The Birth and the Death of *facebook* Democracy

*Social media as the ultimate game changer in the quest for democracy*

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

REFERENCES
Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried. - Winston Churchill, November 11, 1947, in the House of Commons of the British Parliament

1. Introduction

1.1. Social Media and Democracy Promotion - Questions

facebook, MySpace, google +, Вконтакте, LinkedIn, hi5, tagged, iWiW, Wordpress, blogger, Twitter, YouTube. These websites – and many others – may be for different uses – the first seven being social networking websites, the next three being (micro)blogging pages and the last one a video sharing service – but they have one thing in common: they are all used for one purpose: networking. To be more exact: social networking. Even if not all of those websites are de facto social networks – see the definition later on – all of them are used for this purpose. You can “friend” and “follow” people, post messages, photos and videos and comment on other’s posts on all of these sites. Even if the interaction is uneven – in case of blogging – there is an interaction and that is how social networking is built up.

Today Internet and social networking shape how we see the world. People no longer have the limited insight which newspapers, magazines and televised news programs give them. They can be up to date about another person’s life who lives on the opposite side of the globe without any intermediary channel between them. That is why social networking is seen as a great tool to promote “world democracy.” People –
anywhere, anytime – have the ability to report what they have seen, to tell their opinion, to ask for help or just to attract attention to their situation. Take the events of 2011, for example. It is a common belief that the revolutionary wave of the so-called Arab Spring could not have happened without the help of social media. People used the abilities listed above and ignited revolutions which – will or will not – spur democracy. At least this is what we like to believe. By “we” I mean the people living in so-called free and democratic countries. In reality, though, posting on blogs, on facebook and YouTube is not always a possibility, nor is the very access to the Internet. And when it is, there is always the inevitable question coming up: why? Why would an oppressive regime suddenly enable access to facebook, which has been forbidden for years, as it did in Syria? Surely, not because they are just trying to be “cool” about it. Most likely there is an ulterior motive, perhaps it is just surveillance, but cannot it be also manipulation?

With all these question marks around can we really say that the Internet and especially social networking has such a great role in shaping the world’s events as people were led to believe by – the more traditional forms of – the media? And if it does have a role, is it shaped by common, everyday people who believe their posts can change the world or do governments and their agencies control what is posted and where? Social networking is a buzz word (phrase) today. Everything is organized on facebook and the resulting events are being reported on Twitter with the videos of these events posted on YouTube. Today media tells people that without the World Wide Web nothing and with it everything is possible and sadly both the people and the governments believe the media.

When the government is supported fully – or at least mostly – by the people, there is no problem. However, authoritarian regimes are usually not supported by most of the people, but the people are suppressed not to be able to tell their real opinions. With the Internet they are given a superb tool, argue many, what they forget is that Internet only exists where it is allowed to exist. You can be the fiercest online revolutionary, but if the plug is pulled you became a simple lame duck. Yes, it is true that the tools of online revolutions have evolved greatly in the past few years, but so did the tools of governments to keep Internet under control. From total ban (North Korea) through selective blocking of contents (many countries in the world) to “harmonization” (China).
In the light of what has been said so far the main questions are: does posting on social networks really promote social change? Is social networking a good tool to achieve a revolution and force a change in authoritarian states and is it a good tool for the authoritarian states to track and/or eliminate unwanted anti-government individuals? And if a government eventually failed, was protesting online, on social media sites enough to make the transition into democracy or were there other requirements without which it cannot have been made?

1.2. Structure of the Thesis

To answer the above questions this thesis will deal with various contemporary international events, concentrating on social unrest, highlighting how and for what people used the Internet (i.e. social networks). It will also compare the level of Internet monitoring and control in the selected countries trying to establish a link between the strictness of censorship and the results of social movements. Along with the case studies the question of democracy and challenges of democracy building / maintenance will be brought up. The case studies will primarily focus on non-European or North American events with a clear emphasis on the Arab Spring of 2011, mentioning some previous examples from Iran and Moldova and taking a brief detour to China and North Korea. Along with these two countries in the final chapters the point of view of so-called developed states will also be presented together with the challenges of maintaining their democratic standards while trying to keep order (an example for this is the recent riot in the United Kingdom).

In the case studies first the factual events – obviously only the ones which have relevance in our topic – will be presented then the perceived role of social media will be examined as well as the governments’ response. Each study will be concluded with the establishment of what the role of the Internet in reality was – in contrast to the role as perceived in the media – and the – possible – outcome.

However, before heading right into the studies, some definitions and terms should be clarified in connection with social media as well as with democratic and authoritarian regimes. The ways, methods and degrees of government control also need elaboration and, while for the parts about the Internet and social media only
contemporary authors will be consulted, for the definition and typology of regimes historical quotes, along with recent studies, will provide great insights.
2. Definitions of Social networking and the Description of the Methods of the Abuse and Control of Social Networking Sites by the Governments

2.1. More than just facebook – Defining Social Networks

People tend to look upon social media (from here on usually referred to as SM) as just facebook. While facebook may be the most well-known social networking site (referred to as SNS), other forms of SM exist. First off, there was life before facebook, as Boyd and Ellison say:

“Since their introduction, social network sites (SNSs) such as MySpace, Facebook, Cyworld, and Bebo have attracted millions of users, many of whom have integrated these sites into their daily practices” (Boyd and Ellison, 2007)

and also social media is much more than social networking. There are also, for example, blogs, video sharing services and, finally, perhaps the most important of all, the new form of blogging: microblogging, its premier site being Twitter. Twitter can not only play a great role in the organization of movements, but it can play an even greater role in spreading the news about what is happening.

While SNSs are defined as

“…web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

the term, social media, is much more complex. Although it still primarily refers to the Internet and nothing else, but on the Internet, not just SNSs, but everything which people use to “socialize,” to express their thoughts, to connect with others is a social medium. Also many web pages, previously not intended to work like SNSs are now adding SNS like functions, like marking other users of the service as friends, messaging them, etc…
Some may argue then that Internet, itself, is a social medium. Yet, the Internet is not primarily for two-way person to person communication. Although it is great forum to get information, before sites like facebook, YouTube and Twitter, people usually got information from web pages of companies, governments and other organizations. With the appearance of the aforementioned sites, Internet, however, truly became social with people getting information from each other without a channel to moderate. At least that would be the ideal situation.

2.2. “Harmonizing your life” – The Way Governments can Control and Abuse SNSs

As the Internet became social and more and more communication was redirected to this new medium it was obvious that governments and their agencies became more and more interested in the traffic and communication going across its so-called social media. In accordance with Eriksson and Giacomello I propose a three plus three layer model of controlling and checking the Internet.

First, there are three dimension of Internet control: “(1) access to the Internet, (2) functionality of the Internet, and (3) activity on the Internet” (Eriksson and Giacomello, 2009:206). Out of which the first is obvious, a state either allows its citizen to access the Internet or not, however, it only has local reach. States cannot cut other states off the Internet completely – although some states may have the necessary power to cut off some others, but it could only happen in the most extreme cases –. Functionality is mainly the technical aspect of control, while the last, activity is the most important for us now, as…

“Control of online activity can take many different forms: (3a) filtering and blocking of particular parts or features of the Internet such as websites, search words, or online communities; (3b) surveillance of online activity, for example, surf logs, spyware, and more comprehensive eavesdropping of electronic communications (see Dunn Cavelty), which is done for instance through the much debated Echelon system; and finally (3c) attempts to shape and control social and political discourse through various means of
Governments usually do not choose to block full access (except maybe for North Korea) to the Internet, instead they filter particular content. Surveillance of online activity and (mis)information, on the other hand, is more common than we would think. Filtering though is not always for the wrong reasons, for example, in many countries ISPs (Internet Service Providers) are forced to block content featuring, e.g.: child pornography. However, many governments use these techniques to filter out the sites which are “not compatible” with the state’s ideology. Surveillance also happens every day. In democracies most of this is lawful, and is either conducted by interior law enforcement agencies based on a court order, or the source of the intelligence is public, or “open,” so gathering it does not violate the rights of other people/states/organizations. However, in not so democratic regimes interior law enforcement agencies can employ surveillance techniques to gather information about anti-government individuals without a warrant, while in these states also “Open Source Intelligence” (hereafter referred to as OSINT) is not always that open source. Think of facebook profiles for example. Many people would say that facebook profiles are open to the public, but facebook currently employs a wide range of privacy settings to make some of the information private and only be seen by your closest friends.

If a government agency checks out those parts, the question of “open sourceness” is not that obvious. Also, if it is done through a fake persona, who then “befriends” an individual, then the agency behind that persona does not explicitly violate any law, since it only accesses the part which is open for “its” profile.

A similar event happened just recently when a profile was created on facebook for NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander James Stavridis through which the creator of the profile befriended many top military leaders and Ministry of Defense officials. The problem was that it was a fake profile and the creator was not the NATO commander. Rumors say that “state-sponsored individuals in China” (“Fakebook: Bogus NATO Chief Spies On Top-Level Friends,” 2012) were behind the operation, but as of April 24, 2012 it has not been verified.

The third form of action a government can take is the “attempt to shape” opinions about events, by setting up posts serving the goals of the agents of a
government. One might think that governments do not resort to such actions, but why not? As it was reported by the guardian:

“The U.S. military is developing software that will let it secretly manipulate social media sites by using fake online personas to influence Internet conversations and spread pro-American propaganda” (“Revealed: U.S. spy operation…,” 2011)

and

“…a programme called Operation Earnest Voice (OEV), […] was first developed in Iraq as a psychological warfare weapon against the online presence of al-Qaida supporters and others ranged against coalition forces” (“Revealed: U.S. spy operation…,” 2011).

from here there is only a small step to connecting the dots. If such a program exists (and works) it can easily be used to shape local and international events, to provide misinformation and also non-existent support to a government and/or anti-government forces. Obviously, in democracies, such as the United States of America supposed to be, there are safeguards, but

a) these safeguards are usually for domestic use only

b) they are not always respected, particularly when national security is endangered

c) and even if these safeguards exist they only exist in somewhat democratic states.

The “50 Cent Gang” of China, for example, uses the same tactics. According to the Le Monde, they are the “agents” of a similar program with the goal of raising support for the government on the Internet. It is rumored that members of the “Gang” are...

“…paid a half Yuan (0.05 €, the price of a subway ticket) for every pro-government comment left on forums, chat rooms, and blogs” (Ulrich, 2009).

In China, however, this is not the only “creative” use of the Internet. There is their way of web-“harmonization,” which means that...

“an automatic filter, an invisible hand, suppresses a word here, a name there, any phrases, comments, blogs, or images that are undesirable” (Ulrich, 2009).

By the way, this method also belongs to the third category of control, manipulation.
Salhi tellingly writes that “the state’s control […] is a matter of degree, not […] an either/or issue” (Eriksson and Giacomello, 2009:207), which is indeed very true and not just in the states we would normally think of.
3. Typology of Political Systems, Definitions of Democratic and Authoritarian Regimes and Understanding the Term of Social Change

To be capable of fully understanding and analyzing the events in democratic and in authoritarian states one should first give a definition, a concrete typology. The questions which immediately arise are: what is a democracy, what is an authoritarian state and which is better? The uprisings of the Arab Spring demanded social changes. But do we know what that exactly means, what is a social change and where the people wanted their society to move from and to?

Aristotle in his book, Politics presents three types of governments. The royalty controlled tyranny, the aristocracy led oligarchy and the constitution based democracy. Even today most political systems can be grouped into these three categories with adjusting royalty to, for example, military borne dictators and aristocracy to party political committees. However, even Aristotle admits that these three groups in reality form only two bigger opposing groups of states. Although he does not use these exact words, a more obvious line can be drawn here, between democratic and authoritarian states. To the latter category belongs both tyranny and oligarchy, as they are both governed without the consent of the major population and by a small elite.

Although these two main groups still exist, the states today can be also classified based on their level of development and history. The classification of different social systems presented here will be based on the typology originally used by Almond, Mundt and Powell in their 1993 book, Comparative Politics, yet the original grouping of the authors will be slightly altered, even in the beginning, to serve the purpose of putting the regimes in either the authoritarian or democratic category. Also, be aware that, as in the realist perspective only nation states exist, in the following grouping “nation” is used as a synonym to state, but in the current world order many inner state conflict and civil wars are based on the fact that states are composed of many nations, including the very states of our case studies.
3.1. Authoritarian Systems

Hereby, by authoritarian state we mean the states which are not ruled by a democratically elected government, but by people who either seized power themselves by any other means than democratic elections – which is a form of elections where there is a suitable number of opponents who have a realistic chance to overcome the current leaders – or who have inherited it in some way. By people we do not necessarily mean one individual, however, beside traditional dictatorships, we also put regimes lead by a party or military committee of selected individuals under the authoritarian label. So if we use Aristotle’s typology both tyrannical and oligarchic systems belong to this category.

