

DEMOCRATIC RESISTANCE AND STATE POWER IN THE AGE
OF SOCIAL NETWORKS;
THE ROLE OF FACEBOOK IN IRAN'S GREEN MOVEMENT

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Declaration

I, Sharareh Azizi Ari, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

Acknowledgements

It is not an exaggeration to say that the political movement, the Green Movement that erupted in 2009 in Iran imputed a political meaning to Facebook and Twitter. The political significance of Facebook became a fact with the political uprising that brought the dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak of Egypt to an end. I was a member of Facebook when the Green Movement broke out in Iran. I was not a Green Movement activist and I tried very hard to refrain from being too much emotionally involved in the Movement. Due to my education in journalism I considered myself an observer. Yet, together with thousands of Iranians I experienced both the Facebook euphoria when the Green Movement was in its climax and tens of thousands participated in street demonstrations, and Facebook dysphasia when there was no sign of the Movement to be seen in the streets. Since last year, more than three years after the event, I decided to study the role of social networks in general and Facebook in particular in the Green Movement and by extension the struggle for democracy in Iran. There are individuals whose memory, support, friendship and assistance were encouraging from the start to the end of this study. My former professors in Tehran University and Allameh University made social sciences in general and media studies in particular the most interesting academic field of studies I could have imagined. I am very grateful to them for what they have done for me. I would like to thank so many individuals who participated in my interviews as well as my supervisor Yadullah Shahibzadeh for his encouragement and valuable critique, comments and advice. However, I am solely responsible for every shortcoming this work has.

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Abstract

The internet and social networks have contributed extensively to democratic political uprisings in the Middle East in recent years. We cannot think of the Iranian Green Movement in 2009 and the Arab Spring in 2010-2011 without thinking, at the same time, of Facebook, Twitter and You Tube. The roles played by the internet and social networks in these two significant political events in this region led me to ask and discuss the question: Have internet and social networks constituted an alternative public sphere in countries where freedoms of expression and assembly have not yet been institutionalized? I have tried to discuss the question in the domain of Iranian politics from 2009 to 2013, from the 2009 disputed presidential election to the 2013 presidential election and some of outcomes of the latter election up until now. I demonstrate, in this thesis, how the Iranian social networks contributed to the eruption of the Green Movement and how this Movement created the condition in which citizen journalism emerged in Iran. In my demonstration of the role of social networks in the Green Movement I revealed both strengths and weaknesses of the networks. I have demonstrated in this thesis how, in the absence of institutionalized freedom of speech in Iran, activists and journalists use Facebook to escape surveillance of mass media by the government.

Furthermore, as members of a network power they resist the Iranian government's mechanisms of repression since social networks enable them to mobilize the masses for political protests. Since the eruption of the Green Movement Social networks and citizen-journalism have been the mainstays of the Iranian cyber public sphere. This cyber public sphere functions as an alternative public sphere that pressures the Iranian government to recognize citizen's freedom of expression and assembly. I have demonstrated in this thesis that the Iranian network power on cyber space cannot be ignored by the government. By bypassing the government censorship and media gatekeepers the Iranian social networks share information and news. They discuss issues of public interest and shape public opinion and in doing so they empower the network power that they have created since the eruption of the Green Movement to demand their democratic rights. However, the struggle represented by the Iranian social networks in the alternative public sphere faces continuous backlashes and punishments of the government whether in forms of reducing the internet speed, blocking social networks or government's monitoring of individual Facebook pages.

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1. Introduction

Street demonstrations that followed the disputed 2009 Presidential election were one of the biggest challenges for the Islamic Republic of Iran since its establishment in 1979. Through street demonstrations, the Iranian people, particularly the youth, protested against the election results. The protesters conceived of themselves as activists of a democratic political movement that demanded free and fair elections in Iran. This political movement became known to the participants and to the world as the *Green Movement*.¹ It was sparked by the biggest demonstrations that had taken place in Tehran since the 1979 revolution. During its pinnacle in 2009 the *Green Movement* expressed its extraordinary mobilizing power by gathering together hundreds of thousands of Iranians in the streets of Tehran who chanted: “Where is my vote?” Without proper preparation and detailed information about its aims, time and place in any traditional media such newspaper, Radio and TV, the *Green Movement* was inaugurated by the mass demonstration in Tehran. We should bear in mind that freedom of speech has more or less been restricted and there has not been any private Radio or TV in Iran before and after the emergence of the Green Movement. The question I would like to raise is: Through what means did the Iranian people succeeded to exchange the necessary information about the aims, the time and the place of the first demonstration?

