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Abstract

Index terms—

1 I. INTRODUCTION

There is complexly intertwined nexuses, symbiotic interplay and complementary interdependence between the Arab Spring's pro-democracy counter-protests and cyberactivism. The revolutionary uprisings and the insurgent counter-protests of the Arab Spring, whose volcanic eruptions and explosive blowup have engendered tumultuous disarray and fomented outrageous fulminations across the MENA Region, tightened the grip of mass mobilization and cemented the bonds of collective action and co-operative collaboration among the marginalized underdogs (Mourtada, 2012). Throughout this paper, I re-interrogate how the groundbreaking whirlwind of irrepressible political dissidence and iconoclastic insurrections fertilized the soil for democratic enfranchisement, engendered the rise of cyber-activism, facilitated the prevalence of virtually interactive online communities and augmented the ubiquity of digital identities that boomed the widespread of online-activism shifting it to real-life organized demonstrations (Howard, 2010).

The Arab insurgent youths and their effervescent enthusiasm as Netizens and influential Facebook vloggers, cyber-enthusiasts or opinion-leaders harnessed the practical serviceability of cyber-activism to instigate social overhaul, economic perestroika and engendered political The Rise of Cyber-Activism and Digital Disobedience during the Arab Spring Uprisings reforms through the subversive overthrow of autocratic regimes (Mourtada, 2012).

With the exponential upsurge and the cumulative growth of Facebook registrations and twitter penetrations, social movement amid the riotous proliferation of the Arab Spring have been staggeringly skyrocketed and reached their climacteric flashpoint by lifting the curtain on economic parsimony, governmental austerity and the flimsy fragility of their socio-economic infrastructure (Wolfsfeld, 2013 et al.) Since accessibility of Media predetermines the control of political gatekeeping and the distribution of speech and voice articulation, Arab youth political dissidents disheveled the autocracy of the state and catapulted their smothered voices to the international community and externalized their dismal grievances by translating them into real-life protests (Wolfsfeld, 2013 et al.). Hence, it is salient that the technological invention of the so-called cyber-activism has transgressively demolished the ivory-towered recluse, the dismissive marginalization, economic deprivation and the social withdrawal exerted by the armchair Arab intelligentsia and the supremely oligarchic dignitaries who monopolize constitutional ratifications and policymaking. By the same token, cyber-activism has been a groundbreaking breakthrough which swerved the pendulum of the public opinion and reawakened the sleepily dormant and frozenly paralytic spirit of the downtrodden underdogs by raising their political consciousness to divulge the tyrannical dictatorship, malevolent encroachments and the abusive misrule inflicted the Arab autocrats.

The practicable applicability of the media networks and their communicational functions have been expedient in prompting a transgressive trespass of the state enforced political surveillance and its media censorship. The public opinion which was once enchained captive by the enslaving bondage and the constrictive constraints of stifling suffocation is, now, freely unfastened loose and extricated to unleash its furious outrage (Mourtada, 2012). deployed as a terminological neologism to refer to socioeconomic overhaul, reformist refurbishment and constitutional reform in the field of political economy.

Drawing on the theoretical inscriptions, epistemological prescriptions and the conceptual precepts devised by the disciplinary sub-set of Cyber-Anthropology as a deconstructive framework, I shall re-explore in depth how cyber-activism fractured the handcuffing shackles of state-terrorism and went grassroot to exhume the silently

2 II. THEORIZING CYBER-ANTHROPOLOGY AND DIGITAL ACTIVISM AS THEORETICAL PARADIGMS: RE-ASSESSING THE INFLUENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF CYBER-ACTIVISM IN THE ARAB SPRING

48 asphyxiated political interests and expropriated human rights of the subaltern minorities living outside the power
49 structures under the Arab despotic governments.