3.1.1. Authoritarian Industrialized Nations

It may be wise to start with this group since the authors of the above mentioned book say, both its subcategories, “its radical and conservative varieties is relatively empty at the moment” (Almond, Mundt and Powell, 1993:182). Yet this statement is still mostly valid for the Latin American and Eastern European countries it was meant for, it is worth mentioning that in the past almost 20 years many things have happened, mostly in Asia. North Korea is an industrialized state and a classic dictatorship – perhaps the last classic dictatorship and tyrannical state in the world – and it is a safe assumption that the People’s Republic of China belongs to this category, as well as did the Soviet Union before 1990, although it is not ruled by one dictator but more of a ruling elite, a new form of “aristocracy.”

3.1.2. Preindustrial Neotraditional and Preindustrial Authoritarian Nations

Although in the original listing these nations form two separate groups, I believe neotraditional nations are in a way also authoritarian, since “they have survived into the modern era with their traditional social structures and cultures mostly unchanged” (Almond, Mundt and Powell, 1993:182), which means that their political system is based on tribal roots and, if they have developed military institutions, is of military rule.
In any case, based on our classification, these systems can and should be called authoritarian, just as well as states which are not neotraditional, but fell into autocracy, for example, after a military coup against a popular democracy. This category of preindustrial authoritarian states (including the ones of neotraditional origins) will be of particular importance for our case study, as most African states of the “Arab Spring” belong to this category.

### 3.2. Democratic Nations

Though subrouping inside democratic nations would also be possible – however, since democracies are usually industrialized societies, it could only be done into the categories conservative and social democratic states – it is not necessary for our goals. Grasping the essence of democracy is more crucial here, since one has to understand why it is seen to be better than autocracy by the masses.

Being better is relative. It was not by accident that Winston Churchill said that “democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried.” Pessimists may say that democracy is just another form of oligarchy, since in both cases it is a powerful elite who maintains control. In the antiquities scholars believed that democracy is doomed to lead into autocracy and they were mostly right. There was always a dictator who could emerge when the antique republics were weakening. This age old story even recurred in the science fiction of the popular culture. The Star Wars saga, a simple tale, presents the story of a thousands of years old republic falling into a cruel dictatorship.

Yet, people thrive for democracy. They may have not heard about the antique scholars – nor of the antique republics – but they must have seen Star Wars. True, there finally the rebellion prevails, but even in popular culture it is a never ending circle. The question is now that if democracy is so elusive and non-lasting, why do people thrive for it and why is it still an ideal and even a stronger ideal for people who do not live in democracies. For those who feel oppressed by their own government reaching for democracy means a whole new opportunity to change the world around them. Even though they themselves might be living in a country which has been – or at least tried to
become – a democracy a number of times and democracy never prevailed, there is always a will for change and for reform.

People fight for the democratic change because they believe, they believe that their lives matter and that they can make the world a better place. People want to decide over their own fates and that is the motivating factor behind thriving for democracies.

As it is written in *Comparative Politics*:

“...democracy consists of political structures that involve citizens in selecting among competing political leaders. The more citizens are involved and the more meaningful their choices, the more democratic the system. (Almond, Mundt and Powell” (1993:82).

So people – “citizens” – want to be involved and want their choices to matter, to be meaningful. That is why I wrote, when describing authoritarian systems, that to a state to be a democracy, democratic elections are needed “which is a form of elections where there is a suitable number of opponents who have a realistic chance to overcome the current leaders.” Obviously, elections held in the former Eastern bloc of Europe and in the Soviet Union itself did not suffice according to this criterion. It is yet another question whether today these are respected or not in every so-called democracy, the recent presidential elections of Russia, for example, were criticized not mainly because of the possibility of cheating, but because, according to international observers, the opposition “did not stand a chance” to win the elections.

Although, as Churchill said, democracy is not the best form of government, and according to Plato when he makes Socrates talk about it, is out of control and like a ship crew without proper leadership –

“Imagine then a fleet or a ship in which there is a captain who is taller and stronger than any of the crew, but he is a little deaf and has a similar infirmity in sight, and his knowledge of navigation is not much better. The sailors are quarrelling with one another about the steering --every one is of opinion that he has a right to steer, though he has never learned the art of navigation and cannot tell who taught him or when he learned, and will further assert that it cannot be taught, and they are ready to cut in pieces anyone who says the contrary” (Plato, 360 BC:Book VI).
– it is still the form of government which involves most of the people and is based on the will of the majority, and up till today, no “better” form was found.

3.3. The Desire for Social Change and the Question of Legitimacy

Social change happens when the society changes – sometimes fundamentally – for better or for worse. As it has been established before, in many (although not in all!) authoritarian states people thrive for social change as they want more influence and more involvement into state matters.

Yet social change may not always happen as expected. Sometimes democracies can turn into cruel dictatorships and even rebellions which start out with people demanding democracy can end up in the military securing the power. Or – perhaps even worse – sinking into anarchy and/or tribal rivalry.

Whenever there is a revolution demanding changes, there are always numerous outcomes possible. The first is when the revolution is put off and the revolutionaries are punished. The other extreme is when the revolution succeeds and the transformation of the system goes down as planned. These are the obvious ones, however, these are also the rare ones and there is a number of possibilities in between them. In preindustrialized countries without strong democratic traditions the outcome of such revolutions is at least questionable.

That is why the outcome of the revolutions of the Arab Spring is unclear. Perhaps new democracies will be formed and the transformation will be completed but there is an equal chance of the failure of realizing social changes.

Social change was a motivator for the people participating in all the following case studies, but not always from autocracy to democracy. Sometimes all they wanted were reforms for better life circumstances, better welfare system, or more transparency. Social change is not necessarily from one type of regime to the other, that is just the most extreme case.

Why people want social change is yet another question. There are democracies in the world where the masses were or are not satisfied. See the Cold War period for example, in many Western countries, today regarded as “sample democracies,”
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Communist parties did everything to force the ultimate social change, the Uprising of the Proletariat, the transformation into socialism. Viewed as the ideal type of the people’s rule in their mind socialism was the highest peak of evolution, an utopian outcome of democracy. While, although they believed Karl Marx when he said “democracy is the road to socialism,” history has proven them wrong. Yet, it was a serious threat to Western societies and no one knows what would have happened if they had overcome in a country like France, for example.

It is true that this was an extreme example, but even today in countries like the United Kingdom and France people go out on the streets and protest. They do not want to overthrow the government, but they desire changes in the social system.

For people to be satisfied their own well being is a crucial factor, but also is the “legitimacy of the government” (Almond, Mundt and Powell, 1993:55). If the legitimacy is weak, even the smallest problems can cause social unrest, but if people accept the government as a legitimate one, elected by the majority by their own free will, they are more willing to make sacrifices when their leaders say it is necessary to do so. As it is put in Comparative Politics:

“A strong and widely shared sense of legitimacy of the political regime may sustain the political system through hard times and help leaders to overcome policy divisions” (Almond, Mundt and Powell, 1993:61).

However, legitimacy cannot be taken for granted. Even if it is given at beginning of a regime’s lifespan it has to be reinforced all over again and again. It is a powerful tool in the hands of the government, but it cannot be abused and even if it was achieved by elections said to be truly democratic, it can be shattered even by the suspicion of manipulation and abuse.

See the events in 2006 in Hungary, for example. After the democratically elected prime minister of the country admitted “lying” during the campaign period outrage spread all over the country, protesters demanded him to resign and to have new elections. It is true that protesters may have not represented the opinion of the majority of the country, but for them what was lost was the legitimacy of the government and they were not really simply unsatisfied with the performance of the system. And, although the protesters’ actions were far too extreme and cannot be legitimized – mainly when they destroyed public and private property – even the possibility of the legitimacy
being lost had serious consequences both to interior and foreign affairs and seriously crippled the work of the government for the remainder of their term.

With the evolution of technology in the 21st century legitimacy is harder and harder to maintain. Disclosing information is no longer the privilege of state overseen media. Internet and social media plays a huge role in spreading the word and how this changed the playing field for the regime and the society is the topic of the next chapter.
4. “Spreading the Word” – New Media and the Challenges to Build Democracy

4.1. The (Hi)story of State Control Over Information

James Madison wrote to W.T. Barry on August 4 in 1822:

“A popular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or, perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: And a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives” (Kurland and Lerner, 1986).

Even then, in the 19th century, this was not an original thought. Throughout the history people in key positions knew that information was power. Without information “or the means of acquiring it,” a state cannot be governed, a stable system cannot be built.

But acquiring information is just one thing, feeding – selected pieces of – information to the public and controlling its flow may be even more important for the leaders of a society. This task proved relatively easy in the beginnings of the history, when the only way for masses to quickly spread the information was by the word of mouth and when people only communicated with their close neighbors.

Later, in the Middle Ages, once in a while came a royal messenger to tell the people of the village what their sovereign wants them to know. The rulers did not disclose unnecessary pieces of information with the common people, they only had to keep the nobility immediately below them informed, not the everyday people. But, by today, societies and communities are so interlinked, so many local, regional and global connections exist that now the official source of information is not anymore the only or even the most trusted source of information.

Based on the advances of technology it is logical to divide history into four parts according to the possibility of the spreading of information.

First was the long period of orality. Spanning from the beginnings of mankind till the New Age all forms of society and government had this feature in common. The information culture was based on the word of mouth. People were told the news by
messengers and stories by the bards. Even though important figures exchanged letters and handwritten books appeared, information was mostly spread orally, therefore even if someone wanted to plot or rebel against the government, they could only do it slowly approaching every prospective participant in person one by one.

This was absolutely different in the next, gradually shorter period of the *printed word*. Guttenberg’s introduction of the printing press around 1440 changed everything. Personal appearance was no longer required, you could spread your ideas everywhere and all you needed were flyers. It gave way to the reformation and shook the traditional states of Europe.

The third period was even shorter, it was (perhaps it is still in some degree) the period of *broadcast media*, primarily the radio. In the 20th century radio proved itself to be the most successful tool of propaganda ever. In the second half of the century governments also used its more “colorful” counterpart, the television, but for anti-government purposes radio still remained the primary tool, often broadcasted from outside the country’s borders. Obviously, for the most throughout effect you still need the traditional printed media to complement broadcasted services.

The last period, which we live in today, is the *age of the Internet* or the *digital age*. The Internet is “the freest” medium and – in theory – everyone can post everything. You are free to spread your propaganda and to recruit people for your goals, whatever your agenda is. You can gather pro- and anti-government activist alike and if you hide behind proxy servers and use the Internet only at public locations you cannot be caught, can you?

That is the theory. However, the previous chapters have already supplied evidence that Internet is not as free as it seems, even though it is still widely regarded as the “freest” medium.

All through these periods to control the spread of information has always been the goal of every government – also of democratic government, not just authoritarian ones –, since they knew it was crucial. It may seem that the advances of the technology challenged government control, but technology is a two-edged sword. Already in 1993, Almond, Mundt and Powell wrote that “in a modern society it is possible for the government to control and shape the flow of information and communication” (Almond, Mundt and Powell, 1993:82) and that is almost always the case. The reason is
simple, governments always have more resources than anti-government groups or individuals, and while printing press and broadcast media may have helped underground societies to produce samizdat literature and radio “amateurs” could broadcast programs, like the “Radio Free Europe,” governments always have a wider array of print media, television and radio channels at their disposal.

The “freest” medium is only a bit of an exception as the situation is not that different in the case of the Internet, either. Remember Salhi’s thoughts, I concluded the second chapter of this thesis with, “the state’s control […] over the Internet is still] a matter of degree, not an either / or issue” (Eriksson and Giacomello, 2009:207).

However, up until today it in unquestionable that – where allowed – Internet has been the most effective medium of spreading your thoughts. However, the importance of Internet may not even only lie in its effectiveness, but also its existence as a symbol of the “free world” and the “free media.”

