

Social Media and Political Revolution: Re-Understanding The "Arab Spring" Phenomenon in the Perspective of Transnational Public Spaces

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze some linkages between revolution, public sphere, and transnational activism through social media in the Middle East. A revolution in Tunisia in 2011 became an international issue after the revolution spreaded to other states in the region. After Tunisia, protest movements began to ignite in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Jordania. This wave of revolution comes into a public discourse: what causes this movement? How could a revolution in one country inspire another revolution in another country? To answer these questions, we analyze the role of social media as a "bridge" to connect activists in the Middle East to make a revolution. We conclude that transnational activism was formed by routine and massive reports from media which explained what had happened in the Middle East during the revolution. The reports were followed by a spread of the idea of democracy and civil rights through social media. As a consequence, revolution took place in several other countries whose socio-cultural tradition are similar to that of Tunisia.

Keywords: *revolution; social media; transnational activism; public sphere.*

INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2010 to mid 2011, the governments of several Middle Eastern countries faced a series of demonstrations organized by youth activists. This demonstration movement, which came to be known as the "Arab Spring", began in Tunisia's Sidi Bouzid Province, when demonstrators demanded the downfall of the Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali regime for the bad economic situation, corruption and high unemployment in Tunisia. Their action was triggered by a suicide attempt by a hawker named Mohamed Bouazizi. Bouazizi set himself on fire after police confiscated merchandise in the form of fruit and vegetables which were the only source of income. Bouazizi died in hospital on January 4, 2011 due to burns from the action. Immediately, Bouazizi became a symbol of popular resistance against the Ben Ali regime. Not strong in the face of demonstrations and riots that continue to occur, Ben Ali finally fled to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Ben Ali's flight marked the end of the regime he had built 24 years earlier. Opposition movements can finally build transitions in Tunisia.

Similar conditions are faced by Egypt. The large number of unemployed young people, high levels of corruption in the government, as well as the gap between rich and poor which increasingly makes people take to the streets demanding the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak. A mass movement that has continued to take place since January 25, 2011 led Mubarak to resign and submit governance to the

military (Said Ali, 2012). Thus, Egypt became the second country to change leadership due to pressure from the mass movement in the Arab Spring. The collapse of the Ben Ali and Mubarak regimes then spread in other countries in the Middle East region. Demonstrations accompanied by riots took place in Algeria, Yemen, Jordan, Syria, Bahrain and Libya. The causes are the same, namely corruption, poverty, and high unemployment. In Algeria, for example, the masses demanded the resignation of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika because his government was deemed unable to overcome the problem of food prices, housing shortages, and political and social dissatisfaction. The Jordanian government is also seen by its people as being unable to reduce the price of fuel and the price of basic necessities.

The phenomenon of mass movements in various countries, which dared to demand the withdrawal of authoritarian regimes is a new phenomenon in the Middle East region. The mass movement led to a wave of democratization which was previously thought would never take place in the Middle East context. Why is the mass movement against the regime authoritarianism occurs and spreads among Middle Eastern countries. This paper tries to provide an explanation of political change in the Middle East as a separate phenomenon that occurs in the region, which is different from similar phenomena that have occurred in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, this paper argues that the Arab Spring revolution was strongly influenced by citizens who actively initiated political movements and the development of social media which allowed the spread of discourse about revolution. The development of social media technology goes hand in hand with increasingly sophisticated and networked activism patterns, which produce a simultaneous political movement in the region. Theoretically, by using the concept of transnational activism proposed by Snow and Benford (2000) and the public sphere concept from Habermas (2010), technology triggers the formation of a "political public space" that transcends the nation-state and allows the battle of political ideas to take place in the arena. The discussion of this paper will be divided into five parts. The first part will explain theoretically the links between public space, transnational activism, and political change. The second part will explain the political setting in the Middle East region ahead of the Arab Spring wave in 2010-2011. In the third part, this paper will provide an explanation of the growth of social media, and its role in spreading the socio-political movement in the Middle East in this period will be described in the fourth section. Meanwhile, the fifth part will review the formation of "public space" that allows political change in the Middle East through social media. The writing will close with a conclusion.