50 2 II. THEORIZING CYBER-ANTHROPOLOGY AND DIGITAL 51 ACTIVISM AS THEORETICAL PARADIGMS: RE- 52 ASSESSING THE INFLUENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF 53 CYBER-ACTIVISM IN THE ARAB SPRING

54 Cyber-anthropology is a newly emerged disciplinary field of inquiry and an unprecedented scholarly realm which
55 scrutinizes the virtual interactive communication, the formation of digital communities, online identities and
56 the reciprocally transactional exchanges of internetusers in the cyberspace (Sivilisic, 2012). Cyberanthropology
57 as an epistemological doctrine and disciplinary endeavor re-interrogates the cyberculture of technosociality and
58 artificial modes of digital communication systems and the formation of social network online communities that
59 interact virtually. ??Johana, 2011, p. 5).

60 Cyber-anthropology is a sub-set of science-art interface, techno-culture theory and digital sociology which is
61 critically deployed to deconstruct the discursive artificiality involved in cyberspace, and how the exponential up-
62 surge of electrical-mechanical communication systems, teleconferencing techniques and the rampant proliferation
63 of computer-generated works have dominated the human social relations, molded their ideological proclivities and
64 eventually refashioned their behavioral patterns. By the same token, the cumulative growth of ICTs (Information
65 Communication Technologies), and how they influentially reshaped the worldviews of the youth culture and
66 conjointly dovetailed it with the developmental viability of cyber-culture,© 2023 Great] Britain Journals Press
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68 The Rise of Cyber-Activism and Digital Disobedience during the Arab Spring Uprisings videotaping
69 photography and the explosive blowup of digital mania are also quintessential centerpieces recurrently unraveled
70 by the doctrinal epistemology of cyber-anthropology (Sivilisic, 2012).

71 While cyber-anthropology re-examines the digitally technologized youth culture, its customary traditions,
72 modernly updated lifestyles and avant-garde thinking trajectories or groundbreaking illicit activities associated
73 with cyber-criminology such as hacking, privacy disclosure, plagiarism or literary forgery, digital sociology
74 focuses intensely on the type of online conversational exchanges, virtually circulated discourses, the dominantly
75 overarching perceptions and the digital assumptions upheld by the audio-visual postmodern technologized culture
76 (Sivilisic, 2012). Both, digital sociology and cyber-anthropology are practically applicable and efficiently workable
77 once a comparative contradistinction and evaluative juxtapositions of how power dynamics in real-life social
78 relations are correspondingly reflected, incarnated and computerized in the online digital cyberspace. (Sivilisic,
79 2012).

80 Extrapolating from Cyber-Anthropology as a preliminary groundwork and a theoretically foundational
81 springboard, I shall argue that the multi-dimensional efficiency and the pluralistically multi-tasking versatility
82 provided by cyber/Digital Activism have consolidated the grip of the politically conscious and mobilized
83 Arab youths. In the same vein, I am also inclined to demonstrate how 'the right to the city' (Lefebvre,
84 1968), which reiterates the reappropriation and the invasive occupation of the urbanized central cityscape, is
85 contextually reconfigured in this current study as a metaphoric metonymy for proclaiming the right to the
86 democratization of the virtual cyberspace and the de-politicization of digital media through the efficacious
87 serviceability supplemented by cyber-activism.

88 In so doing, I shall revisit and re-conceptualize cyber-anthropology not as a disciplinary field of study but rather
89 as a conceptual praxis, a theoretically analytical paradigm to re-explore how digital technology assisted the Arab
90 insurrectional uprisings to formulate undetected online identities, construct surreptitious digital communities
91 and circulate seditiously antitotalitarian pro-democracy protests, via multimedia platforms, that eventually
92 culminated in the efflorescing springtime of constitutional reform, regime transformation, socio-economic overhaul
93 and democratic transition in the Arab autocracies.

94 Based on the theoretical framework of Cyberanthropology, the principal mainspring of this paper is to
95 reaffirm how cyber-activism, a sub-set or a fraternal offshoot of cyber-anthropology, has empowered the insurgent
96 upheavals of the Arab youth political dissidents and left-wing human rights activists to democratize the political
97 spectrum in the Arab world and topple the theocratic orthodoxy and jurisdictional encroachments fiercely wielded
98 by the despotic rulers and their old-entrenched regimes.

