creation and relational networking (Magro, 2012: 149). It includes social networking applications like Facebook and Google, microblogging services like Twitter, media sharing sites like YouTube and Flickr, and blogs, wikis or many other interactive media software.

In general, four major strengths of social media can be mentioned: participation, collaboration, empowerment, and time. Since social interaction is the basis of social media, it is collaborative and participatory. Users have the ability to connect with each other easily and form communities to socialize, share information or to achieve a common goal or interests. Anyone with access to the internet has the ability to inexpensively publish or broadcast information and can do this in near-real time (Bertot, Jaeger and Grimes, 2010: 264- 271).

Social media networks have democratized the traditional power understandings of mass communication and challenges the control of governments. Yet, it created new legal problems. The question of the applicable law arises where a communication crosses borders: does national law still govern? In this new formation where not only communication but also social movements are beyond national borders, it is not certain how international law and international organizations will take a stand. According to the 1950 Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms "the right of everyone to express freely his opinion, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authorities and regardless of frontiers" (p. 1 art. 10). Resolution 428 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the Declaration on the Media and Human Rights of January 23, 1970 states the political position of the EU countries in respect of a wide range of guarantees for the media to implement fundamental political rights and freedoms. In the context of globalization and augmentation of conflicts in the world community, freedom of speech becomes the vital legal institution for the whole mass communication industry (Kirilenko and Alekseev, 2018: 226). When considered in this context, respect for the freedom of the internet world can be considered as a natural part of freedom of expression and human rights.

Besides, media is not necessarily used for good reasons. The reputation of the social media's liberating and democratizing effect in the region and in the world has been severely disrupted by its use in terrorist activities. It empowered the terrorist organization ISIS to recruit immensely. As in the words of Jared Cohen, the director of Jigsaw (Google's internal think tank), ISIS was "the first terrorist group to hold both physical and digital territory" (Brooking and Stringer, 2016). They recruited at least 30,000 foreign fighters, from some 100 countries, to the battlefields of Syria and Iraq. Seeding of new franchises was seeded through social media in many places such as Libya, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Bangladesh. They even declared war on the United States through some horrible videos uploaded on YouTube and Facebook. The execution of the American journalist James Foley was deliberately choreographed for viral distribution (Brooking and Stringer, 2016). The terrorist organization spread a similar panic online through orderly staged and filtered photos and videos on social media platforms. Through this combination of activities, ISIS showed that these platforms can be a good vehicle for evil purposes.

"Technology is neither good nor bad, nor is it neutral" (Kranzberg, 1985: 50) and despite its emancipating power, social media can also be used as a weapon against the freedom of societies. The authority/capacity of states and the abuse/underuse of the internet have strong grounds to claim against its advantages. As the communication develops, the means of control, censorship

and surveillance of states also develop. In other words, the internet can be a tool for new authoritarian techniques (Chaves, 2010: 23; Morozov, 2011). The state can censor critics or use propaganda in the cyber world by applying its authority, but such actions have higher costs than simply not having any critics. Any internet restrictions would risk radicalizing pro-regime citizens or harming the national economy, what Shirky calls the "dictator dilemma" (Shirky, 2011: 8). Moreover, any type of repression may ultimately cost the state more in international outrage than it gains in intimidation (Lynch, 2011: 305).

Social media is difficult to control by governments since it is so easy and cheap to access. Possibly for this reason, state authorities and political leaders now prefer to take advantage of this medium rather than block it. Today, Twitter, in particular, appears as an important political arena which leaders use as a way of making politics. Hence, Twitter diplomacy is one of the most popular topics of IR, recently (see: Collins, DeWitt, LeFebvre, 2019; O'Boyle, 2019; Sobel, Hester, 2016). It is obvious that such studies will improve the perspective of the discipline. Nevertheless, this study applies a different approach and instead of leaders or speculators, the focus is the very ordinary people who are using social media. The new type of citizen is not inaudible since they are empowered by the new tools of communication. Communication is not only about transmitting and receiving information, but also about the production of meaning and the constitution of political, social and economic subjectivities. It is the ability to participate in the transformation of society via producing, manipulating, delivering and using information (Constantinou, Richmond & Watson, 2008: 12 &14). These citizens are able to move societies in a totally new way of organizing. These new types of social movements are peculiar in terms of their organization. They are predominantly organized on the internet, with real time broadcast to the world and have the diffusion capacity to millions. Internet technology allows for immediate mobilization across the globe and may also serve as a tool to provide information that tends to be suppressed by the more established media. It affects the internal structure of social movement dynamics, and above all, the density and direction of their links (von de Donk, Loader & Rucht, 2004: 18-19).

Is International Relations Ready for Social Media?

After the conceptual, historical and theoretical discussions about the concept of communication, in the previous part, we will now analyze the place of communication in IR. When we look at the name of the discipline, "International Relations" refers to the "relations" among nations; those relations that can be made through connecting and communicating. This inference raises the expectation that a sophisticated theory would be developed about the way in

which "relations" happen. However, it can still be questioned whether it even has a thorough comprehension of the concept of communication in the first place. "Communication" is unfortunately virtually a "blank space" in contemporary IR theories. The argument is not that communication is absent from IR theorizing. In fact, there are several studies connecting communication with IR discipline areas (see i.e.: Westcott, 2008; Carr, 2016). The new media in foreign policy with regard to the subject as a tool in various publications can be found in Turkey (see; İpek, 2018). For a detailed media analysis on Twitter's place in foreign policy, Ovalı's Turkish-US assessment can be viewed (Ovalı, 2020).