Public Spaces, Transnational Activism, and Political Change: Framework Theoretical

Political changes in the Middle East in early 2011 were often explained by their existence. The 'wave of democratization,' which sees the Middle East political movement as basically a democratic movement that wants to undermine

authoritarianism and replace it with a democratic transition process (Grand, 2011; Howard and Hassan, 2013;). Inspired by the theory of democratic transition put forward by Samuel Huntington (1993), this perspective argues that the Arab Spring is a 'liberal' response from authoritarianism that calls for political liberalization and democratization in the Middle East.

There is some literature that uses this perspective to understand Arab Spring. For example, Grand (2011) calls the wave of mass action in the Middle East in early 2011 the fourth wave of democratization. Traditionally, the authoritarian power built in the Middle East involved a very strong oligarchy between the military, international capital and political leaders (see Arfani, 2011). The political movement that took place in Tunisia, in this viewpoint, was a political resultant from the dissatisfaction of the masses who wanted democracy after years of being under the authoritarian leadership of President Ben Ali. In this perspective, mass movements are more "inevitable" than the collapse of authoritarian regimes and the emergence of democratization (Ahmad and Cappocia, 2004; Kitchenet.Al,2011). Another perspective emphasizes Arab Spring as a process of democratization that is built naturally (see Howard and Hassan, 2011). This perspective sees that the process of democratization will grow naturally, because of the growing social movements and use of existing technological advancements to articulate their movements. The use of several repertoires and non-violent actions shows that the Arab Spring is a necessity from the emergence of pro-democracy movements in the Middle East who want political change(Kurzman,2012).

There are several criticisms of this transition model approach. Structuralists criticize this approach for failing to explain the dynamics of the 'consolidation of the market economy' that accompany the process of democratization (Hadiz, 2003). The process of democratization that runs post-authoritarianism fails to explain why the process of liberalization that runs in the political sector is not followed by democratization in the economic sector, but paves the way for massive institutionalization of capitalism (Hadiz, 2011). In the Middle East context, this approach also fails to explain the phenomenon of the revival of Islamist movements in various forms, which in some cases such as in Egypt and Libya actually eliminates democratic assumptions after the "Arab Spring" (Chamkhi, 2012). Aside from being theoretically criticized, the perspective of the wave of democratization also failed to explain why after the Arab Spring there were several cases of return authoritarianism. The phenomenon in Egypt shows that although the authoritarian regime was successfully defeated, the election which was won by the Islamists actually failed to bring a democratic political climate (Pepinsky, 2013). In the context of Syria and Yemen, the Arab Spring phenomenon was actually followed by a prolonged conflict due to contestation between the political forces that brought down each other. This

makes the perspective of the wave of democratization less than giving a full explanation of the Arab Spring phenomenon.

This paper tries to provide a more adequate explanation of the emergence of the Arab Spring along with a reversal that occurred in several countries after the 2011 revolution. This paper argues that the Middle East political movement in early 2011 occurred because of limited public space in the country, so the masses accumulate their disappointment through new public spaces. The presence of communicative discourse formation on social media, as reviewed by Al-Jazeera (2011), reinforces this argument. The formation of the discourse of revolution no longer uses the conventional way with mass cells, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, but by using the virtual world.

The lack of public space occurs because authoritarianism makes the government holds a powerful power to spy on all forms of political activism, which has the potential to disrupt the existence of his regime. Activism is not possible in mass base cells, so it is carried out in social media. The transnational nature of social media networks makes the discourse expand from one country to another. Borrowing the term Al-Jazeera, social media has become a "new weapon" for political activism. To see the relationship between social networks and mass movements, the term "public space" as the central theory of this research needs to be defined. According to Habermas (2010: 41), public space is understood as the space of private people who come together as public, they claim that space is public property that is not regulated from above (the state) as (a form) of public authority. If this definition is used consistently, public space is not only defined to exist in a political, but also economic, social, and even cultural sense. Public space is the embodiment of public rationality in the articulation spaces available in society. In a political sense, public space is seen in the context of political representation. Habermas calls it a "political function of public space", which means that public space is able to become an arena for certain political subjects to articulate their interests (Habermas, 2010: 81). The existence of public space makes protests protested and mass movements can be consolidated. Therefore, in this perspective, public space needs to be understood in relation to the articulation of political interests. In the context of an authoritarian society, public space becomes a location for marginalized political forces to voice their aspirations and gather support to contest with the power of the status quo.