99 In a conference on Media and the Arab Spring hosted by the Communication Studies Master Program at AL-
100 Akhawayn University in Irfan, the scientific committee explicitly divulges the integral centrality of multimedia
101 outlets in strengthening the Arab revolutionary revolts underscoring that "In a region where traditional media
102 have been under strict government control, the internet and social networks provide a space for youths to articulate
103 their political views and organize their political actions" (SHSS, 2014. p. 1). Hence, its plainly salient that
104 cyber-activism marks the interdisciplinary consilience, the symbiotic interplay and the intersectional convergence
105 between digital technology and concretely in-person collective arousal or political mobilization amid the social
106 disarray and the tempestuous turmoil prompted by the Arab spring. Besides, I shall succinctly reconfigure
107 how digital activism aided the politically disenfranchised youths and the downtrodden peripheral underdogs to

108 outvoice their hijacked political interests outside the multimedia modalities and normative mainstream discourse
109 of the Arab governmental autocracies.

110 3 III. REFLECTIONS ON YOUTH DIGITAL DISOBE- 111 DIENCE AND CYBER-ACTIVISM AMID THE ARAB 112 SPRING UPRISINGS

113 The integral centrality of the multimedia corporations, newsmaking institutions and cyberactivism in the diffusive
114 promulgation of prodemocracy protests and anti-totalitarian demonstrations as well as the deposition of the
115 autocratic tyrants rejuvenated heedlessly underresearched political implications and resurfaced the synergistic
116 interplay between real-life insurrections and digital riots during the Arab Spring (Mourtada, 2012). In the
117 scholarly realm of social movements and political activism, media is construed as a liberating cyberspace, an
118 instrumental locomotive or communicative mouthpiece that replaces representative spokespersons as it facilitates
119 collective action, cements the bonds of mass mobilization, streamlines the process of social assembly and relocates
120 the hijacked agency of the silenced peripheral subaltern to the central metropolis of political decision-making
121 and social integration (Wolfsfeld, 2013 et al.) With the cumulative growth of digitalized technology and the
122 ubiquitous popularity of multimedia corporations and other communicative outlets, social media networks have
123 been the vehicular mediums whereby videotaped footages displaying homicidal criminalities of police brutalities,
124 sadomasochistic violence, sexual molestation and physical assault were put in the limelight of the public's eye
125 to unmask the callous cruelty of the Arab autocrats (Mourtada, 2012). Besides, Media is the oxygenating
126 lifeblood of virtually 'cyber-activism' and pro-democracy counter-protests as it is an accessible gateway of self-
127 representation, political criticism and unconstrained freedom of speech which breached the constrictive shackles
128 of stifling censorship dismantled the enchaining strictures of regimental regulations and political surveillance.
129 Thanks to multimedia outlets, newsmagazines and documentaries, Bouazizi's tragic demise and his dystopian
130 plight have gone global as they prevalently occupied the institutional agendas of human rights organizations,
131 inspired the strategic vision of diverse NGOs and triggered global citizenship or universally altruistic solidarity
132 as well as transnational realignments irrespective of the divisive disjunctures of cultural heterogeneity, racial
133 disparities, ethnic differences and geographical remoteness. Through media circulations and its diffusive online
134 transmissions, Bouazizi's suicidal tragedy went grassroot and stimulated a popular ubiquity which generated
135 an ideological backlash deconstructing the ivorytower paradigms of stifling censorship and repressive suffocation
136 (Wolfsfeld, 2013 et al) Media is an incentivizing catalyst that fertilizes the soil for irrepressible social activism,
137 the formation of social network cobwebs, the construction of virtually digital communities and collective action
138 of mass mobilization (Wolfsfeld, 2013 et al.) The peripheral subaltern protesting for democracy harnessed the
139 practical serviceability of media to dishevel the autocracy of the state and catapult their smothered voices to the
140 international community. As Wolfsfeld et al critically remarks "When the level of anger and violence rises, all
141 forms of media can serve as accelerators for increasing the speed and intensity of protests." (p.182).