Communicative flows of information among the actors and the "inter"-national realm connect with communication. Units are always believed to be communicatively coded in the international system since they have a social meaning both within and for it. The lacking of a prominent IR theory that focuses on communication as the key concept rises as a problem here. Instead, the relegation of communication puts the concept at the margins of most IR theories (Albert, Kessler and Stetter, 2008: 43-44). Other than the development of the process, the result of this process is the main concern. In other words, communication is perceived to be a process that is taken for granted and further analysis is seemingly not required regarding how communication, the sender/receiver relationship or the means of communication influence the essential nature of politics. The actors and their relations are given more importance than communication itself. The "communicative action" (Habermas, 1986) theory proposed by Jürgen Habermas, a non-IR scholar but still a frequently cited scholar, can be a good example for this. In his theory, even though the concept appears to be based on communication, it is the "action" at the core. Communication is seen only as a consensus-creator between negotiating parties and as soon as the consent is reached, the communication would terminate.

Yet, Karl Deutsch's political system theory is one of the few good examples in IR theory, which is based on communication itself (Deutsch, 1969). According to Deutsch, social systems are cybernetic and communicatively constituted systems. The political systems are the advanced versions of them. They are all capable of achieving operational autonomy and learning how to change themselves. All social systems are built upon communicative networks and they are able to self-change because of their internal communicative capacities.

Perhaps the reasons for not internalizing the concept of communication should be sought in the main pillars of IR. As a way of finding an early-modern spatio-temporal solution to the problem of "particularity versus universality", IR developed the principle of "state sovereignty" (Walker, 1993: 27-28). Within this practical form of analysis, the concepts that are considered universal, such as

power, interest or war, are being examined according to particular units of sovereign states. These actors are assumed to be rational and interacting with each other in world affairs. In fact, the spatio-temporal formulation of the sovereign state is trapped within its self-fulfilling-prophecy, which means the sovereign state actor is stuck within its ahistorical and artificially constructed units.

Actors in international politics are defined as the entities which have the autonomous capacity to determine their own interests and the capability to mobilize human and material resources to achieve their objectives. Their behaviours and actions are significant enough to influence the other actors at the global level (Kan, 2004). It has been assumed for a long time that international arena is only for a specific type of actor: the states. Theories depending on this very claim mutually confirm each other in the cycles of well-developed literature. However, sublimating the state as a spaceless and timeless structure of societies would be an implicit chronofetishism and tempocentrism[1]. Hence, the concrete shell of nation-states seems to be overly tight and restrictive for making any further analysis about the globalizing and transforming world.

This assumption has been challenged since 1960s and 1970s, as many different forms of actors have been involved in international politics. The concepts of both "interdependence" and "globalization" have become important mind-provoking concepts in world politics. "The old images of sovereign states balancing and bouncing off each other like billiard balls will blind us to the new complexity of world politics" (Nye, 2002: 62). The rise of new non-state actors, such as multinational corporations or international organizations, is seen as the new era of the IR discipline (Keohane and Nye, 1973; Nye, 2002; Risse, 2007). As Susan Strange observes, the state "can no longer make the exceptional claims and demands that it once did. . . . It is becoming . . . just one source of authority among several, with limited powers and resources" (Strange, 1996: 73). The level of politics transcended beyond the national level and became transnational. According to Risse-Kappen, transnational interactions are regular interactions across national boundaries when at least one of the agents is a non-state actor, which does not behave on behalf of a government or an intergovernmental organization (Risse-Kappen, 1995: 3). These nonstate actors are partly or wholly

1 Chronofetishism: 'sealing off' the present such that it appears as an autonomous, natural, spontaneous and immutable entity. Tempocentrism: Reconstructing all historical systems so as to conform to a reified and naturalized present, tarnishing all systems as homologous or 'isomorphic'. These terms are taken from John M. Hobson, "What's at stake in 'bringing historical sociology back into international relations'? Transcending 'chronofetishism' and 'tempocentrism' in international relations", in Historical Sociology of International Relations, eds. Stephen Hobden and John M. Hobson, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 8-9

independent of any state. Yet, they still have their motivation to determine their own interests and the capacity to influence the other international actors. Under a classical classification, non-state actors in international relations are divided into two categories: intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), which are created and run by government agencies and transnational nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), which are not founded and run by states, but by certain societal forces such as individuals, businessmen or associations (Miller, 1994; Brown, 1995; Ataman, 2003).

As politics, economy and societies become more globalized, this definition of nonstate actors has extended, as well. Besides the state or non-state organizations, ordinary people turned into a new actor of politics. The influence of new media is more than just a new way of communication, it also changed the way how and why people come and move together. New techniques strengthen outreach efforts, enable engaging feedback loops, and, lastly, increase speed of communication (Obar, 2014: 221). Anybody with an access to social media can become part of sharing, posting, commenting or reacting to a social or political event that can effect him/herself. This ordinary individual is actually the very "subaltern" whose "words are weak, rough, illiterate, and inaudible" (Constantinou, Richmond & Watson, 2008: 10). The subaltern is now equipped with the ability to reach millions of people, produce information and distribute it in seconds. The state is no longer in exclusive control of informing and orienting the people and the people are not mere receivers. Information can be sent from multiple points to multiple points. This change is more than mere changes in the roles during communication; it is in fact a new kind of citizen, who is able to reach, inform and even move masses, without having any privileged position in society. It is difficult to define this new actor of politics, since it is almost never visible, predictable or measurable. Still, its power may be coming from this ambiguousnes. The secrecy and anonymity bring easiness and sense of security to people.

