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<div align="center">The Confluence of Facebook and Nonviolence
Social Media & Nonviolent Social Revolution</div>

This paper analyzes how social media was used in the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt in early 2011. It will consider the history of social media in social revolution, discuss what theories the recent revolutions drew on, connect those theories to the role of social media in social revolution, apply what this paper discussed to the recent revolutions (the main analysis portion), and lastly discuss a dissenting opinion to its thesis that in recent years there have been many nonviolent social revolutions (like those in Tunisia and Egypt in early 2011) where social media (largely Twitter and Facebook) provided a positive organizational backbone to their cause This paper may say "social revolution" or just "revolution" but is still referring to nonviolent social revolution.

First there are a few terms that need defining. Those are "social media", "nonviolence", and "social revolution." "Social media" are media used for social interaction. As Clay Shirky puts it, most websites and news media outlets operate on a one-to-many model (87), they give you content but you can't give them feedback that everyone can see. All forms of social media, however, operate on a many-to-many model (87): we can all contribute content and we can all give feedback on that content for everyone else to see. In essence, social media are tools that enable easy, fast, and accessible group conversations. For the purposes of this paper I'll be looking at three of these tools: Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

"Nonviolence" is, as Michael Nagler (a peace scholar) puts it, "the absence of the desire, or intention, to harm" (44). Contrary to common thought, Nagler makes it clear that nonviolence is not the weapon of the weak (46) but rather is a tool that can only be used by those capable of violence (225). In practicing nonviolence one embodies two sides of the picture, one where you nonviolently push back on your opponent, and one where you acknowledge that your opponent is human just as much as you are. No physical or mental harm is done to your opponent when practicing nonviolence. In short, nonviolence is a constructive way to get long-term goals met, whereas violence will always make those goals harder, if not impossible, to reach.

To best define "social revolution" let me turn to the recent uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt in early 2011. Social revolutions in a general sense are interpreted as being the force behind changes in governmental institutions that by their nature trickle down into massive changes to their country's social structures. There is a controversy as to when a social revolution ends. Is it when the dictator is out of power? Or is it over when a new government is in place? It is also possible that even after a new government is in place a few years down the road the country will be back in a social revolution, as has occurred in Ukraine. This is one area where there is much disagreement. I'm personally torn as to when it ends, so for the purposes of this paper I will consider the end of a social revolution to be when a dictator is out of power.

The recent revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt will be my example when discussing the use of social media in nonviolent social revolution. In order to discuss these revolutions, I need to talk about an established theory of nonviolent social revolution that was most likely drawn upon in these revolutions: that is, the work of Gene Sharp.

Sharp is the author of a handbook entitled *From Dictatorship to Democracy* that outlines how to run a successful nonviolent campaign to liberate a country from its dictator and move to a democratic form of government. Sharp is currently Professor Emeritus of political science at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. His core theme is that power is not monolithic, but rather comes from the consent of the people of the state. Let me spend some time discussing some of his theories.

Nonviolence is generally considered more powerful than violence, because when you resort to violence you are using a means where your oppressor is superior (4). When a subgroup of the oppressed wants to bring down a dictatorship Sharp says they have these 4 tasks to accomplish (7): "Strengthen the oppressed"; "Strengthen the independent institutions and social groups of the oppressed"; "Create a powerful internal resistance force"; and "Develop a wise grand strategy and implement it" (7-8).

Sharp suggests that creating a state with freedom and peace requires great strategy, organization, planning, and above all power (17). Sharp indicates that dictators don't have any political power without the assistance of the oppressed (18). Some sources of power for dictators are: authority; human resources; skills and knowledge; intangible factors; material resources; and sanctions (18-19). Withdrawal of support diminishes the sources of power on which all dictators depend (19). This withdrawal then becomes the goal of nonviolent social revolution.