The public space perspective is important in providing alternative explanations for the reason the Arab Spring can become a regional issue, rather than only being concentrated in Tunisia or Egypt. In contrast to the explanation of the wave of democratization which believes that the Arab Spring revolution will necessarily have an impact on the process of democratization and transition, this perspective sees that the political struggle that accompanies the Arab Spring will be closely related to the

struggle for public space. Democratization will only be meaningful if there is debate or dialogue between all political forces that take place in the public sphere (Singh and Takur, 2013). In this perspective, democratization is the processes of the struggle for public space, among all political forces, including the state and civil society. The problem is, how can the public sphere be used to carry out actions that have social or political value? Habermas made an offer in the form of democracy through communicative actions. The process of transferring legitimacy to the people as an articulation of democracy is carried out through communicative discourse between citizens and the medium of public space.

According to Habermas, as described by Hardiman (2010), a public legitimacy is brought about by a process of transfer between the masses and the political elite which is carried out through communicative discourse. Through these communicative actions, public space is transformed into political public space. In the context of the mass movement, the process of how the mass can be moved against the authoritarian regime takes place through communicative discourse in the public sphere. If this perspective is associated with the Middle East revolution, a question will arise: how can a revolution in a country spread to other countries in a short period of time? The most probable answer is the existence of the phenomenon of transnational activism, as revealed by David Snow and Richard Benford (1998). The transnational perspective implies the existence of a non-state actor's approach in reading contemporary issues in the study of International Relations, including the matter of information flows that are increasingly unable to be controlled by the state. The process of globalization combined with the development of information technology implies the development of mass media. Now, social networking media is becoming a new tool to convey information and carry out transnational activism. Its nature that crosses national borders and its social influence makes this new media need to be analyzed. In transnational activism, Snow and Benford (1988) introduce the concept of "framing" as a mode of transnationalisation of movements. **Framing** is defined by Snow and Benford as "the use of external symbols to orient local or national claims." The Middle Eastern political context shifts this meaning, framing does not only mean the use of symbols, but also the presence of the same substance due to authoritarian modes that are not much different. Leksono (2011) states that information technology accelerates the process of spreading discourse, so that the framing process runs faster. Social networks have become tools to accelerate the spread of discourse, including those that lead to political change.

Middle East Political Settings Contemporar The term "Middle East" arose in studies of classical orientalism and developed into a regional category in the study of International Relations (see Said, 1978; Halliday, 2005). This term is closely related to ethnocultural and ethnoreligi factors. Ethnocultural, the classification of countries in the Middle East region is dominated by the Arabs. While from ethnoreligi factors,

most of this region is dominated by the influence of Islam. These two factors become one inseparable blend so that the Middle East region is often also referred to as "The Arab and Islamic World." Both of these factors make some countries in northern Africa including from the Middle East region, namely Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Libya, Sudan (except for South Sudan who have just freed themselves from Sudan), Egypt, Somalia, Tunisia and Djibouti. They joined Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Palestine, Turkey, Israel, Lebanon and Syria on the Asian continent. In general, countries in the Middle East are world oil exporters. However, a number of countries in the region are also listed as oil importers (IMF, 2011). Politically, most regimes in the Middle East are dictatorial and authoritarian. This can be observed from several interesting special phenomena. First, political participation and the existence of political parties is very limited. In Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan, for example, elections and the opposition came under intense pressure and control from an authoritarian regime. In Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, political parties are not allowed at all. Meanwhile, dictatorial regimes of Iraq, Libya and Syria have banned the development of opposition parties.

Second, leaders in the Middle East rarely gain power through elections. Most current leaders, or at least one previous generation of leadership, came to power by staging a coup or through inheritance. An example of a Middle Eastern leader who came to power with a coup is Moammar Qadhafi (Libya, 1969), Saddam Hussein (Iraq, 1979), Al-Basyir (Sudan, 1989), Hafi z Al-Asad (1970), A. Saleh (1978), and who recently collapsed, namely Zine Abidine Ben Ali (Tunisia, 1987). While inheritance was carried out, for example, by Saudi Arabia (the As-Saud family) and Bahrain (Hamad bin Isa, formerly Shaykh Isa). The inheritance of power was also carried out in Kuwait, Jordan and Morocco.