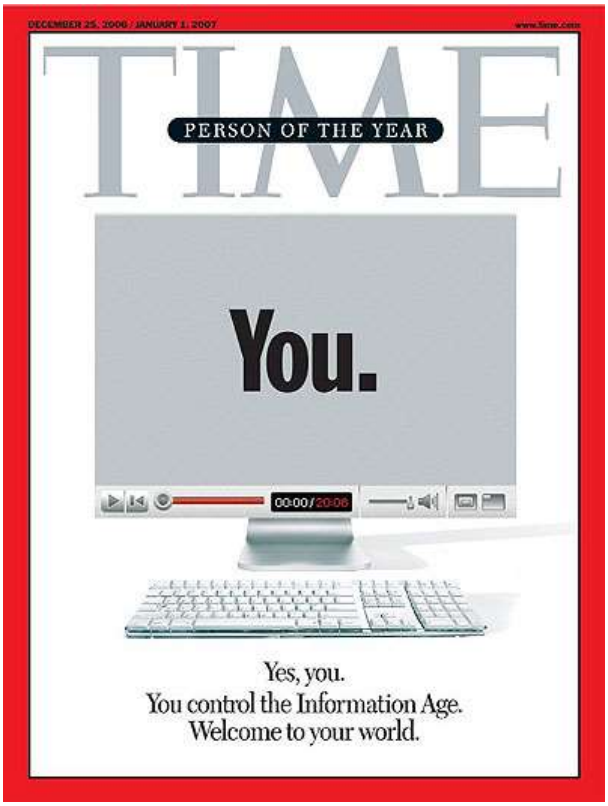
To define this new actor, as accuretly as possible, it is important that it has its own autonomous capacity and capability to determine its benefits. This new actor has a new way of culture; digital culture. The most important aspect of digital culture is its interactive nature. A large number of people can create content for public space or choose whatever they want in many content and this has brought freedom that no medium has previously provided. The public space, which has become a universally accessible communication space in a structural and functional sense, has radically changed as it is so widely accessible. Although there have been claims about traditional media to cross national borders, the access and production with digital media is interactive, unlimited and visible which make it structurally different. However, visibility is one of the most contradictory issues in this sense. While the produced content can be visible to

everyone in cyberspace, it also creates a new kind of social isolation culture. The flexibility to be anonymous in cyber space offers a fake world in which people are involved without the need for socializing or even leaving their homes. Digital culture is complicated and contradictory. In this respect, digital culture could be seen as an incomplete and even wrong orientation in creating an active citizen. However, social media platforms, which have become more effective in political decision making processes, should be revised together with examples that individuals move more comfortably with the invisibility cloak and strengthen each other gradually. The weaknesses of digital culture, such as uncertainty, confidentiality or unpredictability, have always the potential to bring more courageous and visible individual culture than the previous ones.

Moreover, the citizen 2.0 has the potential to mobilize people, as we saw during recent social movements all around the world in the early 2010s. Its behaviours can affect the other actors, not only at local or national levels, but also at the transnational level. Few numbers of protesting posts on social media can ignite the fuse among millions, as well as the ostensible social media combustions can fizzle out in a stroke. Today, social media is a platform to discuss, protest or just call the attention of people on many different topics. There is a vast number of webpages, mail groups, electronic campaigns or accounts on human rights, animal rights or environmental issues. Many activities or protests are announced and organized through these platforms. For example, on 15 April 2019, thousands of people gathered in London for an event that was organized by the online platform @ExtinctionRebellion, with follow-ups planned across 33 countries. The aim of the group is to make governments reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2025 and establish a citizens' assembly to devise an emergency plan to cope with climate change (Guardian, 2019). Whatever the results of these actions, these environment friendly people were able to find each other on the internet raised their voices to be heard by the governments and declared their ideas about environmental politics. Receiving and applying the message is one thing, but in this case, the citizens were able to send their message to the authorities. Hence, it is clear that society has found a way to talk to states more effectively.

According to social media analyst, Clay Shirky, when the way of communication changes, the society changes. He entitled his book "Here Comes Everybody", referring to the ordinary person who is living in the middle of a remarkable increase in terms of their ability to share, to cooperate with one another and to take collective action, all outside the framework of traditional institutions and organizations (Shirky, 2008: 17, 20 & 21). This is the reason why in 2006 "You" were chosen as the person of the year by Time magazine. This recognized the millions of people who had anonymously contributed to the user-generated content movement all around the world.

Image – Time's Front Page: You. (2006)



New social media networks deeply challenge and transform the ability of sovereign states to exercise power by sovereign states via undermining their capability to legitimate their rule. The confident, energetic youth symbolizes this vision of new competences aggregating into political change. By becoming producers and distributors of information, and by overcoming the editorial control of state censorship, these individuals can become a new kind of citizen, better able to resist the instruments of state manipulation. The rise of participatory citizenship and the transformation of the public sphere might indicate what lies beyond the nation state (Lynch, 2011: 307).

The strength of this new actor stems from the fact that individuals act together in digital environments. The impact that anonymous, fluid and unidentified identities cannot create individually can steer societies when they turn into mass trends. Therefore, at this stage of our study, we can move on to examine citizen 2.0 within the framework of social movements.

The New Citizen and the New Way of Social Movements

If "the world as is known was over" (Müftüler-BAC, 2007: 132), we need new tools to understand this new world. The new citizen is a product of the new society, which has acquired a global dimension and has been defined in a variety of different ways, such as "world society" (Burton, 1972), "network society" (Burton, 1972) or "global civil society" (Heywood, 2011: 138-140). According to Zigmunt Bauman, the combination of widening and thinning social connectedness has changed every aspect of the human condition. Society has moved away from being "heavy" or "solid" within the hardware-based modernity to a "light" or "liquid" form of software-based modernity. The new remoteness and un-reachability of global processes coupled with the unstructured and under defined. The fluid state of people's everyday lives is, for Zigmunt, a "liquid society" (as cited in Heywood, 2011: 143). The flexible, changing and borderless structure of society associated with the phenomenon of "time/space compression" and social interaction can now take place outside the limitations of space and time (Harvey, 1996). Social media offers powerful tools by reducing transaction costs for protest organizers and presenting rapid and well-functioning channels for the dissemination of Facebook messages, tweets, pictures or frames (Lynch, 2011: 302). Secure and cheap tools of communication diminish operational costs for organizing social movements, with social media in particular supporting likeminded members to find each other and to make their true beliefs known in a more or less public setting. This kind of facility helps to overcome the atomization and isolation policy of dictatorships that are grounded on political conformity and silence. Additionally, as long as people witness the raising sound of protests on the squares, information cascades can break the wall of fear (Lynch, 2011: 304).