This role as a symbol is a lot stronger in the states where the rule is authoritarian. Since in those states the regime does everything to control and manipulate the population, including the regulation of the flow of information. As it is written in Comparative Politics

“Modern authoritarian systems have discovered that more efficient and effective control is achieved by simultaneous manipulation of political socialization, political recruitment, and political communication. Socialization efforts are made to instill loyalty, to recruit loyal activist, and to limit and regulate the flow of information” (Almond, Mundt and Powell, 1993:81).

Political communication and regulating the flow of information is crucial to uphold the authoritarian regime. It is just natural that after a while develops at least a small group of people who want to access information, in its “unregulated” form and who are unsatisfied with the system, with whom it has lost its “legitimacy.” To publish their thoughts they always seek a medium, but such is very difficult to find in an autocracy. Their chances are always the best when a medium is relatively new and the government has not yet mastered its manipulation. With the advances of the 21st century new forms of media – mostly online forms – are appearing every day and for a government it is getting harder and harder to control these forms. As Sedra comments:
“the emergence of social media – Web 2.0 – has presented a major challenge to the state’s ability to control the message and contain popular dissent…” (Sedra, 2011)

...unless they are not afraid of banning the whole of the online world – which is not acceptable even in most autocracies – or have already mastered its manipulation, as they did in China. (See the end of chapter 2.2 “Harmonizing your life” for the details of China’s way of tailoring Internet content.)

However, the appearance of new forms and the availability of the technological tools to a wider and wider audience have at least one positive effect, the deregulation of all forms of the media. To broadcast a video feed twenty years ago you needed a complex TV studio, and a broadcasting station. Today you can share it online by using your phone’s built-in camera and a wireless Internet connection from a cave. “Producers” of media “programs” are more and more difficult to catch up with as they can operate from anywhere and broadcast to everywhere, and this, inevitably, leads to deregulation.

To see how this process of “deregulation” happens, we will continue with a concrete example, which is also connected to our later case study: the place of the media in the Arab world.

4.2. Media in the Arab World

Television and radio channels, newspapers, news agencies and magazines in non-democratic states traditionally represent the interest of the ones in power. It is not by a bit different in the Arab world, either. As Pintak reminds us of the map drawn by the Freedom House:

“The Freedom House map of press freedom in the Arab world is monochromatic; most of the region is colored dark blue for “not free,” with just two small countries qualifying as ‘partly free’” (Pintak, 2008).

Believe it or not, what changed this landscape dramatically was Al-Jazeera. It is not truly an “independent” channel as it is owned by the state of Qatar, but it reports mostly everything and mostly accurately. For the average Western viewers Al-Jazeera
is the “evil” TV channel, which aids Al Qaeda and broadcasted Osama Bin Laden’s manifestos, but no one of an educated audience would call Al-Jazeera evil. Since its foundation it has expanded into a whole network of TV channels and web sites and usually provides useful insider information of and an interesting insight into the Arab world. Al-Jazeera was the channel which reported on the Afghan war live from its local office and covered the events of the “Arab Spring” in detail. As guardian (and many other sources) reported: even U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton praised Al-Jazeera, saying "Viewership of Al Jazeera is going up in the United States because it’s real news" (Tomasky, 2011).

Internet – and its English language service – was a great help to Al-Jazeera to gain international reputation and to be able to broadcast worldwide. However, it was another forum on the Internet which shook the Arab world last year and that was the forum of social media.

4.3. Social Media and the Arab World

SM is a relative newcomer in the Arab world, but it can already be seen that it became as – if not more – important as all the other forms of media. In a stereotypical autocratic Middle Eastern regime state controls the important TV and radio stations, but it cannot control SM. Social media – being social – belongs to no one and belongs to everyone in the same time (at least if we do not believe the popular speculations that facebook is a front for CIA).

Unlike many regions of the world the Middle East and North Africa does not have its own signature social media. Former Soviet countries have Вконтакте, China has its own facebook clone, even Hungary had iWiW, but not the MENA countries. A typical user in the MENA would use facebook to collect friends, Twitter to post status updates and YouTube to upload videos. A typical user meaning a user living in a place where it is allowed to use social networking services.

Users think SM is a great tool for fighting oppressive regimes and leaders of authoritarian states agree. That is why they try to block it and track users posting “regime incompatible ideas” with everything they have at their disposal.
One would think that the easiest way to suppress the use of social media is to block it entirely. But it is a rule that if you ban something people will try even harder to have access. And, since its illegal, they will do everything to erase their tracks and mask their presence when posting to social networking sites. However, if you allow SNSs to be accessed, people will drop their guard, post in their own names and stop using out-of-country proxy servers, making themselves much easier to be tracked down by government agencies.

That is what leaders of Syria, for example, realized. When SM-based revolutions broke out all around the country they lifted the ban on social media, immediately making it easier to find and eliminate enemies of the state.

The Syrian answer and its effectiveness, along with challenges and the response of other governments in the region will be detailed in the following case studies about the Arab Spring, but first let us see, how social media helped revolutions to spur in other regions of the world.
5. Previous Examples of Using Social Media to Try and Force Social Changes

The Arab Spring may have given SM the “big break” to be identified with social uprisings, yet there were times even before 2011 when it played a key role. A prime example, the revolution in Moldova even gained its nickname after one of the popular social media services, being called “The Twitter Revolution.”

Although in both of the preceding cases, which we will deal with, resistance was futile, the uprisings were put off, and the role of SM was not such much overhyped by the press – even though the nickname –, it is worth looking into the details of these events, to try to identify at least some patterns of how a “Twitter revolution” unfolds.

5.1. April 6, 2009, Moldova

In Moldova the protests broke out because people suspected that the governing party had to cheat to win the elections. Here people mainly used Twitter, hence the name “Twitter Revolution,” which played a two-folded role. First, it was used to organize the protests – as the Spiegel reported:

“Monday's Twitter-organized student protest brought some 10,000 people to Chisinau's main square, who accused the government of rigging Sunday's vote” (“‘Twitter Revolution’…” 2009).

– and it was also the device of carrying information out of the country to a much wider audience, as Mungiu-Pippidi comments:

“The official media carried no coverage, but accounts, pictures, and video of the rally were appearing in real time on Twitter and YouTube” (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2009:138).

Although, the “Twitter Revolution” had moderate success in the country itself, it paved the road for the more extensive use of social media in collective, spontaneous events and it was proven what a great tool Twitter was for organizing mass demonstrations and also for getting the word out about how these demonstrations go.
However, this first instance of using social media as a tool of organizing resistance against the government was not the only one, it was just a start and in the following we will see another example, just from a few months later, the Green Revolution of Iran.

5.2. June 12, 2009, Iran

Just two months after the events in Moldova the people of Iran also went to the streets to protest against the outcome of the presidential elections. As Baumann reports:

“[a] mob of Iranian students taking to the streets in support of candidate Mir-Houssein Mousavi, crying out against the alleged election fraud committed by incumbent Mahmoud Ahmadinejad” (Baumann, 2009).

To organize their demonstrations Iranian did not exclusively use Twitter, although the micro-blogging service was the most important in the organization and was widely used to spread information. To answer why Twitter can be so useful in a tense situation like this we quote Grossman from the *Time*, when he asks the question: “So what exactly makes Twitter the medium of the moment?” (Grossman, 2009) and answers it: “It's free, highly mobile, very personal and very quick. It's also built to spread, and fast.” (Grossman, 2009).

In the Green Revolution of Iran the role of twitter was so widely known and appreciated, that supposedly even the U.S. Department of State asked the company providing the Twitter service not to commence its scheduled maintenance to be able to provide full service to those protesting on the streets.

However, as mentioned, Twitter was not the only site, which played a huge role, mainly when reaching into foreign countries. A video, portraying the death of a young woman, Neda Agha-Soltan, was uploaded to YouTube and immediately made Western media “consumed with talk of a [new] ‘Twitter Revolution’” (Baumann, 2009).

But did, in reality, Twitter and YouTube helped in democratizing Iran? No matter how their role is acknowledged, by the media and the governments of the West, SM did not help to change the system and this movement was, again, unsuccessful (however, the movement was somewhat renewed as a side-effect of the Arab Spring).
When asked “what difference did social networking actually make in promoting democracy in Iran?” (Baumann, 2009) Evgeny Morozov, a Fellow at the Open Society Institute and Belarusian journalist answered: “None at all” (Baumann, 2009).

According to Baumann Meier admits that it was “amazing” to “get the word out” (Baumann, 2009), but he also added that only a small number of people used Twitter in Iran and this did not dramatically change during or after the events, either.

One could have expected that the Iranian regime would shut down Twitter and other sites to kill the protests, but they had much more sophisticated tools. Meier is supposed to have said that the reason not to block access to SM was “because the regime found them useful. It was a way for them to get information without having to really look for it.” (Baumann, 2009). Also, Iran was among the first instances where we can examine the third layer – according to our previous definitions – of government control over the activity on the Internet. This is the attempt to influence the events on the streets, which is called manipulation. It is without question that the government used Twitter to follow the events. But now it is also being said that they went further and placed false messages to be retweeted and therefore to confuse the protesters. Ironically, to warn each other about this new threat, people also used the service posting tweets like this one:

“DO NOT RT anything U read from "NEW" tweeters, gvmt spreading misinfo” (Grossman, 2009).

Obviously, this very message quoted here can be an attempt of manipulation on the government’s part to try and spread mistrust among the users, since on the internet one can never be sure who is who in the reality.
6. The @rab spring – Tunisia

As “the Arab Spring” people usually refer to the revolts that happened in the Middle East and North Africa region in the beginning of 2011. As it is said by Motadel, the waves of unrest “beginning in Tunisia, […] spread across Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, Bahrain, Oman and Yemen within weeks” (Motadel, 2011).

In our analysis out of all these countries we will focus on the ones regarded most important in the progress of the movements and in the intent of progressing chronologically, the first case to be examined will be the case of Tunisia.

6.1. The Reasons and the Events

The (second) Jasmine revolution and the first spark of the Arab Spring broke out on a (cold) winter day in December 2010. The reasons for a revolution were more than given. Food shortage, high and rising unemployment, lack of political freedom, freedom of speech, and corruption were all present and accounted for, in short Tunisia was almost a typical preindustrial authoritarian state (almost, because the access to Internet was really high and the country was more developed than others in the region).

However, as these were all ongoing issues for years and even decades, the reasons why the revolution started when it actually started are more complicated. Various explanations are given. There is one which blames it on WikiLeaks, since the site leaked some U.S. diplomatic cables containing intelligence on how corrupt the leaders in Tunisia are. Although for Tunisians it was pretty clear what was going on, it is not the same to see it in writing reported by the diplomats of another country. And, as it is written in The New American:

“Until the advent of the Internet — and WikiLeaks — the Tunisian people lacked the specifics about government corruption and (more importantly) had been denied the knowledge that most of their countrymen were equally disgusted with the corruption” (WikiLeaks (With Facebook, Twitter, & Blogs)..., 2011:8).
It seems to be possible that, as people learned about the facts from an “official source,” they suddenly realized that the system is corrupt and undemocratic and they immediately wanted a change, wanted president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to go. It is a possible, but not a likely explanation, because most people suspected such things all along.

However, soon a much more surprising, sudden and shocking event, “an individual act of desperation” (Anderson, 2011) followed. “A college-educated young man set himself on fire after police confiscated his unlicensed fruit and vegetable cart” (Anderson, 2011). This individual act of the 26 year old Mohamed Bouazizi was the last drop, and as it was posted, YouTubed and tweeted Tunisians rose. They rose against corruption, against bureaucracy and against the regime and this action served as an accelerator to set the country on fire.

6.2. The Use of Social Media and the Response of the Government

In the eyes of the public – and even, for example, in the eyes Reverend Ramon Echeverria, vicar of the diocese of Tunis, “The unfolding revolution in Tunisia has come about because of ‘Facebook action’ ” (“Facebook Action,” 2011). While this might not be entirely true and while facebook may have only been a tool and not the reason, it was a great tool and in Tunisia – mainly compared to other countries in the region – the Internet readiness – the ratio of how many people can access the Internet – was very high. SM was a great help in organizing the protest and in spreading the word. What world exactly? For example, one piece of the news was the above mentioned corruption scandal, the other was the tragic fate of the boy selling vegetables.