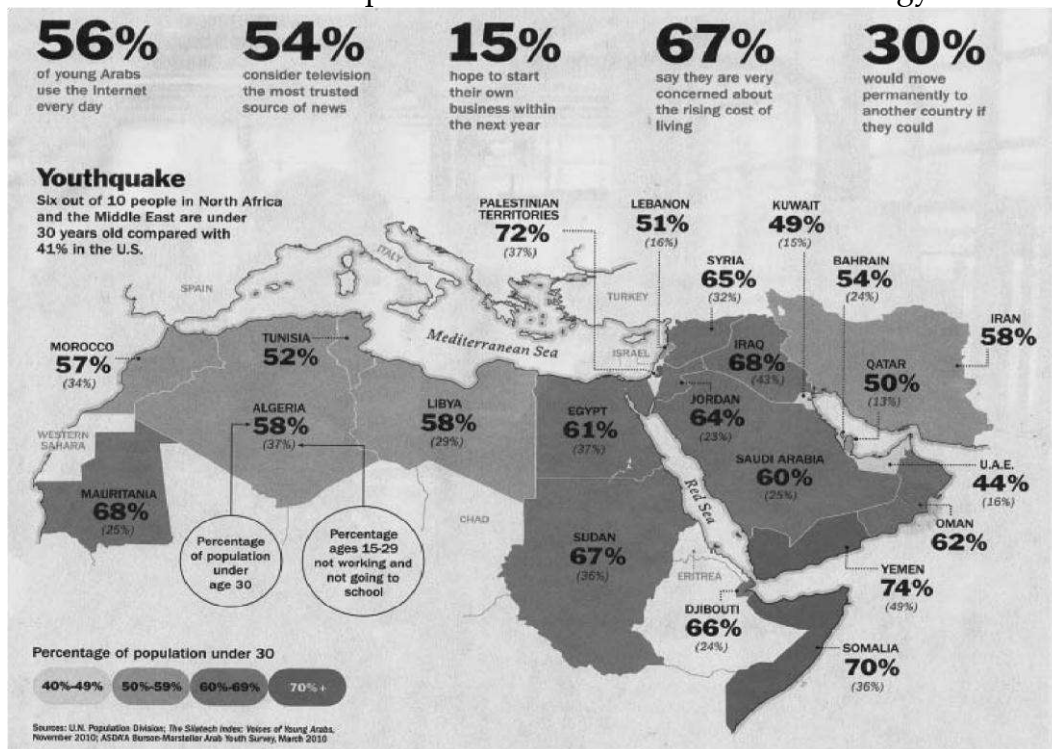
Third, there is an interesting tendency for religious identity and the political system. Although Islamic identity dominates strongly in this region, political parties or Islamic movements themselves are suppressed by the ruling regime. Unlike Iran which gives the right to live freely to Islamic parties, countries such as Egypt, Algeria and Iraq prohibit the development of Islamic parties. For example, the Muslim Brotherhood Islamic movement, even declared a banned party in its native country, Egypt. Although later this movement was in power when Mohammad Mursi replaced Mubarak as president. In Algeria, the great victory of the Islamic Salvation Front party in the 1989 elections even had to end tragically due to a massacre by the government (Internationale, 2011). The Middle East political system with the three phenomena above makes this region does not have heavy political turmoil. Every time an opportunity arises for a rebellion, the regime immediately acts repressively to maintain their power. This authoritarianism lasted very long. In fact, Egypt experienced authoritarianism and came under the military regime from the 1950s until then the Arab Spring (Zahid, 2010). However, these dictatorial and absolute regimes

could collapse by a mass movement that took place in 2011. After Tunisia, on January 4, 2011 similar mass demonstrations emerged in Algeria. In Yemen, a movement took place on January 20, which caused President Ali Abdullah Saleh to immediately announce his post in 2013 and not be in power anymore. The next mass movement, which was the strongest and was intensely covered by international media for days, took place in Egypt. Thousands of people gathered in Tahrir Square condemning high food prices, lack of jobs, corruption, and an authoritarian government system. Insistence and damage that occurred finally made Hosni Mubarak resign and hand over power. Demonstrations also took place in Jordan, Syria and Bahrain. In Jordan, the people condemned the high price of fuel and basic necessities. In Syria, corruption, high unemployment and poverty led people to take action against President Bashar al-Assad.