This new type of society brings along a new type of social movement, which is different from the traditional social movements not only in its organizational way but also in its range, speed and scope. In general, all social movements are defined as diffusely organized group movements striving towards a common purpose. The taken for granted fundamental changes in our history may be mostly, if not totally, caused or triggered by these movements (Stammers, 2015: 71).

The explosion of protests and demonstrations against the US and European governments and their social practices in the 1950s was the reason that social scientists turned their eyes on this issue, more than before. While the US was experiencing the Civil Rights movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, the feminist (and gender equality) movement, the "green" or environmental movement; Europe also saw its versions of the feminist and environmental

movements as well as the anticolonial movement (as for example, the pro-Algerian Independence movement in France) (Sen & Avci, 2016: 125).

Academic researchers have contemplated various reasons why these social movements are born and subsequently grow. There are several well-known theories to explain the social movements. The most known ones are: Deprivation (or relative deprivation) theory (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1988), political process theory (Dobson, 2001; Phongpaichit, 1999; Tilly, 1978), structural strain theory (Smelser, 1965) new social movement theories (Starr, 2000; Tilly, 2004) and resource mobilization theory (Foweraker, 1995; McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1988).

Except for the resource mobilization theory's limited interest in communication tools as an acceleration method in mobilization, all of these theories approach the communication technologies as a way of connection among people. Yet, the popular determinism of functional theory assumes that a social movement exists prior to the communication that creates it (Foust & Hoyt, 2017: 42). In other words, communication is only seen as the networking of the people who are already committed for their purpose to change the given issue. From this perspective, social media channels and digital communication have the same instrumental use of persuasion (McGee, 1980) only with a better speed and scale. However, social media has a deeper impact on societies which cannot be easily measured with data mining among the numbers of Facebook accounts or tweets. Not only the way of communication changed, but also the people, or the ordinary person, using that communication has changed within this new climate of freedom, speed and easiness. The communication is the action now. Not only the method of movements changed, but also the actors in the movements transformed within the communication revolution. The new digital environment that social movements face is increasingly complex that making traditional assumptions used in social movement studies is becoming less relevant. New communication technology delivers more than a new way of connection. As well as the context of the message, the reception of the message by the audience needs attention (Earl and Garrett, 2017: 479). The use of social media by the social movement activists generates "personal action frames" based on individual stories of movement leaders and participants. These online networks create a wider public engagement by using social media (Canella, 2014). Within this context, digital storytelling is an important part of using social media to vibrate masses. According to Couldry, the concept refers to "the whole range of personal stories now being told in potentially public form using digital media resources" (Couldry, 2008: 49).

How social media changed the nature of social movements can be understood by looking into the four-stage life cycle of social movements (Blumer, 1969; Tilly, 1978). These stages are: Preliminary, coalescence,

institutionalization and decline. In the *preliminary* stage, an awareness of an issue among people starts. This stage is followed by the second stage of *coalescence* when there is tendency of people to join together and publicize this awareness. In the third stage of *institutionalization*, the movement no longer requires popular voluntarism to survive, since it turned into an established organization with typically paid staff. In the last stage of *decline*, the movement ends with either a successful fulfillment of social change that movement seeks for or a failure which follows people's indifference to the movement.

The social unrest is a critical commonality for all kinds of social movements to rise up and seek change. The nature of the stages, on the other hand, changed with the accelerating and distributing capacity of the digital technologies. The first, preliminary, stage of social movements, where people become aware of a problematic issue, can be faster with the new communication techniques. All of a sudden, a clever user of Twitter can alert thousands of followers across the globe about an issue on his or her mind at the speed of a click. In a similar vein, people who are savvy and engaged with social media can emerge as leaders for the movement. In fact, there is no necessity to be a powerful public speaker or even need to leave the house to build an audience through social media without ever meeting the people s/he is inspiring. At the next stage of coalescence, social media is transformative, when people join together to publicize the issue and get organized. The ability to organize without the limits of geographical boundaries becomes possible using the tools of social media. The efficiency and scale of the movement can be bigger with these new tools (Little, 2014: 898). The cost of participation is so much lower. After all, instead of getting arrested or shot, a social media activist can click "like" button or retweet a message from the comfort and safety of their desk. However, the level of participation does not always mean an increased engagement (Gladwell, 2010).

Access to the internet does not guarantee political activity or a "democratic" political discourse. Clicking the "like" button might not always mean solidarity, but only a form of "keypad activism" (Papacharissi, 2002). Besides, although the internet allows us to shout more loudly, it is not guaranteed that others are listening (Jones, 1997: 30). Similarly, it would be a fatal mistake to claim that information access equality exists. To have a personal computer and a continuous access to the internet needs a certain amount of money, which makes it challenging for the poor. For this reason, Zizi Papacharissi defines the virtual sphere as a domination space of bourgeois computer holders (Papacharissi, 2002: 21).

Sociologists explain the level of engagement to social movements with high-risk activism as a "strong-tie" phenomenon. If people have close engaged friends at a protest, they are more likely to stay engaged and not run home to safety. The people who leave the movement first lack the strong-tie connection

to other people who are staying. In this sense, social media, by its very makeup, is "weak-tie". It is a fact that on social media, people can follow or friend people they have never met. Even though, these online acquaintances can be a source of information and inspiration, the lack of engaged personal contact reduces the level of risk they would take on their behalf (Little, 2014; 898). In this sense, social media movements are not likely to create strong engagements and, therefore, potential for social change according to classical understanding of social movements. In other words, they can be fastly sparkled, largely spread and digitally organized social movements, which may be doomed to failure due to lack of social engagement of the participants. This critique might have a meaningful ground, but, it should not be forgotten that face-to-face socialization in classical sense has already lost its importance and social movements are no exceptions.