142 The profitable serviceability and the diffusive transmissions of the aired newsreels and televised broadcasts
143 have engendered an unprecedented turn in protest politics through making a transformational shift from real-life
144 orchestrated demonstrations to virtually mediated cyberactivism. The latter is a practically workable mechanism
145 whose rampant proliferation garnered the spotlight of the international media coverage, relocated the hijacked
146 agency and the stifled voice of the displaced peripheries to the central metropolis and destabilized the technocratic
147 suzerainty of the Arab policymakers by exerting lobbying pressure on the elitist stakeholders to democratize the
148 political spectrum. Hence, media as a liberating cyberspace to outvoice the subdued aspirations of the twisted
149 subaltern has subversively created a periphery-inclusive counter-narrative that disruptively demolished the state-
150 sponsored rhetorical propaganda, frustrated its insidious disorientations, infiltrated its unscrupulous corruption
151 and supplanted its monological dogmatism by calling into play London Journal of Research in Humanities
152 and Social Sciences dialogical inter-discursivity as a democratic policy of state-citizen reciprocal negotiations
153 to propound strategic visions of state-rebuilding avenues and constitutional remaking (Mourtada, 2012).

154 The de-politicization of media initiates the inaugural startup of the democratization of policymaking, the
155 liberalization of constitutional ratification as well as the de-militarization of the state (Wolfsfeld, 2013 et
156 al). Metaphorically, Cyber-activism served as an agora-like terrain of political leadership negotiations, the
157 reciprocal exchange of attitudes and the large-scale diffusion of conscious-raising anti-government campaigns
158 that blow the whistle on heinous aspects of corruption, chronic unemployment, social injustice and economic
159 impoverishment. Media is a democratizing mechanism of expository denunciation, castigating revilement and
160 divulging disembowelment which blows the whistle on ferocious rapacity, greedy avidity and covetous avarice of
161 the pot-bellied parliamentarians who ravish the innately inborn rights of the civil society and politicize public
162 sectors by militarizing the country. It casted the spotlight on administrative corruption, chronic unemployment,
163 aggressive pugnacity and belligerent political detention exerted by the state as it disclosed its dysfunctional
164 deficiency, myopic shortsightedness, constitutional misconduct as well as ideological miscarriages (Mourtada,
165 2012).

166 Cyber-activism and virtually interactive transaction across social networks have consolidated the perceptive
167 conceptuality of the rebellious youths and equipped them with a spacious arena to sharpen their innovative
168 creativity, strengthen their sagacious perspicacity and deepen their political consciousness empowering their ide-

4 EVOKING MCLUHAN'S CONCEPTUAL PARADIGM OF THE "

169 logical stamina. Accordingly, Media platforms served as prophylactic immunity and oxygenating lifeblood that
170 resurrect their deadened spirit from the underground dungeon of peripheral subalternity through foregrounding
171 it to the frontispiece of socio-economic integration, political engagement and participatory involvement in the
172 decision-making system and the democratic declaration of their destiny (Wolfsfeld, 2013 et al).

173 A variegated array of zoom symposiums, virtual assemblies and online teleconferencing summits have
174 been frequently held to reflect upon and bureaucratize protest politics propounding state-rebuilding avenues,
175 alternative strategic visions of constitutional reform, socio-economic overhaul and regime transformation (Sivilisic,
176 2012).

177 The seditious mobilization and the co-operative collaboration of collective rallies are orchestrated through
178 interactive virtual communication and message-texting as well as teleconferencing digital techniques.

179 Media is the mechanical locomotive and the supportive linchpin which served as a pivotal pillar, if not
180 empowering backbone of political protestations and instigated a shift from real-life demonstrations to cyber-
181 activism (Mourtada, 2012). For instance, Intifada is an independently autonomous and anti-totalitarian Facebook
182 page devised by the downtrodden underdogs and the marginalized peripheral subaltern living outside the power
183 structures of the tyrannical regime to relocate their hijacked agency of political mobility and unconstrained
184 social action to the central locus of decision-taking and policymaking. Intifada is a media platform originated as
185 a defensive crackdown, a liberating cyberspace and a confrontational countermeasure to democratize the state and
186 re-bureaucratize parliamentary elections of electoral presidency. Media, therefore, destabilized the tectonic plates
187 of state-citizen asymmetrical power imbalances, architectural configuration of space occupation and disheveled the
188 socially structured pyramidal hierarchies of class stratification and divisive disjunctures through counter-forcing
189 the mainstream media.