The chronology of the revolution which can be read as the domino effect of the turmoil in Tunisia and Egypt shows several causes. **First**, unemployment rates and high poverty rates. The unemployment rate in a number of Middle Eastern countries in 2009 was Tunisia 14.1%; Egypt 8.4%; Algeria 12.5%; Yemen 35%; Jordan 12.6%; Syria 86%; Bahrain 15%; Morocco 10%; and Libya 30% (Hanouz and Khatib, 2011). Most unemployed people come from young and productive people, especially those under 30 years old (Ghosh, 2011b: 5). On the other hand, some countries in the Middle East are also quite large recipients of international assistance. In 2008, on a per capita basis, countries in the Middle East and North Africa received financial assistance of \$ 73 per head. Meanwhile, almost 13% of Jordan's GDP, for example, came from remittance funds (Maleek and Awadallah, 2011). This indicates inequality and high levels of poverty in the Middle East and North Africa. **Second**, the high unemployment rate and poverty that plagued the Middle Eastern countries were exacerbated by rising prices for goods. This makes the economic conditions of most countries in the Middle East worsen. A number of countries undergoing a revolution have low GDP per capita and negative account balances. **Third**, the importance of the revolution in the Middle East is corruption. The level of corruption in these countries is shown by the ranking of perceptions of corruption that they obtained in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) issued by Transparency International (TI) in 2010. In the 2010 CPI which ranks 178 countries, Tunisia is ranked 59th with value of 4.3; Egypt ranked 98th with a value of 3.1; Algeria is ranked 105th with a score of 2.9; Jordan ranked 50th with a value of 4.7; Syria ranked 127th with a score of 2.5; Morocco ranked 85th with a value of 3.4; and Yemen and Libya are ranked the same, namely 146th with a value of 2.2 (Transparency International, 2011). Corruption in Middle Eastern countries is not only in the form of petty corruption, but also large-scale corruption and involving bureaucracy and political corruption. Corruption in Middle Eastern countries has created a loss of \$ 1 trillion, according to the Arab Anti-Corruption Organization, if it is not corrupted, that much money can be used to increase income, reduce poverty, and meet food and water needs independently. **Fourth**, dissatisfaction with the authoritarian political system. Repression that has been felt so strongly by the people

of the freedom and rights of citizens makes them desperate and tired. However, the four preceding triggers, which are increasingly felt by the people, have made their despair turn into a feeling of no longer fearing an authoritarian regime, which is very likely to carry out repressive actions using military force. Young people in the Middle East quickly respond to the four reasons above. In general, they carried out various activities which later spread and sparked a revolution in the Middle East. In a survey, it was found that 56% of Middle Eastern youth use the internet every day, 54% watch trusted news programs on television, 67% are very aware of the high cost of living they face, and 30% want to move permanently to other countries whenever possible (Ghosh, 2011a).

Map of Youth Distribution and Technology Use Activities



Source: Ghosh, 2011b

Young people who increasingly understand technology are an important part of the spread of mass movement activism that works transnationally. In Egypt, the involvement of Google executives, Wael Ghonim, for example, became an asset for the Middle East youth movement in the revolution. The existence of technology that has been widely accepted by young people, such as satellite television, cellphones, computers, and the internet plays an important role in disseminating information. Technology can be used as a means of education, information, and connecting people

in an area that feels the same fate, to form a mass movement demanding political change in the Middle East.

Social Media and the Eastern Revolution **The middle** The revolution in the Middle East cannot be separated from the role of social media and technology that caused the revolution to spread transnationally. How does social media play a significant role? Theoretically, social media is one form of new media. New media not only plays a role in the dissemination of information, but also allows everyone to communicate and interact in both directions. In general, there are three important elements of new media that cause it to have a social function, namely communication, convergence, and content (3C). Different from traditional mass media which uses only "one form" for everyone, new media is "one to one" and the consequences are fragmented in certain social groups, which have access and technological capabilities to use it. Furthermore, according to Adiputera, the benefits of new media are highly dependent on how a person uses it as a form of communication and information distribution. Here, the flow of information is controlled by the user, no longer by the media provider. This is different from traditional mass media that present information openly, but are limited. For example, it can be seen that cell phones are used for the interests of users quickly and directly. This explains why mass movements in the Middle East are spreading rapidly between countries, because the pattern of communication is fast and directly refers to existing problems. Social networks are always seen from a variety of contexts: sociocultural, political, and others. In a cultural position, social networks explain how a person represents himself and his group on a social basis. Politically, social networking can be a medium of articulation of broader interests. This illustrates the development of the media from information seeking to inter-individual linkages, which is one of the important variables in building organizing and social movements. In this context, new media can be used as a tool to convey something and encourage change.