From Social Media to the Streets: The Arab Uprisings

The first examples of social movements, which are generated through the new communication techniques, firstly started in the 1990s. The Indonesian protest in 1998 is one of the preliminary ones that show the importance of the new communication techniques in organizing a social movement. The activists used their mobile phones in order to mobilize with the aim of toppling the Suharto regime (Howard, 2010: 3). On January 17, 2001, during the impeachment trial of Philippine President Joseph Estrada, the loyalists of the Congress voted to disregard key evidence against him. Only two hours after this decision was announced, thousands of Filipinos wearing black gathered in Epifanio de los De-Santos Estrada square in Manila. They expressed their anger that the corrupt president could be absolved of his crimes. The protest was arranged by forwarded text messages reading "Go 2 EDSA. Wear blk." The crowd quickly swelled and in the following days, over one million people arrived in Manila, disrupting the traffic. Estrada was ousted by January 20 and even he himself blamed "the text-messaging generation" for his downfall (Shirky, 2011: 1). After Israel's reoccupation of the West Bank in 2002 and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, many protests occurred demanding reform and freedom in the region, which were triggered on Facebook pages and online forums (Lynch, 2011: 303). In 2005, the Kuwaiti women's suffrage movement achieved considerably more success than it had in 2000, because they were able to call activists out of school by using text messages, who subsequently gathered in huge masses to claim their suffrage. Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution of March 2005 was another important case in which mobile phones were used to organize activists to join protests during key moments (Howard, 2010: 4). Egypt also had its own experience of such social

movements. The Kefaya Movement, active from 2004 to 2007, was able to organize protests against the brutality of the Mubarak regime. They were motivated to use the internet. The April 6 Movement was able to organize an impressive strike in the town of Mahalla al-Kubra in April 2008, albeit with limited success (Alterman, 2011: 107).

After the Iranian 2009 presidential elections, the enthusiastic young generation in the country, who were all armed with mobile phones and wireless internet, were organized against the injustice of the election results under the name of the "Green Revolution" (Lynch, 2011: 303). During the elections in June 2009, the role of smartphones and social media in Iran was remarkable. SMS traffic increased on the eve of the election, but in the early morning hours before the polls opened, the Iranian government decided to switch off the text messaging system and block key opposition websites. Facebook had a significant impact during these events. In fact, it was blocked by the Iranian authorities soon after going live in 2004. However, Iran's Commission to Determine the Instances of Criminal Content allowed access early in 2009, in a move they soon regretted. It was unsurprising that young Iranians engaged in social media swiftly. After the officials declared the victory of Ahmadinejad against Mousavi, a growing movement of people emerged contesting the fairness of the results. To support network communication, the activist Iranians organized supply proxy servers that were unknown to the state censor. Hence, despite the heavy interference of the government in terms of digital devices, SMS, Facebook, Twitter and other social media, they were all used to coordinate massive turnout at protests across the country on June 15. When the mobile phone video of a dying woman, Neda Agha-Soltan, lying in a pool of blood after being shot during demonstrations was uploaded to You Tube on June 20, it became one of the iconic global images of the protests and accelerated the movement.

The amount of social media users in Iran was immense. Between 7-26 June, an estimated 480,000 Twitter users exchanged over 2 million tweets. On the election day, it was over 200,000 per hour. One of the Twitter users "persiankiwi" had 24,000 followers by the sixth day of the protests, while "Mousavill388" had 7,000 followers. The Twitter service itself was registering 30 new posts a minute with the #IranElection hashtag. #StopAhmadi kept more than 6,000 followers alert with photos posted on Flickr (Howard, 2010: 5-8).

The Middle East was at the cusp of significant change when the young Tunisian, Mohammed Buazizi, self-immolated on 17 December 2010 in protest at police maltreatment. This incident was immediately shared by thousands on social media and demonstrations erupted soon after. Then, it spread to neighboring cities and led to repression but still a slow response from the Tunisian state. Popular mobilization was spontaneous but increasing on a daily basis. At first, police forces were harsh in repression, but then receded by 10

January 2011, as the army signaled that it would take any action against the protestors. As the general strike unfolded on 14 January, the Tunisian president Ziyn-el Abidin Ben Ali escaped to Saudi Arabia. (Dalacoura, 2012: 64). TV channels began to broadcast general news from Tunisia as the news broke all around the world and world social media was completely focused on the events.

The largest echo came from Egypt, which was experiencing difficult socio-economic conditions. By January 2011, Egypt's youth unemployment rate was 25% and the annual inflation rate was running at approximately 10%. The economic dissatisfaction was combined with political corruption. The government largely steered the November 2010 parliamentary elections toward the ruling party, boosting the National Democratic Party representation from 318 to 420, while Muslim Brotherhood supporters in parliament dropped from 88 seats to 1. Egypt became a tinderbox by January 2011 (Alterman, 2011: 108-109). The Egyptian government first tried to ban the internet in order to decelerate the protests. However, this decision had the opposite effect on the Egyptian people. The interesting result of a poll suggests that 56% of the Egyptian respondents said that when the government blocked the internet, it, in fact, increased their motivation. Oppression made people more determined and pushed undecided people to be more active and find creative ways to organize and communicate (Dubai School of Government, 2011: 8). Another report also underlines that the authorities' efforts to block out information, ended up "spurring people to be more active, decisive and to find ways to be more creative about communicating and organising" (Huang, 2011).