As it was said before the use of the Internet, the “Internet readiness” was really high in Tunisia, making the online media a very important forum for exchanging thoughts, ideas and information and for being such an important tool in the protesters’ hands the Tunisian government reacted accordingly. They employed all the previously detailed three ways of controlling the activity on the Internet, surveillance, blocking of particular sites and trying to shape the online contents.

First, the Tunisian Internet Agency blocked the unwanted sites. But soon, since blocking was proven unsuccessful and just created even more tension, as China writes,
“after four weeks of rioting, 66 deaths […] President Ben Ali declared ‘I have understood you.’ He announced the lifting of all forms of censorship” (China, 2011). Probably, this did not mean the end of Internet control, but, as it is always better to influence than to straight-up forbid, that they had refined their methods and tried to manipulate the users. The Agency tried to collect login credentials for various web pages, and at “sites like Facebook, […] the main login page mysteriously had 10 additional lines of code inserted when it arrived at Tunisian computers” (Anderson, 2011). They used the stolen login information to access and modify pages and to monitor and track down users. But in the long run this did not work, either and the Internet Agency mostly failed in its task, there were simply too many people online to stop the information from flowing.

6.2.1. The Outcome for Tunisia

Just as well as there were too many people on the streets to stop the revolution from happening. After the death of Bouazizi on January 4, 2011, there was no stopping to the changes.

At the end there was no other solution, Ben Ali had to go, everyone saw it, even himself. He stepped down and, already on January 14, the prime minister announced that he was taking over in order to “organize early elections and usher in a new government” (“Middle East and North Africa in turmoil,” 2012).

In October Tunisia became the first, and so far only, country of the Arab Spring to have held democratic elections. On October 27 “Tunisia’s moderate Islamist Ennahda party has won” the general elections with a decisive majority according to BBC (“Tunisia’s Islamist Ennahda party…” 2011).

The former autocratic ruler, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali went on trial in absentia for the first time in June and he was sentenced to fifteen and a half year in prison then at the following trial on the 5th of July to thirty five years in prison and 64 million dollars in fines.

It is yet to be seen whether the new leaders of Tunisia will be able to transform the country into a “democratic nation,” however, the signs are promising.
7. The @rab spring – Egypt

7.1. The Reasons and the Events

As Hauslohner writes “The success of Tunisia’s Jasmine Revolution […], inspired smaller uprisings from Algeria to Yemen, but the drama unfolding in the streets of the most populous Arab nation was of a higher magnitude” (Hauslohner, 2011). That is why, although there were protests in smaller countries of the region, we can call Egypt the “second domino” of the Arab Spring.

The revolution in 2011 in Egypt, a more typical pre-industrial authoritarian state, lead by a president supported by the military, started when a young man, named Khaled Said posted a video on the Internet about dirty cops taking money from someone. In return for this police came for him and “beat him to death in broad daylight” (Giglio, 2011). But of course, there was someone nearby with a camera phone who took a snap and the photo then circulated all over the Internet. Soon a facebook page titled “We Are All Khaled Said” was launched and weeks later – partially in response to the events in Tunisia – a very special “facebook event” appeared on the internet. It was a protest, set up to January 25 to the Tahrir Square in Cairo.

7.2. The Use of Social Media and the Response of the Government

Since more than 50,000 people clicked on “yes,” they would come, in this case facebook was really used to start something, SM this time was not just a tool, but partly also a reason. However, in this case, the affair with social media started much sooner than the spring (winter) of 2011. Already in 2008 there was a young girl who set up a facebook group calling for a nationwide strike after the workers’ strikes were being cracked down on. She was taken from home, arrested and beaten, but this girl, Abdel Fattah since became “a symbol of resistance to the regime of former President Hosni Mubarak” (Chick, 2011) and last year she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. She became a symbol not only because of what happened to her in 2008, but because in
2011 when the new “revolution” also started on Facebook, people identified her act as the first act of online resistance.

The government’s response to the events was swift and professional, they successfully blocked Facebook and Twitter. But soon – just as in Tunisia – “the government’s decision to shut down the Internet backfired” (Baker, 2011), since, after taking their only tool to communicate without leaving their homes, protesters had to go to the streets to organize and to meet their likeminded fellows. Being physically present may have been good to make up for Facebook, since it was the site of organization of the events, however, Twitter would have still been needed. As in the other examples this medium was not only intended for the insiders, but also for outsiders, like foreign news agencies, governments and people all around the world. To solve this problem “Google worked with Twitter and a company called SayNow to develop a speak-to-tweet service,” (Ladhani, 2011) with which people could post tweets from inside Egypt just by calling an international number and leaving a message. That is partly why in Egypt, unlike most other states of the Arab Spring, SM could play a decisive role from the very beginning of the movement and not just in getting the information out and gaining international support but also in organizing the events, at least until the military takeover.

7.3. The Outcome for Egypt

Obviously, conspiracy theorist can explain it otherwise, but the Khaled Said incident and the news from Tunisia may have just been enough to start the protests. Though, strangely enough, to end them peacefully the armed forces of Egypt were needed as well.

Thousands marched on the streets on January 25 and in the following days and, to be able to show some resistance, already by the end of the month the police was pulled off and replaced by the military. In the same time Mubarak removed his cabinet and introduced direct rule over the country with his new vice president as his right hand man.
Although in February he was seemingly ready to make concessions, he was not yet ready to step down. But just like Ben Ali he had no other choice. When the masses of youth faced off the soldiers the generals decided not to shoot. Instead they forced Mubarak to leave. As Mahmoud Shokry, Chief of Staff of the Egyptian army said referring to the military leadership: “If they think this will make a kind of civil war, they will ask Mr. Mubarak to leave the country, I am sure” (Kirkpatrick, Kulish, El-Naggar, Fahim, Shadid, and Worth, 2011:1) and they did.

From then on the movement ceased to exist as a “facebook revolution,” people organizing the protest on SM were no longer in center. Generals of the army took over and the whole thing was becoming more and more like a military coup. Although the generals promised new elections – which were not held yet – and democracy, it has been more than a year since the start of the revolution and nothing has happened. No wonder people of Egypt were getting worried and impatient and – already in late February 2011 – uprisings started again and they have strengthened throughout the year.

Protesters demanded elections – which were promised to them again in March – and Mubarak to be put on trial for his crimes, yet, although he was arrested, he has not been sentenced. In the meanwhile the demonstrations turned into violent clashes between Muslims and Copt Christians, leaving a number of dead casualties.

On July 8, 2011 tens of thousands of protesters gathered on Tahrir square yet again against the lack of willingness to “to prosecute Mubarak-era officials and police responsible for the killing of nearly 900 protesters” (“Middle East and North Africa in turmoil,” 2012), which was repeated again many times during the fall months and the situation has not got much better since then.

Although the Arab Spring lead to an “Arab Summer” in Tunisia, Egypt was not so lucky, here and in many countries in the region, as in January 2012 Professor Rostoványi commented in a TV interview, the Arab Spring turned into an “Arab Fall” and an “Arab Winter.” However, he added, although there is already a new uprising in Egypt, it is not yet a new revolution (“Egyéves az egyiptomi forradalom,” 2012). He also said today the process islamization is strong and ongoing and Islamic movements are ready to make alliances even with secular parties to make sure they have the necessary support to control the country, if there will ever be elections.
However – mainly due to the lack of willingness on the generals’ part to hold elections – the support of radical parties is rising continuously and gradually.

In Egypt the outcome is yet to be seen, but it can be already said that the Arab Spring did not produce such positive results than in the more – electronically – developed Tunisia.
8. The @rab spring – Libya

8.1. The Events

The wind of the (Arab) spring reached Libya on February 15, 2011. Riots and protests broke out in support of Fathi Terbil, a human right activist and lawyer, who was arrested in January and who represented the “relatives of more than 1,000 prisoners allegedly massacred by security forces in Tripoli’s Abu Salim jail in 1996” (“Libya protests: Second city Benghazi hit by violence,” 2011).

General Moammar Gaddafi, leader of Libya, a true military lead authoritarian state, decided to crack down on the uprising as swift and as soon as possible. Already in the clashes between anti- and pro- government groups, more than 20 people died, while the Libyan security forces fired also on innocent civilians. This made the protests turn more into a violent revolt and armed engagements between the security forces and the protesters became regular. Amnesty International urged Gaddafi to stop the killings and even “government officials resign[ed] in outrage over attacks on civilians” (“Middle East and North Africa in turmoil,” 2012).

As the protesters just got angrier and more desperate a straight out rebellion broke out in February, the rebels having set up their HQ in Benghazi, while Gaddafi remaining in control of Tripoli and the neighboring regions. As the country-wide civil war broke out the fight became more and more desperate. Rebels mostly fought with what they found in Gaddafi’s captured arms depots – and what was smuggled in through “illegal” channels –, while the armed forces, still loyal to or recently hired by the General, were launching major assaults on them. The civil war was waging through the country and Gaddafi was losing support gradually both on the inside and on the outside.
8.2. The Use of Social Media and the Response of the Government

Although, it is true that after a brief period of using Facebook, Twitter and other online media forums to communicate and share news the regime shut down the Internet promptly, the initial reaction saying that because of this the Libyan events tell us little new about the relationship between social networking and the revolutions, may not be fully true.

Gaddafi learned his lesson – it is another question whether it did him any good in the long run –; with shutting down communications (not just the Internet, mobile service providers also) he rendered the Internet useless for protesters. The level of blocking varied from week to week, but it achieved its goal.

However, what Libyans were the most successful in, and used the online media – although mostly indirectly through “agents” living in Western states – with the highest success rate for, is getting “the message beyond […] their own borders” (Goodale, 2011). Libyan rebels, alone out of all the rebels in the region, were able to gather and master U.S. and NATO military support to achieve their goals. The posts on SNSs had a key role in shaping the public opinion about them and without wide-spread public support the UN Sc decision would perhaps have never been reached and the NATO airstrikes would have been never been authorized.

Also there is a very strange post-modern phenomenon which appeared in connection with the Libyan conflict. The phenomenon of the volunteer OSINT analyst. During the war anyone with an internet account, from a 59 year old retired lady to an ice cream salesman, could – and many did – help and provide information for NATO airstrikes. Users of Twitter and Facebook followed the Libyan events closely and analyzed the vast data that was available on the country, including satellite images and hearsay about the movement of Gaddafi’s troops. They created such heavy chatter on SM that even military decision makers could not ignore and, after it was proven that these people were actually providing valuable information, NATO started to rely on their info and use social media as a source of intelligence. Obviously, just as any piece of OSINT, this info had to be verified and cross-checked, but…

“NATO officials have acknowledged that social media reports contribute to their targeting process” (Smith, 2011).
Also, according to the above quoted article of The Globe and the Mail by Smith there was at least one occasion when a target was selected after being discussed by an activist online. Ten hours had passed since he had posted his observations about a site of possible military relevance and “the spot was hit by a NATO air strike” (Smith, 2011).

NATO Lieutenant-General Charles Bouchard, who was in command of the operation in Libya, commented that “where it comes from, it’s not relevant” (Smith, 2011) and if it is good intelligence he could act on it.

8.3. Outcome for Libya

In March 2011 Gaddafi became a persona non-grata for both the Arab League and the NATO countries, recognizing the rebel movement as the legitimate ruling power of Libya. Based on the Arab League’s request The United Nations passed its 1973 resolution on March 17, 2011 declaring that the UN Security Council…

“Taking note also of the decision of the Council of the League of Arab States of 12 March 2011 to call for the imposition of a no-fly zone on Libyan military aviation […] Decides to establish a ban on all flights in the airspace of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in order to help protect civilians” (United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, 2011:2-3)

“Authorizes Member States […] to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, including Benghazi, while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory” (United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, 2011:3)

and…

“Authorizes Member States […] to take all necessary measures to enforce compliance with the ban on flights” (United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, 2011:3).

Feeling empowered by the UN SC, NATO countries, first with the lead of the U.S. then with France, immediately started their air campaign against Libya (and
nothing more as the Security Council resolution explicitly forbade the land invasion) to “protect the civilians.”