In some Middle Eastern countries, although anti-Western, internet access is opened because people already understand the media and the technology can be purchased. The consequence of an increasingly high purchasing power of technology and an increasingly media literate society is the rise of the middle class. The emergence of the middle class was also accompanied by changes in the structure of the political economy in the Middle East, due to the Oil Boom in the mid-1970s, as well as the policy on open doors imposed in North Africa. In some countries, such as Egypt and Tunisia, the middle class has grown and become one of the strongest bases of the Islamic movement (see Wickham, 2003; Zahid, 2010). However, there are two problems that arise. First, some of these countries are countries that are politically under the authority of an authoritarian regime, thus hampering the articulation of middle class politics. Second, the two countries experienced difficult socio-economic

conditions in the middle of 2010-2011, as a direct impact of the global economic crisis. Mass movements dominated by the middle class, in Egypt can be seen in the April 6 Movement or Kifaya, is a response to the domestic economic crisis and the lack of political access to the middle class.

According to Faris Al-Fadh, the problem that arises in the Middle East is the freedom of society that is politically restricted and repressed by the state, so that people become dissatisfied. Egypt and Tunisia are two interesting examples where political authoritarianism represses opposition movements, including Islamist movements and social democratic movements. On one hand, the crisis made movement inevitable in early 2011. On the other hand, the current revolution in the two countries has nothing to do with the previous revolution. In Egypt, the revolution that took place in 2011 was very different, either with movements initiated by the Muslim Brotherhood or a revolution in 1953. The Middle East revolution process in 2011 was started by young people who were not in contact with ideology. They are not under the same umbrella organization. In addition, the revolution was also supported by the use of technology and information that became a symbol of the middle class. In Libya, according to Faris, the absence of public space became the main trigger of the demands for change which ultimately had implications for the mass movement demanding the withdrawal of Moammar Khadhafi. In the Middle East, arrangements for communication tools do exist, but access to information will not be closed because it is decentralized. In the revolutionary years, the internet was very much linked to political issues because it was related to information that had news value. The problem is, in the Middle East and other countries with authoritarian culture, the internet cannot be accessed freely enough. In this case, the activity of distributing public information will usually be strongly related to the issue of national security which is the domain of the military to resolve it.

In addition to social media, the revolution in the Middle East also uses blogs to channel political opinions. Blogs are a means for young Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood to express themselves, become a space for self-criticism, discussion and dialogue with the middle class and senior Brotherhood elites (AlAnani, 2011; Hauslohner, 2011). There are three stages in the development of blogs as a media for political movements in the context of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (Al-Anani, 2011). **First**, the exploration stage, which is the stage when bloggers explore manhaj, activities, important agendas and internal issues of the organization through blogs. They do not directly criticize the regime directly, but by first exploring issues and discourse. **Second**, the stage of civil resistance, which emerged when the revolution occurred. Blogs in this phase become symbols of political resistance through propaganda activities. Approximately 40 bloggers who initially started civil resistance through cyberspace media in Egypt, so the blog has its own socio-political dimension. Third,

self-criticism, which occurred after the revolution. At this stage bloggers began to critique ideology, discuss, debate critical matters. **Third**, blogs not only serve as a medium for socio-political resistance, but also develop broader discourse of democratization. This last stage corresponds with the development of transnational activism in the Middle East. A wave of democratization has emerged along with transnationalism and the use of public space as part of a revolution in the region. Thus, it can be seen that there is a relationship between the process of democratization and the opening of public spaces in the Middle East represented by new media. In this context, the new media is driving the process of democratization that is proceeding slowly. The presence of the media becomes important when an economic crisis occurs, which in turn becomes a momentum for the opposition to consolidate its movement.

The Role of Transnational Activism: Explain the Spread of Mass Movements in the middle East The mass movement which demands the withdrawal of authoritarian regimes in various Middle Eastern countries is an interesting phenomenon to observe. In less than two months, the Middle East's young generation has succeeded in driving political change on a very large scale as a form of transnational activism. This section will provide an overview of how transnational activism is an important variable in the process of political change in the Middle East. In Relationship studies Internationally, transnationalism has been a theme that has been discussed since the late 1980s. According to James Rosenau, transnationalism is a process in which international relations carried out by the government have been accompanied by relations between individuals, groups and private parties. This relationship process has important consequences for the international world (see Jackson and Sorensen, 2007: 101). Transnationalism sees the state as no longer the main actor in every interaction of international relations.