Sharp says that in order to bring down a dictator you need to strike at their weaknesses, such as: the cooperation of the oppressed; subordinates not reporting accurate details; unstable power hierarchy; and police or military supporting revolution (26-27). As we saw in Tunisia and Egypt, attacking these weaknesses helped topple the

dictators. Struggles that target these weaknesses have a greater chance of success than those that hit the strong spots. The question Sharp poses is how to lead such struggle (28). His answer? Lead with political defiance (29).

Political defiance doesn't accept that the dictator will decide the means or outcome. Political defiance is difficult to combat, and it can aggravate weaknesses of authority. Political defiance can be widely dispersed or it can be concentrated. An entire population can utilize political defiance, and it can distribute power more effectively (29-30). Yet Sharp also warns us that because political defiance is a nonviolent means of struggle, it can be much more complex to exercise than violence is (30).

Sharp suggests that "the common error of past improvised political defiance campaigns is the reliance on only one or two methods, such as strikes and mass demonstrations." (30). In contrast, there are about 200 methods that Sharp has listed. Unlike violent means, nonviolent means can be focused on specific issues at stake (31). Sharp warns that any violence in a nonviolent campaign threatens the legitimacy of the nonviolent commitment (32). We saw hints of this dilemma when the party headquarters was set on fire in Egypt. Sharp believes that it is important to realize that power is never static, but always changing in these situations (34).

Since nonviolent struggle is complex, it requires careful strategic planning. Sharp outlines four important terms in strategic planning. "grand strategy" is what is used to coordinate and direct the use of all appropriate and available resources of a group wanting to meet its goals in a given conflict (43). Within a grand strategy there are more "limited strategies" for a struggle. These strategies have to do with how best to achieve specific goals while operating within the scope of a grand strategy (43). "Tactics" are

used to implement a specific strategy and refer to the skillful use of one's forces to the best advantage in a limited situation (44). "Methods" are the specific means of action used within a tactic (45). In Egypt the April 6th movement was essentially part of the same grand strategy as the early 2011 revolution was.

According to John Timpane, before the Tunisian revolution, social media had not played a significant role in bringing down a dictatorship in the Arab World (1). Timpane said that the Tunisian revolution was visibly sparked (because, as Clay Shirky noted in an interview the Wall Street Journal did with him, political struggle is always the result of coordination and is never spontaneous) by images of a Tunisian setting himself on fire that made their quick rounds on the internet (1). Dictators can temporarily block social media, but eventually they'll need to live with how it helps citizens get around authority (1).

Clay Shirky studies how groups in general use social media and asked the questions: "To what extent did the effects of social media and news media matter in the revolutions? How did these help people coordinate and organize?" (Video - Social Media Expert Clay Shirky Explores the Role of Facebook and Twitter in the Middle East - WSJ.com) I agree with Shirky's statement that social media's brilliance is that it "allows for larger coordination at a lower cost across a wider area" (Video - Social Media Expert Clay Shirky Explores the Role of Facebook and Twitter in the Middle East - WSJ.com). In an interview done by the Wall Street Journal, Shirky says that social media allows citizens to communicate their dissent without government interference (Video - Social Media Expert Clay Shirky Explores the Role of Facebook and Twitter in the Middle East

- WSJ.com). This power of social media will change the dynamic between dictator and citizens.

Twitter was a major force in fomenting and publicizing the Iranian protests of 2009 according to Evgeny Morozov (10). With no access to the ground in Tehran the news media had to rely on tweets. Morozov says, "A Twitter revolution is only possible in a regime where the state apparatus is completely ignorant of the Internet and has no virtual presence of its own." (12) This revolution represents the first time social media, as we know it today (largely social networks), was used for revolution organizing.

It is possible to look further back into history to consider how social media might equate with the impact of other emerging technologies on social movements. It is possible to argue, for instance, that movements like the United States' Civil Rights Movement succeeded because they utilized the emerging technologies of their time (mainly television). Social media are the emerging technologies of our time, and they have been a primary communications platform for managing social revolutions.