However, critics of the operations (like Russia and China) said that after a very short while NATO operations went much beyond just the protection of the civilians and the strategic air and sea based strikes were designed to cripple Gaddafi’s military and to help the rebels to overcome their enemy. As time progressed international forces gradually stepped up their attacks on government forces and started openly bombarding troops which were preparing to fight the armed rebels and not to shoot innocent civilians. In April even military advisors and assistance was sent to the rebels, who were unable to break the resistance of government forces – which, by this time, mainly consisted foreign mercenaries – by themselves, despite the airstrikes. From then on NATO forces were working in close – yet somewhat undeclared since they were openly stepping over the boundaries of their mandate – cooperation with the Libyan rebels and NATO planes were even ordered to fire guided bombs at Gaddafi’s very HQ. Around the same time the International Criminal court issued arrest warrants for Gaddafi, his son and his chief of intelligence.

Finally the rebels did overcome and defeat Gaddafi’s forces, while the dictator was captured and killed in his hometown on October 20, 2011. The leaders of the revolution declared the country liberated and that they intended to found a new Libya based on “a more democratic but also a more strictly Islamic system” (“Middle East and North Africa in turmoil,” 2012). Abdel-Rahim el-Keeb was elected as the new interim prime minister and, as reported by the Voice of America, “The election takes place just hours before NATO ends its mission in Libya” (“Key Events in Libya’s Revolution,” 2011).

The true outcome of the revolution is yet to be seen, although experts warn us not to be too optimistic about the forming democracy in Libya as new leaders have a large number of obstacles to overcome, including the tribal rivalry, the danger of the still existing supporters of the late Gaddafi and the not unanimous acknowledgment of the leaders’ legitimacy around the country. Also there are quarrels even inside the leadership about how Islamic the new laws of the country should exactly be, including the question of whether it should be based on the Islamic law of Sharia and if yes, to what extent. Western experts and political leaders are hoping for a moderate Islamic
regime to be formed, but extremity and even anarchy are getting stronger and stronger possibilities the longer the instability and lack of public order last.

8.4. An Interesting Parallel Concerning the Use and Ban of Social Media during the Arab Spring

Although social media did / could not play an important part in Libya in the organization of the movement, perhaps that is exactly where we can draw an interesting parallel. Between the availability of the Internet and the willingness to take the fight to the streets.

Without Internet access people needed to protest in flesh and blood and it is obvious that for a government thousands of people marching on the street must have seemed a bigger threat than some anonymous online users. Libya was the country which turned off the Internet the soonest and made it unavailable for the longest time. In the same time this was also the country where the most vicious fighting broke out that lead to a full blown civil war. A war of which the magnitude was so far unprecedented during the Arab Spring. Today something similar is unfolding in Syria also, but calling the events there a civil war would be questionable since anti-government forces are unorganized and very few in number with the government also shooting and bombing unarmed civilians – for real. Obviously, for the events to take this radical turn there were and could have been many reasons, including the strong tribal traditions in the society, the violent and harsh reaction of the government to the very first protest and Gaddafi’s clinging to power, however, the parallel outlined above is definitely an interesting one.
9. The @rab spring – Syria

It is another question, though, why NATO supported the armed Libyan rebels, when the UN did not give a definite go ahead, in a civil war, which is, as a prime directive, to be considered a sovereign, interior affair of a country and why the SC was unable to pass a definitive resolution on Syria, where the government is bombarding and shelling unarmed civilians. It is an interesting question, worthy of investigation, but not in our current focus. However, this question brings us closer to our next topic, to the case study about the last major domino on the playing board of the Arab Spring, Syria.

9.1. The Reasons and the Events

Unlike Libya, the revolution in Syria started with an online campaign. The “days of rage” (“Middle East and North Africa in turmoil,” 2012) was organized to February 4 and 5, 2011 against President Bashar Assad, a strong autocratic leader of a strong authoritarian regime. Yet, no one showed up. Assad seemingly sensed that to control the people he did not need to shut down social media. Openly allowing the use of it can be just as effective, the longtime ban on facebook, Twitter and their likes have been lifted, but the government kept a close eye on what was happening in the online world. This duality characterizing Assad’s policy came through also in the way he handled the protesters. First he ordered a harsh crackdown, then, to ease the tension, he ordered the release of “hundreds of political prisoners” (“Middle East and North Africa in turmoil,” 2012).

However, this dichotomy did not last and soon the events took a violent turn. In April 2011 the government stepped up with the crackdown, killing more and more people, making it clear that Assad is not ready to negotiate and is not making compromises. Soldiers, tanks and snipers were soon deployed into the cities where demonstrations were held. The armed resistance in Syria was negligible at this time and the army continued to use live ammunition against everyone on the streets. By the end of May more than a thousand were dead and a few thousands were detained. Yet the protests were just getting stronger and stronger, the symbol of the movement being a 13
year old boy, Hamza Ali al-Khateeb, who “had suffered terribly during the month he spent in Syrian custody” (Sly, 2011) and the video of whose torture was aired by the network of the already mentioned Al-Jazeera. His death created so much attention than in just a few days a facebook page remembering his death gained more than forty-thousand members and about whom, according to Washington Post, Razan Zeitouneh, a human rights lawyer said:

“Torture is usual in Syria. It’s not something new or strange. What is special about Hamza is that he was only 13 years old.” […] “That’s why it shocked all Syrians, even those who haven’t decided whether they want to participate or not in the protests” (Sly, 2011).

And that is how the uprising in Syria got just another push.

9.2. The Use of Social Media in the Beginning and the Response of the Government

The far most creative of all governments presented here was the Syrian. Just weeks after the revolution in Tunisia and Egypt, in the fear of similar events, instead to strengthening the already very strict measures – meaning totally banning the access to social media –, the government lifted the ban on SM sites as part of their “democratic concessions” (Preston, 2011). However, what might seem as a step to please citizens, a step of “understanding” and compromising may had ulterior motives, suddenly openly allowing the use of these, previously forbidden, sites suggests a hidden, more sinister agenda, than “democratization.”

Despite the ban, many people in Syria were able to tackle the firewalls and use proxy servers to reach restricted content and were already posting anti-government propaganda which, after the lift of the ban, they could do openly. Which, believe it or not, was good for the government.

First, proxy servers make IP addresses much more difficult to track, therefore monitoring user activities is much easier when the people – think that they – can use their own IP addresses and their real names. And although the access was now open, the monitoring and tracking just strengthened and this lead to numerous searches and arrests.
However, this was not the only tool the Syrian government used. They learned their lessons and just as in Iran they quite mastered the (3c) method of controlling access, the manipulation of SM. As *The Middle East* reports:

“…by far the most successful tactic was the creation of Anti-Protest Facebook groups, many of them supposedly with thousands of users, cheering for the president and referring to potential demonstrators as “Jewish and/or American agents”. In addition to these tactics, there was the all-time-favorite tactic of using direct intimidation, where agents would post threats on forums and Facebook groups, and then contact users one by one via the Internet or by telephone to ‘deliver the message’” (“Syrian authorities go creative,” 2011:24).

### 9.3. The Outcome for Syria

Yet, the protesters did not give up. By June the protests have turned into an armed rebellion and today the government regularly orders its soldiers to shoot not just the rebels, but the unarmed mob and bombard cities with the population living inside. Bashar al-Assad is seemingly still not willing to let go of the power and he is blaming the casualties on the protesters and the rebels – calling them terrorists – and accusing European states of supporting the rebels cause, claiming that their aim is to stimulate a conflict inside an Islamic Arab society.

Though many observers have said a “humanitarian disaster” was on the verge of blowing out, or is already happening, neither the UN, nor the Arab League took a firm stand against Assad. Though European states and the U.S. introduced some sanctions, but it is far from the way how they condemned Gaddafi in Libya.

Seeing where the country was heading there were more and more soldiers who defected from the regular armed forces and these defectors slowly built up their own army. Cells were established and, although the violence so far had been mainly one-sided, the country was definitely headed in the direction of a civil war, probably even a more brutal war than in Libya, as here the government had already proven that they were not afraid to kill thousands of civilians, if they suspected just one rebel among them. Government forces are also much more organized than in any other “domino”
previously fallen during the Arab Spring and without outside help it will not be easy to break Assad’s rule.

It was yet not until the second half of 2011 when foreign leaders started to express explicitly that they would rather see Assad stepping down. These included U.S. President Barack Obama in August and King Abdullah of Jordan in November. After these statements one could have thought that finally the international community was ready to make a decisive step towards stopping the violence in Syria, but unfortunately it was not.

Members of United Nation Security Council drafted a resolution condemning Syria, which should have been adopted in February, 2012, but China and Russia, two permanent members of the SC vetoed the resolution. The veto was shocking, however, not really surprising – at least on Russia’s part – and resulted in an outrage on the side of the rest of the international community and also among the Syrian people, who felt abandoned. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton supposedly called the veto a “travesty” (McLaren, 2012), while “U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Susan Rice tweeted that she was "disgusted" by the dual veto” (McLaren, 2012). She also told CNN that "Those that have blocked potentially the last effort to resolve this peacefully ... will have any future blood spill on their hands" (“Russia, China veto U.N. action on Syria; opposition group calls for strike,” 2012). Almost everyone agreed, except, of course, for Russia and China.

The reasons for Russia blocking the resolution may even seem obvious. According to McLaren “Russia's arms sales to Syria [which is just a small piece of their economic relations] are big business” (McLaren, 2012) and Russia does not want anything less, than instability and / or more U.S. influence in the region. However, China’s reasons are harder to explain. There are no real ties between the two countries and seemingly China has limited interest in Syria. One explanation, given in People’s Daily, supposedly by sources inside the Chinese government, representing its official opinion, says that China did not want to rush into any decision since…

“Libya offers a negative case study. Nato abused the security council resolution about establishing a no-fly zone and directly provided firepower assistance to one side in the Libyan war” (“China defends Syria veto in People's Daily article,” 2012)
That is logical reasoning. However, Kabalan goes further and claims that the reasons “include[…] its [– China’s –] relations with the other great powers, mainly the US” (Kabalan, 2012) and that it is because of the worsening U.S. – China relations and the international and regional pressure on the country that it did not want the West to go into yet another “undemocratic” state creating either an unstable or a pro – U.S. regime.

That was in February and for more than a month it seemed that the solution is not coming along easily, but finally, just recently, on March 21, 2012…

“The United Nations security council, including Russia and China, has agreed to a statement backing Kofi Annan's six-point plan for ending the violence” (“Syria: UN security council agree to back Kofi Annan's plan,” 2012).

The Presidential Statement goes as follows:

“The Security Council expresses its gravest concern at the deteriorating situation in Syria which has resulted in a serious human rights crisis and a deplorable humanitarian situation” (Security Council Presidential Statement SC/10583, 2012)

and as the UN News Centre puts it the SC “fully supported the initial six-point proposal submitted” (“Security Council calls for implementation of six-point plan to end crisis in Syria” 2012), six points, which were proposed by the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Kofi Annan.

The statement is unbinding, does not mention any retribution if the Syrian government does not comply, but it includes…

“a call for a daily two-hour ceasefire, troop withdrawals, and talks between the opposition and the regime” (“Syria: UN security council agree to back Kofi Annan's plan,” 2012).

When Kofi Annan first received a response to his six point proposal according to the news the response said that the Syrian government “will respond very shortly.” (“UN-Arab League envoy receives response from Syria on his six-point plan to end crisis,” 2012). However, since then a cease-fire has been agreed upon and finally the Security Council could reach a decision, too. Even more recently, on April 14 they adopted the UN SC Resolution 2042, saying that the SC…
“Decides to authorize an advance team of up to 30 unarmed military observers to liaise with the parties and to begin to report on the implementation of a full cessation of armed violence in all its forms by all parties, pending the deployment of the mission referred to in paragraph 5 and calls upon the Syrian Government and all other parties to ensure that the advance team is able to carry out its functions” (“Security Council Unanimously Adopts Resolution 2042,” 2012)

True, this resolution may not be as decisive as it was in the case of Libya, but it is certainly a first step, and the first resolution the UN SC could unanimously agree on regarding Syria. To comply with the resolution on April 21 the SC…

“authorized the establishment of a United Nations observer mission to Syria, for an initial period 90 days, to monitor the cessation of violence there, as well as monitor and support the full implementation of a peace plan” (“Security Council authorizes UN observer mission in Syria, Ban welcomes decision,” 2012).

However, the details of the ongoing crisis in and debate about Syria may not belong to the narrowest focus of this paper, I felt that the addition of the up to date news about the country was necessary to have the fullest picture possible. Also, showing the growing international concern and the debates in the UN may sign that somehow, even against the government’s ban on and manipulation of all forms of electronic communication, information got out of Syria. The explanation of how this might have happened is much more related to our topic and that is the reason that the case study of Syria is going to have one more chapter, a chapter about the role of social media and the Internet in the Syrian crisis today.