In the context of reform in the Middle East, the actors behind transnationalism are individuals and groups of individuals, especially young people. However, transnationalism is not a direct cause of revolution in the Middle East, but rather the impact and political outcome of popular dissatisfaction with the ruling regime. Transnationalism instrumental in political changes. At this point, the role of social media as a means of spreading the discourse of the revolution becomes significant. Thanks to the role of social media, when the Tunisian resistance succeeded in undermining the Ben Ali regime which had been in power for 24 years, people in neighboring countries in the Middle East began to dare to take the same steps. Transnational activities in the Middle East in the context of the Arab Spring can be understood through two perspectives. First, transnationalism can be seen through attitudinal change or behavior change. Second, transnationalism is understood by the

interpretation of the fact that young Middle Eastern generations interpret the symbols that exist outside the country into their movements. The meaning of this symbol leads to one conclusion, namely the assessment that there is a structural similarity between their countries and the majority of other countries in the Middle East. Borrowing Sidney Tarrow's argument, this phenomenon is a form of transnational activism that uses framing methods and tactics as instruments of his movement. This means that, using this framework of thinking, new media, in this case social media and blogs, becomes important to convey the symbols and messages of the movement built by activists (Tarrow, 2005). In the era of globalization, transnationalism will have implications for a transformation process. Those who interact will adopt each other's knowledge which will then drive behavior change. In the Middle East context, behavior change occurs at the grassroots level, especially in the younger generation. On the one hand, intense transnational interactions make young people in the Middle East aware that they are entitled to the freedom and a more prosperous life as those obtained by others abroad (Ghosh, 2011b). On the other hand, as Michele Angrist revealed, the mass movement that initially only occurred in Tunisia and Egypt became a trigger for the birth of a similar movement in other countries because transnational activists were aware that authoritarian regimes were also present in other countries (Angrist, 2011; Ghosh, 2011a). Political obstacles make it difficult to physically spread ideas across countries. Technological developments help transnational activists interact indirectly through cyberspace. Transnational activism that took place in the Middle East succeeded in utilizing public space through social media networks. Hassan Nafaa, a professor of political science at Cairo University, referred to the youth as transnationalism also needs to be understood as an important basis in the formation of public space that goes beyond the construction of the nation state. In the context of transnationalism in the Middle East, social networking has an important role in shaping public space. According to Habermas, public space is a very conducive space for the development of society. The public sphere can only achieve its function when the ideal opinion situation has been realized. In the Middle East, the new media brings together a situation of opinion among citizens in various countries, which was previously limited due to an authoritarian political system. The absence of sufficient government control over the development of new media prompted mass protests to turn to the media, accumulate among national mass movements and then spread to the regional level.

Public space in this context becomes transnational and is no longer limited by nation-state boundaries. The public sphere can be a liaison between the holders of power with the community given the dialogues in the public sphere can be a reflection of people's desires. In some countries, for example Egypt, the public sphere is hampered by an authoritarian government (see Zahid, 2010). Due to transnational

influence, mass movements in the country strengthened and took inspiration from other countries. Therefore, it is through this public space that an ideal form of society can be born, free from oppression, and can overcome the crises that confront them (Kellner, 2011). The existence of public space will greatly help the public to express their opinions with more independence. So far, in countries such as Egypt and Libya, political participation and people's aspirations are limited. In Egypt, opposition parties are under intense pressure from the ruling regime, while in Libya opposition parties are even barred from developing. In Tunisia, Islamic parties, which are the aspirations of some groups, are prohibited from standing. Social networks have succeeded in providing the need for public space that has been needed by people in the Middle East (Sihbudi, 1991: 34; Chamkhi, 2012).

