The Arab Spring and the Digital Public Sphere

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How to Protest Intelligently

Important information and tactics

Please distribute through email printing, and photocopies ONLY!

Twitter and Facebook are being monitored. Be careful not to let this fall into the hands of the police or state security.
The Praxis of the Egyptian Revolution

by Mona El-Ghobashy
published in MER258

If there was ever to be a popular uprising against autocratic rule, it should not have come in Egypt. The regime of President Husni Mubarak was the quintessential case of durable authoritarianism. “Our assessment is that the Egyptian government is stable and is looking for ways to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people,” said Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on January 25, 2011. [1] With these words, Clinton gave voice to a common understanding of Egypt under Mubarak. Government officials, pundits and academics, foreign and domestic, thought the regime was resilient -- not because it used brute force or Orwellian propaganda, but because it had shrewdly constructed a simulacrum of politics. Parties, elections and civic associations were allowed but carefully controlled, providing space for just enough participatory politics to keep people busy without threatening regime dominance.

Mubarak’s own party was a cohesive machine, organizing Intramural competition among elites. The media was relatively free, giving vent to popular frustrations. And even the wave of protest that began to swell in 2000 was interpreted as another index of the regime’s skill in managing, rather than suppressing, dissent. Fundamentally, Egypt’s rulers were smart authoritarians who had their house in order. Yet they were toppled by an 18-day popular revolt.

Three main explanations have emerged to make sense of this conundrum: technology, Tunisia and tribulation. Technological analyses celebrate young people who employed new media to defeat a stolid autocrat. By the second day of the Egyptian uprising, CNN correspondent Ben Wedeman was calling it a “very techie revolution.” In the following days, every major news outlet framed the uprising as the work of wired, savvy twentiesomethings awakening the liberating potential of Facebook, Twitter and the writings of American intellectual...
Tunisian protesters with a Mohamed Bouazizi banner (AFP)
Tunisian president Ben Ali visits Mohammed Bouazizi (official photo)
How Tunisia's revolution began

From day one, the people of Sidi Bouzid broke through the media blackout to spread word of their uprising.

Yasmine Ryan Last Modified: 26 Jan 2011 14:30 GMT
“Thank you, Facebook, Al Jazeera” - Tahrir Square, (Mona Sosh)
John Gilmore

“The net interprets censorship as damage and routes around it.”

December 1993
Open Net Initiative, 2010
Political filtering
Danny O’Brien of CPJ on state internet control:

- broad-based filtering (Iran)
- precision censorship (Belarus)
- denial of access to computing resources (Cuba)
- infrastructure control (Ethiopia)
- attacking dissident-run sites (Burma, Vietnam)
- targeted malware (China)
- state cybercrime (Tunisia under Ben Ali)
- killswitch (Egypt under Mubarak)
- detention of bloggers (Syria)
- violence against bloggers, journalists (Russia)
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- methods have broad economic consequences
Internet traffic to and from Egypt on January 27 - 28. At 5:20 pm EST, traffic to and from Egypt across 80 Internet providers around the world drops precipitously.

January 27

January 28
**Iran**
While Iran aggressively filtered Internet access during past unrest, Iranian traffic showed little significant change over the last two weeks.

**Libya**
A traffic slow down beginning late last week culminated in the abrupt loss of all Internet traffic on February 18th.

**Yemen**
After traffic drops earlier in the month possibly related to added filtering, Internet traffic was higher than average last week.

**Algeria**
Traffic remained remarkably constant over last several weeks. No sign of added filtering.

**Bahrain**
Pronounced drop in traffic during the mid-part of last week. Government blamed the slow-down on “overwhelmed Internet circuits”.

**Egypt**
After a week of near complete loss of Internet, Egypt returned to the net last week with normal traffic volumes.
Is the Tunisian internet censorship regime shutting down?

Posted 13 January 2011 20:41 GMT

Categories: Advocacy, Feature, Tunisia, regulation

Written by Ben Wagner

Following persistent widespread protests in Tunisia in recent days and the impending general strike tomorrow, Tunisian President Ben Ali held a speech on the state television channel Tunisie7 this evening with a long list of highly unusual concessions. Among other points he announced that he will not seek presidency for life, a lowering of the prices of basic foodstuffs, that police and soldiers will stop using live ammunition, and that media and internet censorship will be halted.

Since this speech there have been multiple independent reports that previously blocked internet sites such as YouTube or the OpenNet Initiative are now accessible without receiving the typical ‘404’ messages. Nevertheless further tests are required to ascertain whether the Tunisian regime follows through on Ben Ali’s statements.
I CAN HAS INTERNETS?
BAHRAIN: Protesters shot as government seeks to smother protests...
Feb 19, 2011 ... Internet videos show peaceful protesters in Bahrain coming under fire as reports surface that the government used live ammunition Friday to...
latimesblogs.latimes.com/.../bahrain-video-protest-khalifa-violence-shoot.html - Cached

Bahrain Protest Graphic Video - Bahrain | Mediaite
Feb 19, 2011 ... The protests in Bahrain, just one in a series of nations that have been inspired by the revolt in Egypt to host their own anti-government...
www.mediaite.com/.../graphic-video-shows-bahraini-protesters-being-shot-as-they-march-through-street/ - Cached

New shocking video of Bahrain Army shooting protesters with...
4 min - Feb 21, 2011 - Uploaded by RussiaToday
(Warning: RT’s exclusive video contains graphic scenes of violence) Last Friday, at least 50 people have been injured as security forces in...
www.youtube.com/watch?v=UEw3E3Poc7Y

Violent response to Bahrain protest
3 min - Feb 17, 2011 - Uploaded by AlJazeeraEnglish
[WARNING: This video contains images that some viewers may find disturbing] Troops and tanks have locked down the Bahraini capital of...
www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6RCBOC-MAM

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3 days ago
Thousands denounce death sentences for anti-government protesters, and solidarity ... He was referring to video footage that Bahraini authorities have ...