Shirky notes that social media goes beyond your own network, one page on the Internet is carried to all of your friends' networks and beyond, allowing you to reach a massive audience (3). The more readers you attract, the more robust your page will be (6). Author and reader become embodied in the same person (112). Shirky refers to those who actively participate in and alter stories as they unfold as the "Former Audience (7)."

Shirky argues that social media function as a "share then gather" environment (35). We use websites like Facebook and Twitter to share ideas with each other, and only afterwards work to gather all the ideas for ourselves. Coordination in groups is harder as groups get bigger, social media can make this kind of coordination much simpler. We are

all media outlets with social media; there is little distinction between professional reporters and the regular citizenry (56). Communication and publishing shade into one another, Shirky argues, as this distinction fades away (81). We filter our content through our friends, the filtering therefore occurs after publishing instead of before. One implication of this is that we may actually see a more complete picture from social media then we do from the news media because of the varied points of view and backgrounds.

For groups like the organizers of revolutions, Shirky says, collaborative production is what they need to achieve with social media (109). The idea is that different people can contribute at different levels, though ultimately the goal is to get them to jump from low-risk sharing online to higher-risk activities in the streets. To really accomplish revolution, as Shirky says, you need to make a further jump to collective action (143). Social media are good tools for this because they are an ordinary part of everyone's lives (156). When the situation warrants, like in Tunisia and Egypt, people can come together and make change happen using these tools.

Shirky suggests that social revolution relies on a successful fusion of a plausible promise, an effective tool, and an acceptable bargain with the users (260). Anything that takes time out of someone's day must have value higher then what he or she would otherwise be doing – it has to be an acceptable bargain. The promise needs to convince a user that something will occur that they desire. For instance, that a group will be able to attract new members (the underlying promise that matters for revolutions). Yet a promise isn't something you create for users, but rather something they use the tools to create (261).

Shirky says that there is no such a thing as a generically good tool (265). "Technology is not an infinitely elastic piece of fabric that can be stretched to cover any situation." (265) The tool has to be designed to fit the job people actually want done (265). Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are the social tools that fit the needs of the Tunisian and Egyptian people.

They fit those needs, during the revolution, because Facebook allowed people to rapidly share information across networks, Twitter provided anonymous access globally to news sharing, and YouTube allowed people around the globe to see videos that people involved with the revolutions uploaded. In all of these ways the people of Tunisia and Egypt could share things that their governments would otherwise have prevented them from sharing.

Acceptable bargains, Shirky's last item, are complex because the users have a hand in creating them (270). For a tool to work, everyone – or at least a large number of people – needs to agree that the bargain is useful. There may have to be an ongoing negotiation, as these tools are changing and new tools are emerging. In Tunisia and Egypt a strictly nonviolent strategy was part of the "bargain" of the revolution. People were willing to be involved because they could do so without resorting to violence. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube allowed that kind of involvement.

My argument that social media provided a major organizational backbone for the revolution in Tunisia and Egypt is grounded in the synthesis between Sharp's and Shirky's work. The work of both of these scholars is regarded as key in their areas of study and I tend to agree with what both say. By understanding what roles social media

played in the different elements of Sharp's theories we can explain the importance of social media to the downfall of these two dictatorships.

At the heart of Sharp's theory is planning. We know that some of this planning was done on Facebook. One Facebook page used for this is http://www.facebook.com/elshaheeed.co.uk (TED 2011: Wael Ghonim — Voice of Egypt's Revolution). I'm sure lots of planning was done outside of social media, but when the time comes to widely publicize the grand strategy, as Shirky's work makes clear, there is hardly a better tool than social media.

We also know that images of Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation being passed along in social media were the point at which these revolutions began. The images could not have spread like wildfire except that social media was available to share them. Since Twitter hides content after a few weeks and Facebook is centered on the notion of networks of friends I can't get to the image actually in social media this far from the event, but I did find an article that mentions this fact to back this claim up in The Independent (http://j.mp/lm7Irv). A protest or two may have occurred in his home village, but it could not have kicked off a regime-toppling revolution without social media. Even more than a national audience for sharing of these images, they got an international audience drawn into the national struggle because social media made that possible via the Internet.