During and after the 2009 election, social networks played a crucial role to connect Iranians beyond the interference of the state. They contributed to people’s awareness of their rights as citizens. During the election campaign, Iranian people used social networks to discuss the merits of their preferred presidential candidates and argued about their credibility to deliver the promises they made regarding the democratic rights of the people. Facebook became a meeting place for persuasion and publicity in the 2009 election campaign. After the election people used social network to protest against what they considered a rigged election. Facebook’s popularity has increased in Iran in the recent years. People who use social networks such as Facebook are young and educated. Through Facebook they are connected and exchange news and information. The nature of the news and information used and worked out by Facebook users is not always political, but they become political with the degree of politicization of the society. Facebook has become more

¹ The color of Mir Hussein Mousavi campaign was Green. Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi were reformist candidates in the 2009 presidential election. Both of them are currently under house arrest.

appreciated in Iran and other countries in the Middle East since it has become the expression of a democratic public sphere in which users encounter each other as equal and free political agents. While chance of involvement in the larger public sphere that is authorized by the state is slim the young and educated seek Facebook to exercise their subjectivity. Many young journalists who have been punished by the government for what they published in newspapers use Facebook as a sanctuary in which they can do their journalistic work and remain relatively safe. Thanks to professional journalists who took refuge in Facebook and the regular users of Facebook with a highly reflexive capacity to exchange and analyze the information of public interest, censorship in Iran has been facing its own limits. With at least one individual connected to Facebook in almost every Iranian home, the Iranian people have not only compensated free newspapers and other media with the social and political information they received from social network, but also established a public space that seems stronger than the one that is guarded by the state. Facebook played a surprising role in Hassan Rouhani's election in the 2013 presidential election.

This thesis is an attempt to investigate the nature of resistance to state power in the age of Facebook and Twitter. My main argument in this study deals with 'network power' that is based on Manuel Castells' conceptualization of '*communication power*'. (Castells, 2011)

Here, I want to understand network power as an interesting combination of traditional hard power (e.g. military) and soft power (e.g. diplomacy), manifested in technical devices, and located in the operation of software and computer code. On these forms of power that are particularly manifested through and in social networks. 'Network power' is an emancipatory device or strategy that people use to liberate themselves from the boundaries of repressive and ideological state apparatus in the age of information technology.

I would like to shed light on the role that social networks can play in the in Middle Eastern countries with their lack of institutionalized freedom of speech, and while their governments monopolize mass media. I view social networks as manifestation of public debate and public or political protest. In the same manner that journalists and intellectuals in a democratic society challenge the state power in order to defend the interests of the public, social network activists in that Middle East challenge their states and expose their abuse of power in the alternative public sphere they have created. The main question that I shall deal with in this study is: Have social networks created a new public sphere in the Middle East in general and in Iran in particular, in which activists of these networks can challenge the larger

public sphere that is authorized and controlled by the state and change it towards a more democratic public sphere?

New democratic movements in the Middle East such as the Green Movement and the Arab Spring seemed to have relied heavily on social networks. They had a strong role in the Orange Movement² in Kuwait, Green Movement in Iran and Arab spring in Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain and Palestine.(Bayat and Herrera, 2010,p:113) The internet has had a great impact on the social and political behavior of ordinary Iranians. In the late 1990s and early 2000s activists and journalists in Iran started to use internet to present news and analyses of social and political importance in the public sphere. From the beginning of their internet activity to the present, Iranian activists and journalists have seen their internet activities as a form of political intervention and as a contribution to the democratic struggle in Iran. As a result when members of social networks overcome on line censorship they create the expectation that censorship on independent media is eased. I shall firstly discuss the difference between online and traditional media in Iran. Then, I try to focus on different opportunities provided by the internet and social networks compared to other mass media. While the state machinery has full control over the traditional media, since they can shut them down and prosecute their editors and journalists, it cannot impose the same degree of control on internet websites and social networks. Despite the internet restrictions in Iran, activists and journalists find creative solutions to visit the websites that provide them the knowledge and information they need in order to practice their freedom of speech.