The advantage of social networking is that access is almost unlimited and without state control. Social networks have become a public space, people can interact freely. The nature of social networking that is difficult to control has helped the massive mass movements that occurred in the Middle East in early 2011 which failed to dammed the government. Social networks even cross national borders, making the domino effect of a revolution in a country spread to neighboring countries. According to Ninok Leksono, following the analysis of David Kirkpatrick and David Sanger in *The New York Times*, social networking has made the free flow of information exchanges between pro-democracy activists in Tunisia and Egypt. When Egyptian demonstrators confront security forces, they have received advice or advice from their counterparts in other countries, namely demonstrators in Tunisia (Leksono, 2011). For example, demonstrators are encouraged to put oranges, vinegar or onions under a scarf in an effort to ward off tear gas. For the same purpose they are also advised to bring soda or milk. The information is exchanged through the Facebook social network. Activists who usually face the risk of being arrested while demonstrating can also spread ideas through the internet. This has been done by Ahmad Maher, a movement activist who built a group on Facebook and used it as a communication node of the movement. Internet technology is also used for fundraising. In Egypt, the fund raised from the fund was used to buy blankets and tents for activists who survived in Tahrir Square (Leksono, 2011).

Social networks have an extraordinary role to play in the revolution in the Middle East. Some experts say the biggest impact of social networks on the revolution is when the government began to prohibit access to social networks. In Tunisia, some people call resistance to government efforts to block or close down some networks as WikiLeaks Revolution. When the Tunisian government blocked several pages and arrested a number of activists, young people were even more motivated to reciprocate the government's treatment by sharing information through blogs, Facebook and Twitter. In Egypt, public anger grew when the government blocked Twitter and

Facebook, which was then followed by the shutdown of internet connections. Although social media helps protestors organize movements and communicate with one another, it seems that the biggest role of social media is when they disappear. The latest slogan on the internet about that was coined by The Economist (2011): "If your government closes the internet, it's time to close that government."

The spirit for revolution has moved beyond the transnational boundaries of one country. All these revolutions are driven by young people through more modern facilities and infrastructure such as social networking on the internet and text messaging via mobile phones. An economist and political activist from Bahrain, Ala'a Shehabi, said that "[w]hether where in Tunis or in Cairo or in Manama, young Arabs are all on the same wavelength" (Ghosh, 2011b). The spirit which then transformed into a popular resistance against the dictatorial regime in Tunisia has spread into a mass movement. In this context, transnational activism has an important role, especially in utilizing the functions of social networks as new media. That is, borrowing the term Habermas (2010), mass movements can be read as an embodiment of public space that is transformed politically and provides political spaces for the community. It is this political transformation of public space that opens up the possibility of a process of democratization in the Middle East.

CONCLUSION

This paper outlines the roles of the new media in the Arab Spring revolution in 2011 and its political implications for the development of mass movements in the region. In general, this paper concludes that the mass movement that dares to oppose governments in Middle Eastern countries, such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, is motivated by a number of social dissatisfaction factors, including high unemployment, poverty, high prices of basic necessities, and regime corruption. At the same time, political dissatisfaction also surrounds the people because the authoritarianism that has been used by the ruling political regime has actually curbed and reduced the rights of opinion, and in turn has caused disappointment and protest against the political regime. Dissatisfaction in the two aspects above makes mass movements in the Middle East demand a change. From the social side, the people clearly want a more prosperous condition, if necessary with a change of regime. From the political side, people began to want an effort towards the democratic order that they often saw and heard in the West, but they did not see in their own country. The spirit of the mass movements in Tunisia and Egypt also spread to other Middle Eastern countries. The key words in the dissemination are transnational activism and digital technology in the context of public space. Transnational activism takes the form of ongoing reports from various media about what is happening for months in Tunisia

and Egypt. This was followed by the spread of democratic ideas and the promotion of people's rights through the internet. The geographical location of these countries are close together, the political system is almost the same, and authoritarian regimes that do not make people satisfied, make ideas against the regime very real and feel right in context. This dissatisfaction then accumulates and meets its momentum in mid-2010-2011. The question is, why does the 'political change' spread to several countries? The explanation that emerged was that pro-democracy activists exchanged information and made use of the available public space; they are able to use it effectively. The intended public space is social networking or media and blogs. With a medium in the form of digital technology, it is difficult for the government to ward off waves of protests and demonstrations of popular dissatisfaction in the Middle East. In the case of the revolution in the Middle East there is an interesting phenomenon, namely that technology has begun to play an important role and the people, especially the younger generation, are increasingly clever in utilizing technology. With the continuing process of revolution in the Middle East, much remains to be seen from the development of the role of youth and technology in subsequent studies. One important note can be drawn from this process: social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, which only emerged in the 21st century, have changed the ways of people's struggle in a broader dimension as an attempt to fulfill rights in the context of public space, through new ways that are currently difficult to be dammed by any party.

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