Social media's most important role in the revolutions wasn't as anticipated as it should have been. As a general defense against internet-based organizing of any kind what can a dictatorship do to circumvent the organizing? Shut down the Internet connections. No one can continue to organize without the internet, right? Wrong. On the

contrary the organizing got louder, and the dictatorship facilitated people's move from low-risk to higher-risk activities by shutting off the connections. People who hadn't yet started organizing, with no access to social media, were forced into the streets. This is an example of what Sharp calls political jiu-jitsu, when an action meant to suppress the oppressed effectively backfires on the regime (32).

News media is another place where social media showed its worth. For practical reasons most reporters for the news media could not get close to the events. The most authentic news from within the revolutions was carried along largely in the form of tweets. These messages contained information about the revolution as it happened that would otherwise have taken hours to travel to the neighboring city and neighboring continent.

The collaborative capabilities of social media as a common meeting ground helped not just with making the grand strategy known, but also in designing the more limited individual strategies. The organizational strengths of Facebook gave people a platform on which to plan and evaluate methods. Further, as the revolutions did happen in an order and not together, using social media as a planning ground made it easier for the latter to look at the tactics and methods of the former.

I have been providing background and evidence that supports my thesis. However, as with most issues, not everyone is in agreement that social media plays a significant role in social revolution. I'm going to spend a little time here discussing the argument of Malcolm Gladwell.

Gladwell claims social media can only support weak ties (2). He contrasts this with the Civil Rights Movement that, as he put it, was made up of strong ties. Gladwell

makes it clear that there is strength in weak ties, but they seldom lead to the high-risk activities Sharp refers to (3). Gladwell says a Facebook friend does not equal a "real world" friend, and signing an online petition does not equal activism to the degree or kind of the Civil Rights Movement (2). Those who agree with my thesis think that the interaction you have with others on Facebook is similar to that in the real world, both being relatively strong ties.

Gladwell says that social media is not for hierarchal organization, which is necessary for social revolution. Facebook and other social tools are for creating networks, which Gladwell says is the exact opposite of a hierarchy (4). Networks are good at low-risk situations but not high-risk ones. Ultimately Gladwell thinks that social media are not a solid or robust tool to organize social revolutions (5). All of these points are contradictory to the beliefs of those who agree with me. I not only disagree with him that a hierarchy is necessary for social revolution, but also that social media can support a hierarchy just as much as a network. Of course, he put his argument out in public shortly before the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions. At this point his argument appears to be discredited simply on the basis of the actual experience of these movements as we can observe it unfolding via social media. Nonetheless his arguments are the best opinions that disagree with my thesis.

In the course of this paper I've taken you on a journey to help you understand my thesis: In recent years there have been many nonviolent social revolutions (like those in Tunisia and Egypt in early 2011) where social media (largely Twitter and Facebook) provided a positive organizational backbone to their cause. I started by defining three terms central to my argument that you may not have known. Then I dove into the meat of

this paper by discussing Gene Sharp's theories that showed you what successful

nonviolent struggle against a dictatorship requires. When I was done there I gave you a

brief brush-up on the recent revolutions in the Arab World in early 2011 after which you

met Clay Shirky's work and were taught what elements of social media I'd be using in

my decision about its importance to social revolution. This set the stage for what I, and

others, believe the Tunisians and Egyptians used as a foundation to their revolutions. You

were then taken into a collection of evidence supporting my thesis and lastly shown a

glimpse of someone who disagrees with that thesis.

  This paper accounts for its thesis by doing some analyzing of how social media

has been used in nonviolent social revolutions. I took the route of less analysis and more

background since this paper was written as these revolutions and their aftermaths had not

yet settled down. Analysis that I talk about here may become defunct as the aftermaths

settle down and the situation changes, but the background I provide will not. This paper

was initially drafted in April of 2011.

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