190 At the individually micro-level, cyber-activism served as expressive mouthpiece that aided the disenfranchised
191 subaltern living outside the power structures to externalize their despicable grievances, disclose their alarming
192 discontent and unfold their disappointing letdown inflicted by the selfishly egocentric and tyrannical rulers. While
193 the mainstream media and its repressive military apparatus exerted mouth-shutting policies of disproportionate
194 violence, tragic casualties and focused on the separative dispersal of the orchestrated protests, the mass controlled
195 London Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences cyber-activism concentrated on tightening the
196 grip of convergent unification, co-operative collaboration and mobilized collective action (Mourtada, 2012).

197 4 Evoking McLuhan's conceptual paradigm of the "

198 Medium is the message", the Arab youth iconoclastic rebels have revolted through the cyberspace as a vehicular
199 spacecraft and a liberating outlet that can relocate their agency and disruptively unsettle the constrictive
200 strangle holds of online censorship and suffocating political surveillance enforced by the totalitarian Arab regimes
201 (McLuhan, 1964; Johana, 2011,p. 5).

202 Hence, the omnipresent ubiquity of the cyberspace has blurrily overstepped and transcended the boundaries
203 surpassing the divisive disjunctures which used to distinctively demarcate the ordinarily conceivable real from
204 the unfamiliarly artificial hyper-real. Accordingly, the real-life revolutionary mobilization and the fomented
205 fulminations of appropriating the central urban spaces as riotously turbulent hotspots of social activism are
206 supplanted by the contagiously transmissible outrage of cyberactivism and the thickly ascendant domination of
207 the cyberspace as a 'third-space' of power negotiation to outvoice the stifled subaltern minorities outside the
208 preponderantly hegemonic jurisdictional autocracy of the Arab dictatorial governments. Therefore, the heretical
209 defiance and the rebellious disobedience of the Arab youth cyberculture is unabashedly channeled and outlined
210 outside the normative patriarchal infrastructure and the intransigently uncompromising belief systems inherently
211 fossilized in the Islamocentric conservatism-oriented regimes.

212 The traumatizing case of Tunisia, whose riotous atrocities and police brutalities, account for the tragically
213 suicidal self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in the small-scaled town of Sidi Bouzid after he had been
214 humiliated and stigmatized by a female police officer, had gone virtually viral pervading the cyberspace before
215 they were translated into nationwide organized counterprotests. It is, therefore, remarkably insightful to note
216 that "through blogs and text messages that Tunisians experienced what the sociologist Doug McAdam calls
217 "cognitive liberation." ?? Howard, 2010,p.2). Similarly, In Egypt for instance, the tragic casualties, political
218 detentions, repressive imprisonment and the catastrophic collateral damage catalyzed the explosive outbreak
219 of civil disobedience manifestly incarnated in the proliferation of cyberactivism as "Wael Ghonim started the
220 Facebook group "We are All Khaled Said" to keep alive the memory of the 28-year-old blogger, whom police had
221 beaten to death on 6 June 2010 for exposing their corruption." ??Howard, 2010, p.2).

222 It is a markedly phenomenal veracity and an irrefragable assertion to reiterate that politics of intimidating
223 terrorization and dismaying trepidations usually breed forms of confrontational media backlash and defensive
224 pushback. As Foucault critically articulates in his voluminous treatise on the historical archeology of sexuality
225 that "where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, 1984). In the same vein, while evoking Spivak's
226 philosophical reflections on protest politics in the Arab world enunciated in her intriguing essay, *The Subaltern
227 Speaks Through Dying* (2021), The notion of death becomes a provocatively stimulating impetus that animates
228 the inextinguishable flames of both, social demonstrations and cyber-activism as complexly complementary
229 avenues, if not strategic blueprints of political democratization. By the same token, as Daniel Gaxie pinpoints
230 in his article, *The Rewards of Activism* (2017), that a political commitment to a deep-seated convictions and

231 irreversibly unshakable political cause fuels the unstoppable willingness of self-sacrifice because the steadfast
232 attachment to a politically committed belief is a satisfactory reward in itself.