² *“During the summer of 2006, the [Persian] Gulf state of Kuwait witnessed some rather intriguing events. Its established political scene was shaken by the appearance of what came to be known as “The Orange Movement” popular movement campaigning for political reform. Led by young Kuwaitis, the movement campaigned for a reduction of the number of electoral districts from 25 to five. Trivial as it may seem, the issue was controversial in Kuwait. Nevertheless, the movement firmly believed it would enhance the state’s democratic project. In just three short months, they managed to get the country’s attention, to rally large crowds to their demonstrations and to secure the support of many established politicians. On July 17th, their struggle ended in victory; the Kuwaiti parliament voted to change the number of electoral districts to five. ”*(Nordenson,2010,1)

2. Background

2.1 social networks in Iran

Iran is one of the youngest countries in the world and Iranian youth are among the most enthusiastic about internet technology and social networks like Facebook. Facebook has recently become a popular social network in Iran. These days, the people of Iran, just like hundreds of millions of other people around the world, make private profiles, invite friends, relatives and colleagues to join them. They use Facebook's multimedia functions to share news and write comments on different private, social and political issues. One of the questions that I am interested in is: Why have social networks become so important in Iran?

Iran has become known since the 1979 revolution as a country with lack of freedom of expression and in which the government has a monopoly on radio and television. This media situation deprives political forces in opposition of the possibility to transmit their views or critiques to the people on the national base. However, through internet and social networks, oppositional forces and political dissidents in Iran express their critical views of the Iranian government. Facebook in particular has gone beyond the personal preoccupation of its users and become a powerful political forum in which critical ideas of social and political significance are discussed and government is criticized regularly.

In recent years there has appeared a number of studies on the role of social networks in general and especially Facebook in social and political movements. *The double articulation of code and politics on Facebook*" (Elmer et al., 2009), *Orange Movement in Kuwait and the role of the social networks as a public sphere*, (Nordenson, 2010), a study of *Iranian profile pictures on Facebook* (Hajinejad, 2010) and the study about *cyber resistance; Palestinian youth and emerging the internet* (Bayat and Herrera, 2010) are among the academic literature on Facebook. Hajinejad's Focus is of great importance since it deals with political and religious views influence Iranian profile pictures.

2.1.1 Religious approach and Facebook

Facebook is the most visited website after Yahoo and Google in Iran. Most Iranian Facebook members joined this social network in spring 2009 before the disputed presidential election. Despite the Iranian government's subsequent attempts to block the network,

millions of Iranians used anti-filter and have become members of Facebook. (Hajinejad, 2010) Now that Facebook has become a fact of life in Iran, Muslim clerics issue Fatwas. According to most of these Fatwas, social networks are permissible if they do not promote corruption and propaganda against Islam. Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei also issued a rather ambiguous Fatwa about Facebook saying: *"In general if it requires engaging in [immorality and evil acts] (such as spreading corruption, lies, and false materials) or if there is concern that it is sinful, or it strengthens the enemies of Islam and Muslims, it is not permissible. Otherwise it's fine, "*(Esfandiari, 2011) However, since people have different interpretations about corruption, lie and sinful propaganda against Islam the Fatwa becomes unclear and imprecise. In Egypt the approach of the highest Muslim clergy to Facebook is worse since they have declared Facebook as Haram (forbidden) that is, its use is against the Islamic law.(Hajinejad, 2010).

2.2 Social networks and the Green Movement

Despite the Fatwas and government restrictions, the Iranian Facebook community has become one of the most popular social networks in the Middle East. Facebook played a decisive role in the Green Movement and in the Arab uprising, especially in Egypt, Tunisia and Bahrain. In Iran even before the eruption of the Green Movement, during the presidential election campaign in 2009, reform oriented activists found social networks a useful device to firstly encourage the youth and the educated people to participate in the election and secondly to convince them to publicize the stance of their favorite presidential candidates among people outside social network communities. Facebook, Twitter and Blogs were extensively used during the 2009 presidential election. Surprisingly, the state media showed a positive view towards popularization of these social networks and entered in a declared competition with social networks during the election.(Sohrabi-Haghighat, 2011) For instance the first live debates between presidential candidates in Iranian state TV since the 1979 revolution took place during the 2009 presidential election. With its live broadcasted debates between presidential candidates Iranian state TV tried to prove its significance regarding transmission of news and information vis-à-vis social networks.