Despite the government's prevention activities, social media became the arena for Egyptian activists. In part as a consequence of the news coverage, a growing number of Egyptians began to create their own content and posted it online to share with the world. The protesters talked, communicated and planned everything on the internet via their Twitter or Facebook accounts. They filmed events with their mobile phones, made short movies, created photo montages, and swapped songs. They combined and recombined them in many different ways (Alterman, 2011: 111).

In the words of one protester, Fawaz Rashed: "We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and You Tube to tell the world" (Shearlaw, 2016). A survey, which was conducted during the protest movements in Tunisia and Egypt, the vast majority of 200-plus people (88 % in Egypt and 94 % in Tunisia) said they preferred the social media sites for getting information from social media sites. The other choices were non-government local media (63 % in Egypt and 86 % in Tunisia) and to foreign media (57 % in Egypt and 48 % in Tunisia). Almost 9 in 10 Egyptians and Tunisians said they were using Facebook to organize or spread awareness about the protests (Huang, 2011). According to the Arab Social Media 2011 Report by the Dubai School of

Government, social media have "played a critical role in mobilisation, empowerment, shaping opinions and influencing change…with some camps labelling them the main instigators and others relegating them to mere tools…Regardless, it can be stated that many of the calls to protest in the Arab region were initially made on Facebook" (Dubai School of Government, 2011).

The Police Day, January 25 was agreed as the day of the largest protest on Tahrir Square. When the day arrived, thousands of eager and angry Egyptians took to the square shouting "Change, Freedom, and Social Justice". Mass protests are always telegenic, but Tahrir was special in that regard. From the colorful images of attackers on camels charging crowds to rows of people praying in harmony, the Tahrir Square protests represented one of the largest stories that TV channels, such as Al Jazeera, CNN or the BBC, had been waiting for. Social media supplied rolling coverage of the television networks with cell phone images, audio and posted messages (Alterman, 2011: 112-114). Although the outrage in Egypt was stoked by many factors, the Facebook page dedicated to an Alexandrian internet activist who was beaten to death by the police was of particular importance. The page, "Kullena Khaled Said" (We are all Khaled Said) was created by the Dubai-based head of marketing for Google Middle East and North Africa, Wael Ghoneim. Wael Ghonim was interrogated and taken under custody by the Egyptian police after this page. After 11 days, he was released and his emotional interview on an Arab TV (Dream TV 2) on 8 February 2011 turned him into an even more influencing internet figure.[2] Within a few hours, the support for the page had increased from dozens into hundreds and then into thousands. In only a few days, the group had almost a half-million members, which is a high number for those days.

Wael Ghonim and his friend and Abdel Rahman Mansour are accepted as two potential leaders of the protests in Egypt. Yet, their leadership attitudes were in a way different from the previous protest leaderships. The question is whether as page administrators, they can be seen as activist leaders. From the traditional social movement perspective, this argument has several problems. First, neither of them was leading any social movement organization and they had no immediate organizational resources at their command to stage and coordinate

2 On that interview and the following ones on other international channels, including CNN and BBC, he called the social movement in Egypt "Revolution 2.0" (see the You Tube video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxJK6SxGCAw) and coined the "keyboard freedom fighter". "Time" magazine counted as one of the 100 most influential people of 2011 (Time, 2011) the "World Economic Forum" included him as one of "Young Global Leaders" of 2012 (weforum, 2012) and received JFK Profile in Courage Award. Ghonim wrote a book in 2013, which has a name overlaps with the protests he was part of, "Revolution 2.0: The power of people is greater than the people in power".

protests. Second, apart from hundreds of thousands and eventually millions of "likes", they had no "followers" in the traditional sense. Moreover, there was no guarantee that the users who "liked" the page even were sympathetic to their ideas. Third, Ghonim and Mansour were not publicly known figures at the beginning. Finally, they never claimed a leadership role. In fact, after his release from prison, Ghonim stressed that he had wished to remain anonymous. In his own words: "I had hoped no one would find out I am the Admin. Because I am not ahero. I was only using the keyboard […] There isn't one of us here that is on some high horse leading the masses" (Poell and et.al., 2016: 995). The protests, as he underlines, were far from being organized regularly by a determined leader. They were evolving in their own course (at least at the beginning) changing and cascading every minute with a Facebook post or a Tweet shared by thousands.

Facebook usage augmented fast in the Arab region between January and April, sometimes more than doubled. In 2011, the number of users has nearly doubled from 14.8 million to 27.7 million, which is a jump by 30 %, while the growth during the same period of time in the earlier year was 18 %. When we compare the growth of Facebook usage in the first three months of 2011 with the same period in 2010, we see that it was 15 % in Bahrain, compared with 6 % in 201; in Egypt it was 29 % growth compared to 12 % per cent last year; Tunisia had 17 % growth compared to 10 %. The exception was Libya, where usage fell by 76 per cent, because of the fierce civil war. On Twitter, the hashtag "Egypt" had 1.4 million mentions, "Jan25" had 1.2m mentions, "Libya" had 990,000, "Bahrain" had 640,000; and "protest" had 620,000 in the three months before the Tahrir Square protests (Huang, 2011).

Social media users shared the stories in large numbers and reached millions of people all around the world. The reactions ignited on the local/national level were rapidly echoed on a transnational level and the slogans were focused on similar universal notions, such as justice, democracy or equality. As a result of social media, the form and speed of organization of the crowds were immense, and the impact of the events cascaded throughout different cities, such as New York, Madrid, London and Paris. People were angrily expressing their ideas in different cities of the world, but although they were speaking different languages, they were saying the same things in terms of what they wanted from their states. However, in comparison to previous social movements in history, the activists were more related to the reactions of other people and encouraged by the international support. In this sense, social media was an arena through which the ideas of different people were shared all around the world and it allowed them to gather around the same universal ideas.