233 Despite the virtually displayed videotaped footages, organized cyber-activism and the broadcasting of online
234 newsreels and screen images, the Arab youths proved recklessly fearless, and that they developed an unconquerable
235 immune indomitable intrepidity and ideological stamina that securely shields and safeguards them against politics
236 of fear. Hence, bravely undeterred by the repressive state political apparatus inflicted by the police violent
237 torture and dehumanizing felonies, the heroic London Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences
238 youths remained persistently resilient and tenaciously strenuous clinging to their imperishable cause of demanding
239 democracy harnessing the power of multimedia corporations as practical mechanism. Once again, in Spivak's
240 conceptual percepts, the Arab peripheral subaltern social and ethnic minorities rebelling against the heinous
241 forms of social deprivation and presidential wrongdoings have been loudly overheard and outspoken through the
242 monopolization of mass-controlled media and cyber-activism as enabling power structures (1988).

243 5 IV. CONCLUSION

244 In her critically electrifying and thoughtprovoking classical essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak* (1988), Gayatri Spivak
245 has reflexively re-envisioned and revisited the state-citizen dialectical power relations and conflictual discordances
246 or what social movement scholars designate as the cultural Incongruence hypothesis (Sakbani, 2015). The elected
247 enunciating social actors and the representative political stakeholders as supremely hegemonic policymakers and
248 governmental dignitaries overlook the periphery-inclusive policy of conversational dialogues, political engagement,
249 and co-operative collaboration as the rudimental terrain of obtaining contractual consensus and procuring the
250 general will subscribed by the uniformly collective conscious. They paradoxically take recourse in the employment
251 of mouthshutting avenues or truncheon-oriented approaches as repressive state-apparatuses to exert jurisdictional
252 theocracy, despotic totalitarianism, marginalizing dismissal and coercive oppression (Spivak, 1988).

253 Whether consciously recognized or unconsciously undiscerned, the explosive blowup and the outrageous
254 outbursts of the Arab youths political dissidents are dubbed as the prognosticative harbinger heralding the
255 advent of an optimistic springtime of political consciousness and the temperamental penchant towards social
256 democracy. The de-politicization of the newsmaking agencies and the democratization of media platforms
257 disruptively unsettled the top-bottom hierarchized monological flow of media transmissions and transformed
258 them into a dialogically inter-discursive monopoly which adopts an inclusively centrifugal approach. The
259 architectural configuration of discourse industrialization, consent-manufacturing and the panoptical surveillance
260 of the technocratic Arab state are deposed and toppled by a heterotopical auto-ethnography which re-narrativizes
261 the repressed history of the margins which was erstwhile thrust in the wasteland of amnesiac oblivion.

262 Media platforms strengthen the widespread promulgation of twits, anti-totalitarian hashtags, videotaped
263 footages of police brutalities and images of the severely injured peaceful protestors during their frictional encounter
264 with the horrendous repression of the military apparatuses. Hence, it is plainly decipherable that the young "The
265 cyber-enthusiasts express optimism about the ability of the new media to empower people living in nondemocratic
266 societies and to allow insurgents to adopt new strategies." (Wolfsfeld, 2013 et al, p. 117).

267 In a synoptic brevity, it is, hereby, noteworthy to espouse the assertion that Cyber-activism instigated
268 unprecedented transformational metamorphosis in the tectonic plates of citizen-state power structures prompting
269 an upside-down reversal in the periphery-center hierarchized paradigm that supplanted the exclusively state-
270 centered model of tyrannical dictatorship by a periphery-inclusive bottom-up reformist approach which is
democratically centrifugal.¹



Figure 1: 1

271

¹ The Rise of Cyber-Activism and Digital Disobedience during the Arab Spring Uprisings

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