The presidential candidate debates were repeated in 2013 presidential election. Only five months before the presidential election in 2009, Iranian authorities lifted the ban on social networks. Hundreds of Iranian youth used this short period of government relaxation

regarding Facebook to join this social network.(Elson et al., 2012,p:13) However, a day after the disputed election in 2009 and with declaration of Mahmud Ahmadinejad by Supreme leader and the state media as Iran's elected president, all social networks in Iran were banned again. The government ban did not prevent Iranian cyber activists to continue their activities in the social networks which after the official result of the presidential election had become more militant and confrontational. They used the social networks to transmit news about huge electoral fraud and cheating and thus described the entire election as rigged. Soon, the emerged and developed political passion in the social networks found its way to the streets of Tehran and several other big cities. The biggest demonstration after the 1979 Islamic revolution took place in Tehran. Most of the participants of the street demonstration had received the information about the demonstration via Facebook and Twitter and text messages (SMS). *“As Iranians continued to rally over the months following the election, often in huge numbers, tools such as Twitter and Facebook played an ongoing part in keeping the opposition movement active and connected with domestic and global audiences”*(Elson et al., 2012,p:1), Tehran and several other cities witnessed a political eruption and outbreaks of demonstrations in a short time. The first thing that the government in Iran tried to do in order to quell the street protests was to take control of social media. Through the control of social networks and communication system, the Iranian government would become capable of disconnecting social network activists, so that their prosecution and imprisonment would go unnoticed. Then, at the same time that the government expelled foreign journalists from the country, banned reform oriented political parties and newspapers and expelled reform oriented journalists from news agencies, it blocked Facebook and Twitter. In response to the government assault on independent media and social networks the protesters learned to use different sorts of anti-filter devices and managed to broadcast pictures and videos of street demonstrations and the violence used by Iranian security forces against the demonstrators in the internet. Many of these pictures and videos broadcasted by Iranian social networks in the internet were used by international media and news agencies. In doing so, Iranian social networks became the broadcasters of the voice and pictures of the Green Movement to the Iranian people and to the world.

2.3 Citizen- journalism

The concept of 'Citizen- Journalism' emerged, for the first time, in Iran during the Green Movement (Allan and Thorsen, 2009,p:164). Citizen-Journalism combines protester and

journalist in the one and same person. The citizen-journalist was in fact the activist of the political event who broadcasted the news of the event on social networks. Citizen-journalism in Iran was a result of a spontaneous process. The political activist who participated in a street protest took some photos and videos with his or her mobile. As he or she got access to the internet he or she gave the photos and video clips date and place of the event and uploaded them to social media or sent them directly to news agencies. Few hours later the seemingly unskilled reports were broadcasting in internationally recognized news agencies, TV stations and newspapers around the world. *“Photos of the Iranian Basij³ paramilitary forces breaking into houses, destroying property and shooting into crowds of people, as well as protesters on the streets of Tehran, were published in classical mass-media outlets such as the Guardian, the BBC, the Economist, CNN, and others.”* (Mueller and Huellen, 2012,p.187)

Nevertheless, despite the exposing effect of the social networks in Iran, the political authority has not made a clear and determined policy about them. While Iranian authorities describe Facebook as ‘Zionist’ and a spying tool against Iran, Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei has a Facebook page. Right after the 2013 presidential election, several members of Hassan Rouhani government joined Facebook; Iran’ Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif has a popular face and he uses it to inform the Iranian people about his hopes, his activities as well as his disappointments. He is writing regular reports for his fans.(Esfandiari, 2013). It seems the conservative forces in the Islamic Republic consider Facebook both as a threat when it is used by citizens since it undermines state censorship and as an opportunity if they can impose their own control on it.

There are several reasons for the popularity of social networks among Iranian citizens. Iranians find a space of friendly and business interactions there. They use social networks to stay in touch with old friends and make new ones. They use them as an advertisement space as well as a space of exchanging informative news. In other occasions social networks are used as a discussion forum for issues which are forbidden in newspapers and other traditional social media. Iranian Journalists use this capacity of social networks such Facebook to escape from censorship. Many Iranian journalists who are, entirely or partially, victims of censorship post their journalistic works on Facebook. In doing so, they not only

³ Basij is a paramilitary organization established in 1979, after Islamic revolution in Iran. Member of this organization are young volunteer militia. They played an important role in the Iran-Iraq war. The Basij is controlled by conservative forces within the Islamic Republic. They have been using it against their reform oriented opponents within the political system and against other prodemocracy forces in Iran since the early 1990s.

inform their colleagues on Facebook about the new redlines but also contribute to the creation of an alternative media that has become equally influential as conventional media.