One year later, on May 28, 2013, a similar protest was ignited in Turkey. A large protest erupted against the removal of some trees in Gezi Park in order

to build a new shopping mall in Taksim Square, Istanbul. The protests soon became nationwide uprisings against the government. Of utmost importance, from the first days of the activity, social media had a leading role in the events. Most of the young participants in the Gezi protests were the post-1980 generation, whose uninterested attitude towards politics was a result of having grown up within the de-politicized atmosphere following the military coup of 1980. It is quite remarkable that they were the generation who were generally criticized for being indifferent to politics and passive citizens. Yet, they showed a notable participation in these protests right from the outset. Different to the norms of Turkish politics, they were very satirical and even enjoying the protests with their graffiti, slogans or comics, which indicates that the protests were far from being ordinary. In a survey, most of them reported that they had been informed about the protests via social media. They emphasized that they had not planned to go to the protests but spontaneously participated after they witnessed violence as it spread through social media (Gümüş, 2016: 7).

At the beginning of the protests, when thousands of people marched on the streets of many large cities in Turkey and there were harsh encounters between citizens and the police, no TV channel in Turkey covered the incidents, apart from two marginal networks. Every piece of information, including pictures and videos, were all taken from the social media channels, Facebook or Twitter. People used these channels to become organized, as well as to share thoughts, photos and videos of the events as they happened. As a major source of distribution, Twitter traffic increased to a peak of 25 million messages on the 1st of June, which normally varied between 6 to 8 million on average. The speed of reactions and organization were also remarkable. People showed widespread immediate reaction in a very short time, many within hours or minutes. Unlike the usual number of 1 million per a day in Turkey, over 2.5 million distinct users of social media participated in the social interaction during the events (Insight Radar, 2013). More than 224 million tweets were posted between 29th of May and 17th of June (Insight Radar, 2013). In order to reach an international audience, users also preferred to write their messages in English in order to spread the word. Hashtags #direngezi (resist gezi), #duranadam (man stands still) became trending topics for Turkish users and then international users within one day.

The updates were plentiful and very rapid, akin to an instant messaging system. In the absence of any TV coverage of the developments, people had the opportunity to follow events that took place on a minute by minute basis by reading the tweets of a man asking for help when escaping from the police, watching the water canon vehicles' targeting people or protestors suffocating from tear gas. As the number of tweets and status updates increased, the number of people in the streets also grew. The small-scale environmentalist activity was

transformed into a country-wide social protest. Nevertheless, the impact of social media alarmed the government and the prime minister soon described Twitter as the "troublemaker". Because of their tweets or online sharing, hundreds of people were taken from their houses, detained and charged with being part of secessionist activity. The protests have weakened over time, but the government's sensitivity to social media has increased with these events.

From Tunisia to Egypt, and from Libya to Turkey, these events continued for several months. By 2013, protests slowed down, with the brutal intervention of governments, pro-government protests or military inclusion. Although important democratization steps were taken, such as changing the leadership understanding that was separated from the public's demands and reminding the responsibilities of the governments, it also brought with it a serious power vacuum in the Arab world. Early hopes that corruption in the whole region will end and participatory democracy will come were replaced by a pessimistic picture for almost the entire region. It is only possible to talk about the positive impact of the Arab uprisings in Tunisia, which passed to constitutional democracy as of 2018, and in Algeria and Sudan, where authoritarianism was curbed, albeit limited.

Deep levels of social and economic exclusion, political polarization and the inhibiting effect of regional conflict stand as key barriers in front of any further democratization (Bailey, 2017). Even though the uprisings did not end up with success, the experience and courage are constructed through them, and this, in the long run, would mean experiential and transformative learning. Indeed, some authors believe that the popular uprisings in Sudan, Algeria, Syria, Iraq and Egypt and the desire of the peoples to be an equal and free citizen are still an indication that the Arab Spring is still ongoing (Gabon, 2019).

In fact, participating in a movement or witnessing it can educate the adult. It can change the life perspective of the participant and give a critical consciousness in the long run (Holford, 1995). Nothing can change the fact that the neglected and underestimated citizens of the region were able to change the fate of governments when they were organized. Even this reality is enough to change the fabric of politics in the region and to encourage the states to take their citizens more into consideration as possible active participants. Standing back from the current polarization and conflict in the region, an optimist note about the future is striking. Current upheavals will lead to more inclusive system of government in the long run, as the middle classes grow and education levels increase (Bailey, 2017).

The interest in the internet can be a reference point. As can be seen in the Table 2 below, the increase in the number of internet users, which is 11,559 % in

Africa and 5,395 % in the Middle East, is clearly different from the increase in other parts of the world.

Table 1 – World Internet Usage and Population Statistics

WORLD INTERNET USAGE AND POPULATION STATISTICS 2019 Year-End Estimates						
World Regions	Population (2020 Est.)	Population % of World	Internet Users 31 Dec 2019	Penetration Rate (% Pop.)	Growth 2000-2020	Internet World %
Africa	1,340,598,447	17.2 %	526,374,930	39.3 %	11,559 %	11.5 %
Asia	4,294,516,659	55.1 %	2,300,469,859	53.6 %	1,913 %	50.3 %
Europe	834,995,197	10.7 %	727,814,272	87.2 %	592 %	15.9 %
Latin America / Caribbean	658,345,826	8.5 %	453,702,292	68.9 %	2,411 %	10.0 %
Middle East	260,991,690	3.9 %	180,498,292	69.2 %	5,395 %	3.9 %
North America	368,869,647	4.7 %	348,908,868	94.6 %	222 %	7.6 %
Oceania / Australia	42,690,838	0.5 %	28,775,373	67.4 %	277 %	0.6 %
WORLD TOTAL	7,796,615,710	100.0 %	4,574,150,134	58.7 %	1,167 %	100.0 %

Source: Internet World Stats: Usage and Population Statistics (https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm) accessed 02 March 2020

The Arab Spring was an important turning point as the chain of events in which the people of the region took to the streets for the first time with demands such as freedom and equality. It is also quite plausible to explain this situation by finding a platform where ordinary individuals can express themselves and share it with others. In this study, it is claimed that these uprisings are an important turning point in which ordinary individuals come together and become effective actors. Global information network and communication is not limited to a single region or time zone. In recent years, there have been social mobilizations with different purposes and orientations in many parts of the world.