9.4. The Role of Social Media and the Internet Today

As we can see when as the events progress in a revolution Internet gradually loses its potential, however, this might only be true for the role of the Internet as a tool for organizing mass movements.
Obviously, Internet is a good tool for communications, when you still have access to it. But when your city is in flames, your house is bombed down and there is not even electricity, Internet is no good anymore. When an insurgent is hiding from the government agents a battery powered satellite phone worths much more than a notebook. Even Bauman said, quoting Meier again, that “the weapon of choice for digital activists in developing countries is still the mobile phone” (Baumann, 2009).

This all may be true, but just as in Libya SM has retained a unique use. For both in- and out of country activists it can be very useful to raise awareness. As Newsweek reporter Giglio points out in a quote in his piece in The Daily Beast, activists are “desperate to get the word out,” (Giglio, 2012). What is really frequent today that these activists in Syria – called video journalists or VJs – upload their videos to sites like YouTube to show the world the brutality of the Assad regime and what really is happening in their home country. However, there is the problem of credibility as the VJs of Syria have been accused of faking these videos. And although some might view this as another attempt of the regime to discredit the rebels, but it is a fact that some of the video journalists have been proven to have shot “predesigned” scenarios and have made adjustments to in order to make the shots more effective. The makers of the videos say the changes they made were truly minor and were needed for the videos to look real and it does not make them fabrications. Danny Abdul Dayem, the “voice of Homs” (Giglio, 2012) told CNN on March 5th that there are thousands of real videos on YouTube, “why would […] [they] have to fabricate anything?” (Cooper, 2012). By today it is a fact that at least some videos have been fabricated and manipulated to some degree. For example, The Daily Beast article quotes a filmmaker, Omar Tellawi saying “we’ll need to set a tire on fire,” (Giglio, 2012) something he wanted to do in order to make his scene more dramatic. Tellawi made “no apology for doing so” (“Syria’s video journalists battle to tell the ‘truth’,” 2012) and claimed that he did what was needed to get noticed. However, incidents like this seriously undermine the credibility of the VJs and indirectly the case of the rebels, whether claims of forgery are true or not.

Still, SM is just one forum on the Internet and there are many others, which are also able to raise awareness. A perhaps less biased documentary was recently aired on CNN, for example, showing the life inside a city under siege. Reporters of the network took the journey to Homs, under bombardment by the military (“Homs: A City Under Siege,” 2012) to show the world what it is like to be a Syrian today. Though they risked
their own lives, CNN reporters could show the viewers in Western homes what the reality in Syria was. Aired on TV, on February 21, a program like this must have reached a very high number of viewers, but it must have reached millions more from CNN’s web page, just as the video of Hamza Ali al-Khateeb could have not spread so fast without the help of the Internet.

Based on what we saw in the case of Libya and Syria the ability/inability of the people to use social media has no real effect on how a movement progresses. If there is SM available it may delay the protesters to take their demands to the streets, but once they do it, the willingness of the one(s) in power to listen to the people and to step down – or make the leaders step down –, if necessary, is far more important for a peaceful transition. That can be the reason there was no civil war in Tunisia and Egypt, there was a civil war in Libya and there is (going to be) one in Syria. Of course, if there is a civil war, again, SM can be a great help to master outside attention and ultimately, support.
10. The @rab spring – Other countries

Originally I have planned a detailed analysis of further countries of the Arab Spring, but after carefully studying the above four cases I believe a conclusion on this wave of movements can be drawn solely based on them.

Partly because in other countries the movements have not (yet) shattered the stable authoritarian rule and they have not been as influential to other states of the region as those were.

Also, smaller protests, uprising and riots have happened in many countries from Algeria to Yemen in the Middle East and North Africa, but in this analysis I have wanted to limit the listing to those which have any relevance to our topic and can show us something new regarding the link between the use/abuse/ban of social media and the way the movements unfolded and perhaps ended. The countries for the case study were chosen based on where the demonstrations with the most people occurred, where the government broke down the protest in the harshest way or the demonstrators were the most successful and even more so primarily on the grounds of how big a role social media played in the formation of the movements or in getting the news out and whether its role – with the response of the governments and the final outcome – are all documented enough and can be analyzed and examined to at least some degree.

In other countries of the Arab Spring the magnitude of the events and/or the role of SM have not (again, perhaps just yet) reached a level that they could be a meaningful addition to this analysis. However, I would still like to mention two countries in order to see, that although that magnitude has not been reached, but the effect of social media is apparent in other countries of the region.

In Kuwait the anti-government protests never got strong enough to even shake the rule of the current regime, but, at the end this was the only country where protesters achieved more in the beginning with the help of social media than later through massive protests. In the very first days of the movement, already before the demonstration even started “Kuwait's Interior Minister steps down amid calls for street demonstrations on social media sites” (“Middle East and North Africa in turmoil,” 2012), while the
protests on the streets, themselves met heavy resistance and was tear gased and broken up.

In Morocco bloggers, “calling themselves ‘Moroccan movement of 20 February’” (“Middle East and North Africa in turmoil,” 2012) called people to protest against the monarchy. In this state though, the movement was really not unified and even in June, when the events got really tense, it was not the government forces or police who clashed with the protesters, but the supporters of the government. Even though King Mohammed VI agreed to some concessions, unlike in the case of the interior minister of Kuwait, it was not due to social media, which here played a more “traditional role” (in the sense as seen in the previous case studies), but to the movements on the streets.

The previous two examples were perhaps not very detailed, but they show exactly that SM found its way to most of the states of the MENA and it could play a role where it was allowed. However, it is dependent on the interior construction of the society and the system that to what degree it can influence the events.

However, there were countries in the Arab Spring where social media did not play a role at all. Those countries were mostly not that developed and either social media was banned or the Internet readiness was so low that people were simply not able to use SM as in the above examples. And in those countries movements demanding democracy either could not even materialize due either to the widely acknowledged legitimacy of the system even among the majority of the population, or to the strength of the government, or were crushed before they could build up at all.

So after all there can be a connection between the success of these movements and the use of social media to build democracy, just not in the way one would initially think. Maybe it lies in the fact that if a state is developed enough and its citizens are self-conscious enough to – at least wish to – use social media to demand social changes, it is developed enough to support a movement which can promote and, in the long run, achieve, democracy. A movement, which then may or may not succeed.
11. The United Kingdom and its Moral Dilemma

11.1. The Events and the Outcome

In 2011 it was not just the Arab world, which saw unrests like none before. In the very heart of the developed world, in Europe, in August, the heat in the air in the United Kingdom was not just simple summer heat, but the heat of raging riots and of burning double-deckers.

The riots broke out on the 6th of August and lasted for almost a week. The rioting started in a London district, named Tottenham and spread not just to other parts of London, but to other parts of the U.K. as well. The first protests started after on the 5th of August armed police officers shot a suspect to death when the cab he was riding in was stopped on the Ferry Lane Bridge. As the *Daily Mail* paraphrased the spokesman of the Independent Police Complaints Commission:

“…around 6.15pm yesterday officers from Trident, accompanied by officers from the Specialist Firearms Command (CO19), stopped a minicab to carry out an arrest” (Camber, 2011).

Although based on the initial report the suspect, the 29 year old Mark Duggan, took aimed shots at the officers, the public did not believe that the shooting was justified, even though an officer was also wounded. The people of Tottenham, a poor, very multicultural district with a high rate of unemployment, a significant African-Caribbean population and a very high rate of armed gang activity, found the circumstances of the shooting unclear and ambiguous and demanded further investigation and to find those who were responsible for the death of Duggan.

The night of August 6, 2011 was the point when the yet peaceful protest turned into a series of violent crashes between the police and the protesters, or now, rioters. After achieving seemingly nothing in the previous day they did not just attack police officers, police vehicles, set a double-decker bus on fire, but even looted and destroyed homes and local businesses of their own neighborhood. This was the time when the first reports came that the rioters were using the Blackberry messenger system and other forms of social media to co-ordinate their efforts. By the 8th of August the riots were
officially out of control and as officials urged harsher police response, they had spread to other districts of London, including Enfield, Brixton, Walthamstow and Hackney.

By the 9th London was full of burnt out vehicles and buildings and the violence had spread even further, also to other cities of England, including Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, and Manchester.

This day also marked the first death which is connected to the riots, on the 9th a man, shot in Croydon, died. British Prime Minister David Cameron announced that the police would get reinforcements soon to break up the resistance. By this time in London most shops were closed and police was authorized to use rubber bullets and water cannons against the rioters.

In the following days other deaths and injuries happened, for example, two Asian men died and one was injured in a hit and run accident in Birmingham. Also, the IPCC announced that they found no evidence that Duggan actually shot at the police officer. The repost just added oil to the fire and made things worse in most cities, however, the 16,000 men strong police reinforcement, which arrived to London, was finally able to take back control of city and by the night of the 10th of August they were in control of all districts.

By 12th of August the riots were finally over with more than a thousand people arrested and a lot more wanted for crimes committed during the chaos of the past few days. The mayor of London, Boris Johnson used this opportunity to raise his voice against lack of the necessary budget to operate efficient law enforcement in the city, calling “for an end to police cuts” (“UK riots live,” 2011).

11.2. Evaluating the U.K. Riots

During the riots, as time passed the Duggan story was clearly fading out of the center of attention. True, he soon became a symbol, a symbol like Khaled Said, like Mohamed Bouazizi and even like Hamza Ali al-Khateeb or Abdel Fattah, the facebook girl of Egypt, but as time passed, this symbol has disappeared to the background and got only renewed after the IPCC report. The unrest was not really about Duggan, however, nor about what he stood for. People – mainly not born of English origins – who were disappointed in the welfare system of the United Kingdom, who had no jobs and/or
opportunities found the Duggan shooting to be the last drop and in the same time a somewhat right excuse to raise their voice.

What happened after, however, was neither about the Duggan incident, nor the social system at all, an angry desperate mob sacked the cities of the United Kingdom, people looted their own neighbors, set their cars on fire and people, innocent people, got killed.

No matter how bad the situation was, that could be no excuse for hooliganism and vandalism; unrestricted violence is never the answer. In this regard the unrest in the U.K. is not at all like the unrests of the Arab Spring, and while Duggan was truly a symbol in the beginning, he is in no way, like Khaled Said, like Mohamed Bouazizi and surely he is not at all like Hamza Ali al-Khateeb and Abdel Fattah. Duggan may have not been guilty, the circumstances of his death may be ambiguous and it is a tragedy that he died, but he is not to be considered a martyr, he was not fighting or even standing up for a cause. Said, Bouazizi, al-Khateeb and Fattah all died and became symbols of freedom and democracy. But the United Kingdom was already a democracy, a (post-)industrialized state, with a – more or less – working welfare, healthcare and social system.

Even in the U.K. abuses do happen sometimes, but this country should never be compared to Egypt or Tunisia, what is more to Libya or Syria, because the level of personal freedom and the freedom of speech is very different. The countries of the Arab Spring were autocratic regimes, while Britain is a true democracy. That is mostly why, after a short initial period, the riots in U.K. have lost their aim, their edge and became meaningless anarchy.

One important thing to be mentioned about the protests / riots is that although, just like in the countries of the Arab Spring, the whole time during the riots the Blackberry messenger service and Twitter were used to organize what was going on. It would have been an easy answer to shut the Internet down, but in Britain social media was never abused, manipulated or blocked by the government.

Even though they had thought about it and they did not give up thinking about thinking about it till the end of 2011, when it the idea was finally dismissed. More on this in the next chapter.
11.3. The (lack of) Response by the Government to the Use of Social Media in the U.K. Riots

The thought of censoring or limiting access to social media naturally came up very early in the heat of the riots. Worstall, quoting Reuters, reports that…

“Britain is considering disrupting online social networking such as Blackberry Messenger and Twitter during civil unrest, Prime Minister David Cameron said Thursday, a move widely condemned as repressive when used by other countries…” (Worstall, 2011).