We see the radical right-wing movements, such as German Pegida and the Greek Golden Dawn movement; or the radical left Greek Syriza and the Spanish Podemos social movements. Smartphones, social media and all kinds of digital media are used during these movements. In fact, in these countries, which are at a much better level of prosperity than in the Middle East, these opportunities have been used by the activists more widely. Due to the relatively free and democratic environment in their communities, these people are able to express themselves openly from the very first stages of organizing, without the need for the secrecy or the untraceable armor of the internet. Social media has been used as the media

of communication, as expected. For the Arab case, it became more than that and turned into the platform of the protest. It was even the reason for it to become a movement. Without the power of the social media, these societies had almost no freedom to freely communicate, organize a protest or gather in public without police brutality. Therefore, the virtual world has a very different purpose and meaning for individuals who live in countries under pressure and whose freedoms are limited. Perhaps the only way they can powerfully reveal the backlash stuck in them is social media. In other words, beyond being a communication tool, social media has the potential to be a tool of change at social, national and even global levels.

Conclusion

Communication is a social phenomenon. The techniques, methods or ways of communication are not exogenous factors of social or political change. Development of communication techniques does not only mean the ways that people connect change, it also means enlargement of the scale of social functions and generating new societies. We are witnessing the beginning of a rapid societal transformation that will change the world as we know it. The virtual space is weakening national boundaries and the traditional powers of states. The new citizens of the world are not only the receivers of information. Information flows are no longer only from the state or industrial broadcasting media to people, but also from people to people. The new citizen, who used to be the "audience" of world politics, is now capable of rocking states with the virtual power and a capacity to see more, to learn better and to distribute easier.

Interconnectedness, hyper-mediation and speed generates new forms of social relations. The pace is so fast that it cannot be explained easily by conventional social theories. The world is no longer built around the states and their impermeable boundaries. It is flexible, multilayered and dynamic. IR needs to develop a better grasp of this new world and find out why it with the speed of change has lost the alacrity, celerity and sensitivity.

When it was caught off-guard with the Arab Spring and its transnational impact, the problem of the discipline was clear. Within just a few days, local protests in Tunisia turned into a nationwide protest and then spilled over into other countries. It did not take too long to become a transnational movement, energizing European and American people to shout similar slogans on the streets. Between 2011 and 2013, the world witnessed a series of similar social movements around the world. Two different societies from two opposite sides of the world, the Egyptians of Tahrir Square and the Americans of the Occupy Wall Street, were sharing the same posts on social media, shouted similar slogans and talked the same political language.

The speed of cascading from local to national, then regional and in turn transnational levels showed how porous the national boundaries are and how narrow the classical state-oriented approaches are. The internationalization of ideas and actions is more vast, fast and powerful than ever before. The speed and capacity of communication has empowered people and turned them from invisible to visible actors.

The individual has been acclaimed an actor, perhaps for some time, since Liberal theory started to underline globalization, but it was never felt this powerful and influential before. Yet, it is difficult to determine and define this new actor, since anybody with access to the Internet has the potential. However, maybe it is this uncertainty that makes people more powerful. Every internet user can start a fire and fan the flames with their posts, shares and comments. There is no need for a leader to plan and organize. The new political environment is flexible, borderless and speedy. Actors proliferate. National boundaries become blurred. People are in touch. Words can have echoes on the other side of the world in only seconds and a few clicks can turn into social movements with the power to change history.

Yet, it would be wise be cautious about the change that may come with social media, because social institutions are slowly built and the speed of technological change can be fast for it. The potential of the internet cannot be witnessed in days or weeks, but in years or decades; it is a generational change. The children of the internet are taught by their online peers in terms of how to ask and what they want. They will be more active, fast and effective in the future. The time/space algorithm of social life has started to change and will continue to transform.

A political theory that can explain all this turmoil might be difficult to build but with a dynamic and multilayered approach, it is not impossible. Static and narrow approaches are doomed to failure. IR needs to broaden its ontology to speed up its alacrity. In order to free IR from its straight jacket of "sovereign state" and provide a dynamic vision, a communicative turn can provide the necessary tools for the analysis.

With the virus outbreak that erupted just before the completion of this article, a process started which prompted millions of people to stay at home, to think, share and live on the internet to run business, social relationships and physical needs. Everyday life found a virtual platform to go on. The fact that social media go beyond being a communication tool and create a perception of virtual reality strengthens the possibility that the citizen 2.0 will come out even more experienced and effective from these days.

As a social science dedicated to understanding the social and political developments in the world, IR should develop a sophisticated analysis of this

new actor and its way of moving, thinking and making politics. Hence, social media is the necessary subject matter. As a possible approach, scholars may also focus on ordinary people's Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, and Instagram accounts, in addition to online surveys, or the accounts of well-known political figures or famous academics, which is quite common in IR literature. Social media is too public to be analyzed only focusing on the political leaders or the speculators. However, without any doubt, following everybody or all activity on social media is impossible. Still, there are some ways in which the general tendencies on social media can be analyzed. The trending topic hashtags, popular chat rooms, active online groups or most watched videos can be considered ways of following the political direction of people. This kind of method bears significant differences in comparison to classical research based on given theories around a constant topic. Instead of a socially isolated environment for conducting a study innovative IR scholars should watch and observe the society right from its heart: the social media. The method still needs some improvement since we are referring to an unlimited world, but it is necessary to start somewhere. In other words, instead of focusing on the decision-makers, it is time to build radar that can detect societal commotion.

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