And, according to Somaiya, David Cameron’s exact words were the following, when he emphasized that although law enforcement agencies have a way to intercept, track down and listen into phone conversations, they do not have the same tools regarding the online word:

“Just because it’s different media, we shouldn’t stand back and say, ‘We don’t play in that space.’ “The police must have authority online and in real life.” (Somaiya, 2011)

However, this move, to put a limit on the Internet and more specifically on social media was seriously unapproved by the public and also by Worstall, when he said:

“…we can hardly tut disapprovingly at China or Egypt when we do exactly the same thing as they do: close down the media when people say things we don’t like on said media” (Worstall, 2011).

It is hard not to see the logic in his reasoning. U.K. and the whole European Union has always been a promoter of free speech and free media and a move like this would not only seriously undermine the credibility of the policy of the EU as a whole in the eyes of the outsiders, but would also be seen as undemocratic restrictions by the people living in the various countries of the Union and would even set a threatening precedence for future restriction of civil rights. A precedence, which would carry the danger of being abused also concerning some other rights in more difficult times.

Although obviously there is another side of the coin. There are some public officials who see the ability of limiting social – and other forms of (online) – media and the communication through these networks as the “ultimate solution” which prevents
violence, which would, in the long run, perhaps even lead to anarchy. As Shaver quotes the reasoning of the British government, he says:

“British government will consider ‘whether it would be right to stop people communicating via these websites and services when we know they are plotting violence, disorder and criminality’” (Shaver, 2011:7),

while not long ago, during the waves of revolutions in the MENA…

“Obama mentioned Internet access alongside human rights like free speech and the right to peaceful assembly” (Shaver, 2011:7), an opinion, which was then widely supported by David Cameron, and all the other European leaders.

Yet, the topic was not dropped and as Casilli and Tubaro reported the talks were still ongoing even in November, 2011. Members of the government, officials from the city hall of London and representatives of the police were regularly meeting with the representatives of social networking sites in order to find a solution for a stricter regulation of these platforms to avoid them being used in events such as the riots in the U.K. They say that even the “Internet kill switch solution (i.e. temporary shutdown of entire telecommunication networks)” (Casilli and Tubaro, 2011) was proposed, which was highly condemned when it was used to control social media in the Arab states earlier that year.

The question was then whether Britain would give up some of its democratic norms to have more control over the events inside its borders or would stick to its previous opinion as social media is the way of democracies and should not be banned or manipulated in any way. The ultimate decision was finally made at the end of November, 2011, saying that the British government would not ban these services, not even through the times of unrest. The conclusion drawn was that instead of limiting the access and activity on the internet the police…

“…have ‘acknowledged that they ‘needed to do more’ with regard to learning how to use social media…” (Feldman, 2011)

and should become a player on the online playing field.
This decision is reassuring for those who were afraid the British democracy would lose its integrity, yet the question whether a stricter control of social media would be necessary and would be implemented in the future is still open.

Since this is not just a technical question, but a moral one it requires extremely careful consideration. The main idea, which was stressed again and again by the leaders of the “democratic world,” is that social media is the ultimate tool of achieving democracy. This idea was already seriously questioned when Britain’s leaders even talked about social media as a tool to bring violence and anarchy, without the actual implementation of any restrictive measures and people will inevitably start to ask questions like the one that Casilli and Tubaro have already asked:

“why social media would bring democracy to developing countries and anarchy to Western ones?” (Casilli and Tubaro, 2011)

This is as serious question not to be taken lightly. This was the question what lead to a moral dilemma, which I believe have finally prevented the United Kingdom of taking those restrictive measures.

Since by just the possibility of such measures people’s faith in the system and in democracy has already been seriously weakened, let us now see a brief, yet positive example for the use of social media, in connection with public unrests and riots. A way, which the British police, by their own admission, still have to learn and master.
12. How to Use – and Not Abuse – the Internet; the Vancouver example

The following example is not strictly connected to topic of this thesis in the way that it is not about the use of social media by the people to organize unrest, not to mention to promote social change. The events took place in Canada, a state, which seldom regarded as undemocratic and of which the citizens usually say it is the best place to live in on the Earth – according to the 2012 World Happiest Report, it is the fifth happiest country in the world today (Helliwell, Layard and Sachs, 2012).

However, Canadians are also famous for drinking lots of beer and going wild after one of their favorite sports – hockey – team loses in a game, not to mention in the finals of the cup. That is what happened in June, 2011, when the Canucks lost to Boston in the Stanley Cup. A large number of angry Canucks fans roamed to the streets, torched cars, looted businesses and attacked police officers. After “three hours of chaos” (Leger, 2011) order was restored, but many of the people who participated in this unprovoked act of outrage were able to flee the scene and was wanted by the police even a week after the events.

To find these individual, beside traditional methods and practices of police investigation, Vancouver police utilized the resources of social media. Citizens contacted them with videos, pictures and link to SNS profile of those, who they suspected to be perpetrators. In just five days “police had received 3,500 e-mails that included 53 videos, 708 photographs and 1,011 hyperlinks to social media sites such as Facebook” (Leger, 2011). Obviously, they could not and did not want to disregard this information so they went on facebook to investigate and to find people of whom they have evidence to have committed crimes on the night of the 15th of June. As Leger quotes Todd Shipley, a former police detective:

“The crime scene has expanded. It's no longer just the physical world, but it's that Internet cloud” (Leger, 2011).

Obviously, this is not the only example of this kind of use of SM, but it is a good example. A good example to show that police, and other law enforcement agencies, have a place on the Internet, have a place on social media and there is a possibility to
use it without trying to abuse it, lawfully, in a democratic way, even by the agencies of a government.

Which is obviously not the way it was used by such agencies during the Arab Spring or is used by most authoritarian states in the world.

The following chapter will deal with the issue of social media in two of those states, North Korea and China.

By today it is a valid to question to ask whether all authoritarian states are deemed to fall in the 21st century.

If we examine the progress of history this is a logical conclusion. Although, in the beginning it was written that according to antique scholars the change of democracy and autocracy is a never ending cycle, if we look at the number of democracies and autocracies in the world a hundred years ago and now we can see a huge difference. Autocracy became an endangered species. Naturally then emerges the question of why has it not died out yet, why, for example, there has been no uprising or no civil war in North Korea and China?

There are many reasons. When comparing the regimes of the MENA with China and North Korea, we can see basic differences. If we return to the grouping used in the beginning of this thesis we can say that the countries of the Arab Spring belong to the category of pre-industrialized authoritarian states, while China and North Korea are more likely to be grouped under the industrialized authoritarian nations. This difference obviously does not only refer to degree of “industrialization,” but the level of their development on all fields, one of those fields being the use of social media, to be more exact the government control on the use of social media and the Internet as a whole.

Do not be mistaken, China and North Korea are not at all alike. There is a huge difference between their level of general development – except for the fact that none of them can be consider pre-industrial – and they are only grouped together because of their common cultural background – regarding to the relationship between the ruler(s) and its “subjects” – and their excellent handling of their citizens, who do not – usually – give even a sign that they are unsatisfied with the government’s policy and want something to be changed.

China mastered the harmonization of the Internet (already detailed in chapter 2.2) – which is the (3c) type of state control over the online world, according to our previous classification by Eriksson and Giacomello, controlling the functionality through shaping its contents – and North Korea used a much simpler, yet just as effective tool, banned access entirely – this being the number one way of state control,
controlling – blocking – the access to the Internet. As Zeller said, “North Korea has chosen to stay wholly off the grid” (Zeller, 2006), therefore, in China people can use the Internet, they just cannot find – or post, for that matter – any content, what the regime does not want online, but in North Korea even if people know that a global network of computers, called the Internet, exists somewhere it would be difficult to find someone who have actually seen an Internet page from up close.

As it has been said, differences also lie in cultural traditions. People of the Far East respect leadership generally in a better ratio than anywhere else in the world, and are also not prone to question the legitimacy of a government. Which is very well abused by both governments in question.

Also, it is impossible to wish something you have never heard about. Being cut off the information about the outside world North Korea created a perfect state with perfect control over its citizens. The people of North Korea get just as much information and exactly those pieces of information what the government wants. There is even a rumor about North Korean engineers, who worked in Libya, and who, when they wanted to return home, were rejected as the political leaders did not want them to “infect” their fellow Koreans with the idea of revolution.

China, on the other hand, is simply too big, and too big a percentage of its huge population has never seen what is beyond the borders of the country that the rest could make – or wish for – a change. As the support of the party and the government is genuinely high, this leaves people to think whether Chinese would ever choose an alternate system if they had the chance.

Last, but not least, the organization of these states – and primarily of the security forces and the military – is much more professional / strict than in the Arab world. In China it is possible to organize maybe one little protest without the state knowing it, but a rebellion would be stopped before materializing with any remaining cells crushed immediately. This is all true for North Korea, too, with the addition that in the past 50 years the only mass events in the country were the birthdays of the leaders and lately the funeral of Kim Jong Il.

It is easy to see that with the access to social networks being limited or non-existent, and with even the few contents available online being altered (harmonized),
SM here would not be an ideal tool to start any kind of movement. That is one – but not at all the only – reason why the Arab Spring could never reach the Far East and an “Oriental Spring” could never happen.

As SM has only brought misfortune to the regimes which were not successful enough in controlling it or did not do it in time, it is clear that China and North Korea is not endangered by social media. If there is going to be any social change in any of these countries that is either going to be originated inside the leadership (most likely that is what is going to happen in China in the next fifty years) or due to outside pressure – or, less likely, to military intervention (in the case of North Korea).

Even though SM being a small factor here, it has to be admitted that there is a possibility of being of a link between the outbreak – and success – of revolutions in non-democratic authoritarian states and the availability of social media and its level of development – and also the level of development of the tools of the state to manipulate it –. It is perhaps not the driving force of the movements, but seemingly there is a connection, it may not make any movements break out, but may make the start much easier for them when they do.
14. Final Thoughts

14.1. On Democracy in the Digital Age

The Freedom of Speech is a cornerstone of any modern democracy. Democratic “nations” pride themselves on letting their population say – or post – any opinion, anywhere, anytime, no matter how different it is from state “ideology.” That being said, still many rules and regulations exist. The “most democratic country of the world,” the United States of America is monitoring everything and is one of the heaviest regulators of Internet traffic. If we believe to even the most moderate conspiracy theorists, when you post – or even run a google search on – the words “Al Qaeda,” “Osama Bin Laden,” or “bomb” the Echelon system picks it up, analyses its context and alarms an NSA or FBI agent. Next time you are being checked at an airport the TSA guard will see that you need to be examined with extra care. All automatized. They will not go to your home, arrest and torture you if you say Obama is a bad president, but breaking the laws or threatening national security will result in serious consequences. Still, in democracies it is free and is supposed to be free to say anything in public and not to be afraid of the consequences (obviously, to say something which is not absolutely wrong by law).

We have to ask ourselves, how much do we want to make the use of Internet democratic? Should child pornography be moderated and the uploaders arrested? What should we do with public references and calls for looting and unlawful unrest? One can say of course, do something about things like these, but there is a thin line to be walked here. These dilemmas were the main dilemmas for the British government also. For example, you may remove a user from facebook, because he or she published photos which should not be published by law, but if it happens again and again – even though the very own Terms of Use of facebook explicitly forbids it – can you block facebook entirely? How much is a site responsible for the content its users upload? What is more, according to The Social Network, the movie, when facebook started, the creators broke into the user database of Harvard University to send out invitations. Does not that make the whole site illegal? It has been confirmed that it acquired its first users through illegal methods of data mining.
In an autocratic regime these decisions are much easier to make. The president/general/king/prince/etc… sees something unwanted and it disappears, as simple as that. But in a democracy which promotes openness, where are the lines to be drawn?

Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States have endorsed in a joint declaration, called *Open Government Declaration*. In the last paragraph of which they…

“commit to developing accessible and secure online spaces as platforms for delivering services, engaging the public, and sharing information and ideas” (*Open Government Declaration*, 2011).

This means that leaders of some so-called developed and developing democratic countries have acknowledged the role of online spaces as the new level of democratic engagement between the government and the public and among the members of the public. A regulation of this space may be necessary, to “secure” the parties in this engagement, but it is also vital to keep this space free, trustworthy, credible and let people express themselves without the fear of saying something “wrong.” They have also acknowledged that this new level of democratic exchange is the future and for governments of democratic states it is a must to learn to use it, without abusing it. As it is written in “Facebook and Online Privacy: Attitudes, Behaviors, and Unintended Consequences” quoting Boyd and Ellison:

“Specific privacy concerns of online social networking include inadvertent disclosure of personal information, damaged reputation due to rumors and gossip, unwanted contact and harassment or stalking, surveillance-like structures due to backtracking functions, use of personal data by third-parties, and hacking and identity theft” (Debatin, Horn, Hughes, Lovejoy, 2009:83-84).

A democratic government of the 21st century must address these issues, without limiting the possibilities and activities of the users of the World Wide Web, making them feel secure and free in the same time. As we could see in the case studies some states have already mastered this more than others.
14.2. On the Role of Social Media in the Organization of Protests in Autocratic States

One should not think that SM was the reason behind the events. It was just a mere tool, however, a great tool. Social media gives freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of expression, but more importantly freedom regarding the time and place of posting to SM. If there is base to be built on, the use of SM makes building much easier and the realization of the movement much swifter, it is truly the medium of the digital age, but it needs the base. If people generally are not unhappy with their leaders and are not questioning the legitimacy of the regime, SM will not start a revolution in itself. However, when they are, it is the newest and “coolest” method to let yourself be heard, as Sedra writes:

“During the 1917 Russian Revolution, the Bolsheviks’ first steps were to seize the telephone exchange, the railway stations and the main bridges going in and out of Petrograd, the capital of the Russian Empire. This allowed them to control the message about the revolution and to prevent counter-revolutionary propaganda” (Sedra, 2011).

For the revolutionaries today facebook is what all these were for the Bolsheviks, since revolutionaries use all the tools available to reach their goal.

If one asks whether a “facebook revolution” was really a facebook revolution or not, we can safely say that sure, it was. But the role of SM was truly overemphasized by other forms of the media, or perhaps overemphasized is not even the good word for it; its role was more like mistaken. It was truly important, but as Sabar says:

“The e–activist may have replaced the pamphleteer, but it was only once thousands of people massed in Egypt's Tahrir Square, Tunisia's Casbah Square, and Bahrain's Pearl Square that the movements showed themselves as something more than a tinkling of keystrokes.” (Sabar, 2011)

To make a parallel between the tools of starting a revolution and the tools of actually fighting it, the word of mouth is like stones and sticks, printed pamphlets are swords and bows, radio is the rifle and finally SM is the laser guided bomb of the NATO airstrike, when the help of NATO was gathered through heavily promoting the resistance over the Internet.
Facebook, twitter and YouTube are great tools, but nothing more. Hounshell writes: “It's just a tool -- it depends on how you use it” (Hounshell, 2011), which is absolutely right. Facebook is good for organizing, YouTube is good for video sharing, while twitter is good for updating people. But we could see that when the internet is gone, activists must go out to the street and continue there. As it was said in Sabar’s example: “tellingly, the protests in Tahrir Square swelled only after Egypt shut down the Internet” (Sabar, 2011). Different methods of blocking and monitoring the Internet may change the timeline, but once the eyes of the people are open and if the autocratic leader of the country is late and/or not strong enough, those eyes will never be shut again, no matter if all the media in the world is shut down.
15. Conclusion – Answers

The conclusion part of this thesis is actually going to consist of two chapters. In the first I would like to answer the questions that were asked at the beginning. Thus, the second part will be the actual conclusion, summing up what we could learn from the case studies and from the answers to these questions if there is anything to learn at all.

15.1. Question No. 1: Does posting on social networks really promote social change?

All of these questions, including the very first one, will be most difficult to answer. Since even after going through all these cases there are no absolute answers, these are not questions when replying simply with a “yes” or “no” would be enough, explanation will always be necessary.

Regarding a first question, seemingly a simple yes would suffice. We could see and it was demonstrated that posting on social networks promotes social change. However, as it was pointed out many times, and was concluded in the previous chapter, posts on SNSs are not the ones changing the society, people are. Posting is a method, but there are other methods, and posting may not even be the most effective one. As we could see going out on the streets is still (and perhaps will ever be) the most effective tool. An autocratic ruler can ignore anything when it is “only online,” but physical pressure cannot be ignored forever. Will Twitter, facebook or their likes ever replace the street? As Baumann quotes Meier yet again: “I don't see that happening” (Baumann, 2009). So yes, SM can be a promoter of democracy, but the will of the people is what really makes the difference and it is up to them whether SNSs are going to be their weapons of choice.
15.2. **Question No. 2:** Is social networking a good tool to achieve a revolution and force a change in authoritarian states and is it a good tool for the authoritarian states to track and eliminate unwanted anti-government individuals?

Yes and yes. Social networking is a good tool to achieve a revolution when it is allowed to be one and it is also a good tool to force changes. However, not always entirely in the way that is suggested by the traditional media. As we could see after a few instances of trying to get something organized on them most states blocked SM from the public. Even what and who could get through could only get out of the state, not to others living in the same country. After a while the “facebook freedom fighter” became not the individual who leads the revolution from in front of his notebook, but the voluntary reporter who raises the attention of the outside world. In cases like this then the outside world may decide to intervene and help. As they have done in Libya, but they have not (yet) done in Syria.

However, SM is also an excellent tool for governments. Instead of employing an army of agents always wearing black trench coats and secretly following every suspicious citizen, trying to find the hub where pamphlets – and with them the ideas – are originated from, they only need a few talented IT guys to track down IP addresses and they immediately have the name and physical location of their adversary. Surely, the online activists do everything not to get caught and to stay online, but in a game like this it is always the government who has more resources.

15.3. **Question No. 3:** Was protesting online on social media sites enough to make the transition into democracy or are there other requirements without which it cannot have been made?

To the first half of this question the only possible answer is no. There are other requirements and it is vital that at least some of them are met. As it was said, posting on SM will never replace street activism. People have to take it outside and protest physically. From there on it can take many ways. The leader(s) can be smart enough to bow to the will of their people and step down, they can try to suppress the protests and, if this attempt is unsuccessful, a civil war can break out and, if there is a civil war, one
side may win, alone or with the help of outside allies – perhaps gathered on social media –. Based on this there are at least two other requirements. The first of which are people on the street, the other can be – depending on the situation – political will, a powerful enough rebel army to fight the regime, inside or outside military support, or even a combination of these.

**15.4. Extra Question: Is posting on SNSs necessary for a 21st century revolution?**

This question was not originally asked in the beginning, but I felt it necessary to be added as a sub-chapter since, due to the media-hype around the “facebook revolutions,” people tend to overlook that revolutions can happen *without* SM as a key factor. It was already established that even in countries of the Arab Spring sometimes SM did not play a crucial role in the ignition of the movement (Syria and Libya, for example) and was only widely used later when gaining sympathy with outside actors was necessary. But we can go further, it is indeed possible for a civil war to break out, for the rebels to win and even to declare the foundation of a new state without meaningful or any help of SM (see the current events in the Azawad region of Mali, for example). So, no, SM is not required for a revolution, though – as it was said before – it could be a great help on the road of transition to democracy.
16. The Truth is still Out There

16.1. The Truth about Web 2.0

The truth is still out there. We have to keep our eyes open and then anybody can see the changes. So what is the truth? The Internet, when it appeared, changed the way we saw our world and turned it upside down. At first no one could see its importance, but by the arrival of the so-called Web 2.0 no one could live without it. By that time Internet (“Web 1.0”) became a part of our lives, just as it has happened with the written then the printed word, with the radio and the television. Development only goes one way, a man from the middle-ages could not use the Internet efficiently, nor exploit its potential, but someone from the 21st century feels desperate when they are deprived of it even for a few days. This has happened, again, this time with Web 2.0. The “first version” of the Internet was like all other forms of media, just with post and telephone combined. Web pages were for governments, organizations and corporations; it took some time for John Doe, the owner of the grocery store on the corner, to set up his own website. Communication, meaning the colorful, exciting, vivid form of communication, was one way only. Yes, there was email; IRC chat rooms and basic forms of some instant messaging systems appeared but they were only the substitutes of paper based post and telephone conversations. Web 2.0 brought something new. Before its arrival no one knew exactly what it would be like, most people do not even know today. With the appearance of blogs, networking sites, online photo albums and finally social networks, altogether social media, Internet received a major update. Never before were so many users the creators of contents. This was a huge leap. Before this leap it took HTML programming skills or at least basic knowledge of Microsoft FrontPage to create web pages. And, yet many personal and fan pages were created this way, it was nowhere near to the boom of social media. Never before in history could someone publish their ideas so openly like today. Social media is a game changer. One might even say that the ones who do not see it are blind and should be felt sorry for. This may be too harsh, but social media is really the ultimate game changer, which forever changes the relation between a citizen and their government. Things, previously seemed impossible, are now a click away. You are not satisfied with your local MP, post it on your Twitter right
after you posted which restaurant you were in or which famous celebrity you have seen. Never before was a direct feedback like this possible.

16.2. The Birth…

Social media being the ultimate game changer it has major relevance to attempts trying to promote democracy. When you are not simply unsatisfied with your local MP, but with the whole regime and you are lucky enough to live in a country where SM is not blocked, you can immediately tweet that also. And if you are living in a country where other people feel the same way it will generate other tweets, those will generate facebook pages and events and it can, it can, result in a protest or even in a revolution. You probably would not be around anymore, but seemingly it is that easy to start a social movement. The first – maybe unconscious – attempt of an online protest against a government marked the birthday of facebook democracies.

Democracy is a phrase which echoes in the corridors of history and which echoes in the last words of millions dying in its name. Social media is a phrase which echoes everywhere today. It is natural that they are combined, by the people and by the media. In our meaning facebook democracy is not a democracy where social media is free, but an autocracy, where only social media is free. In this sense therefore democratic nations should not be considered facebook democracies, although they – mostly – allow unrestricted access to social networking sites and other elements of social media.

Since its birth social media have shaped every social movement it came in contact with. It was pointed out that usually it was not the driving force, but it helped. Helped to gather protesters in Egypt or Tunisia and helped to gain public support in Libya and Syria. It was also pointed out that the availability of – uncensored – social media is not mandatory for a revolution to happen, but it is a sign. It is a sign of a regime, which is either – willingly or unwillingly – ready for a change, since its society is developed enough and/or its leaders know autocracy is not the future for their country and/or they are simply too weak to uphold the regime. If they cannot even control the Internet, they will most likely not be able to control a movement which then unfolds on the streets. Either way a movement which starts on social media – if not choked at the
very beginning and has enough public support – will undoubtedly lead to a very different kind of movement.

However, if the regime is strong enough to keep social media under control, i.e.: harmonize/ban, the movement is not likely to happen. There will be no public support, but not because the government banned social media, but because banning it is also a sign, a sign of tight government control on all fields of life.

Also when a society is developed enough to use Web 2.0 – thus social media – when available, to share their ideas and demand democracy, it is usually developed enough to sustain a democratic movement and, perhaps in the long run, achieve its goal. Again, this is not a reason, but a sign.

This is how social media is a game changer, not in a way that it changed the way the game is being played, but it changed the playing field, the field and tools of communication between a government and its people. With the use of social media events happen much faster than before, but it is a two-edged sword. Just as well as the people governments can also exploit it and use it to manipulate and track down anyone they wish.

16.3. ...and Death of facebook Democracy

When the government of an “autocratic” nation succeeds and puts an end to an Internet movement and limits the boundaries of the online world that is the death of a facebook democracy. But it is also the death of a facebook democracy when the movement leaves the online sphere and relocates to the physical realm, taking the fight to the street. The movement itself may overcome, but it ceases to be a facebook democracy as soon as it leaves the online world. When/if it succeeds it becomes then “just” a regular democracy.
**Glossary of Abbreviations**

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency of the United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>FBI</td>
<td>Federal Bureau of Investigation of the United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>HQ</td>
<td>headquarters</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTML</td>
<td>Hyper Text Markup Language – the main and basic programming language of web pages on the Internet</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPCC</td>
<td>Independent Police Complaints Commission of the United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>Internet Relay Chat – text based chat system which required special client programs with which users could join to different servers and different chat rooms to interact with each other</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISP</td>
<td>Internet Service Provider</td>
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<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament – originally a British abbreviation used for members of the British House of Commons</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>NSA</td>
<td>National Security Agency of the United States of America</td>
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<td>OSINT</td>
<td>open source intelligence</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Security Council (of the United Nations)</td>
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<td>SM</td>
<td>social media</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>social networking site</td>
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<tr>
<td>TSA</td>
<td>Transport Security Administration of the United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. / U.S.A.</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>VJ</td>
<td>video journalist</td>
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