2.4 Research questions and hypotheses

In this study I shall explore aspects of social networks that work both as a new form of networks power and public sphere and the ways Iranian journalists exploit these aspects of social network. I shall discuss the following questions to shed light on these aspects of social networks and the role of the journalistic society in these networks. The first question deals with the role Iranian journalists in the Green movement. I would like to explore:

1. Did Facebook communication work as a form of network power for Journalists and activists during the Green movement?
2. Has Facebook become an alternative public sphere in Iran in general and in Iranian journalist community in particular?

My hypotheses:

1. Journalists and activists in Iran used Facebook as a form of network power to increase the mobilization structures in the Green Movement by augmentation of participation levels, contentious activity and organizational activity.
2. Facebook is used as a public sphere during and after presidential election 2009.

I shall use qualitative method and semi-structured interviews- which I will explain later- to answer the research questions.

In 2009, in the wake of the Green movement, Iranian government put pressure on independent journalists and reformist newspapers. As a result journalists took refuge in social networks such as Facebook in which they publicized their journalistic work. My own experience in this regard seems worth mentioning. I worked as a journalist in Tehran at the time and like many other Journalists under pressure, used social networks and especially Facebook as a means of defending freedom of expression. Iranian journalists started to construct social network as a network power or as a soft power against the dictatorial policies of the Iranian political system. In doing so, Facebook has become a safe, fast and nongovernmental space of public debate in which social and political issues are discussed

and proper political and social actions are proposed. These Facebook's qualities have made this social network a safe public sphere for journalists in Iran.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 The network power

“Power is like love, easier to experience than to define or measure, but no less real for that.”
Joseph S. Nye

“Power” is the decisive factor in every relationship whether it is the relationship between two individuals or between two countries. For political theorists “*Power means the ability to get the outcomes one wants.*” (Nye, 2004,p.1) By the means of power people defend their values, interests and priorities. Power is a concept as old as the human race. Power will remain at the heart of human relations, though its forms of expression in human interactions may change. We hear and read about hard power, soft power, and smart power and so forth on a daily basis. We are familiar with the nature of hard power when it is used as military or economic capabilities to force political entities and states to succumb to the will of the states that exercise the military and economic power. War and economic sanctions are forms of expressions of hard power. Contrary to hard power, soft power does not rely on the use of force. It is rather the art of “*getting others to want the outcomes that you want. Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others.*”(Nye, 2004,p.5)

"Network power" is a form of soft power that has emerged in the age of globalization, internet. Moreover, network power, is a form of power that enables circulation of power according to a new diagram, as Deleuze would say, in which computational power itself enables different forms of power to be prescribed within the same function.(Deleuze, 1992,p:7) Many political activists in undemocratic states are convinced that they can use ICT technologies in their struggle for democracy against their dictatorial regimes. We may call those who hold such beliefs “cyber optimists.” However, the ICT technologies have increased political knowledge of those who use such technologies. (Xenoos and Moy, 2007,p:407) These technologies have at the very least increased the connectivity between individuals and activity in the public or political arena. (Fraga, 2007,p:50)

3.1.1 Global village

The “network power” is a modern phenomenon. It is a product of the age of globalization. In order to understand the “network power” we should understand the nature of globalization and some of its consequences. One of the earliest books which can be related to the theory of globalization is Marshall McLuhan’s “*The Global Village*” published in 1962. There is no clear conceptualization of the process of globalization in this book. (McLuhan, 2011) However, McLuhan imagined a world with developed technology and in which time and space were conditioned by technology. He argued in “*The Gutenberg Galaxy*” that what made formation of Global Village possible was the new electronic interdependency. “*The electro – magnetic discoveries have recreated the simultaneous field in all human affairs so that the human family now exists under conditions of a global village. We live in a single constricted space resonant with tribal drums.*”(McLuhan, 2011,p.36)

McLuhan predicted the flow of information in the global village. In his global village people’s access to the flow of global information would be as easy as the access of the residents of a traditional village to the information circulating in their own village. McLuhan believed that the interpersonal nature of the relationship in a traditional village would be reproduced in the communication in the global village since communication technology would connect people everywhere.

While appreciating McLuhan’s prediction about global village, some experts argue that his reflection on the concept of global village had its roots in the quality of information and news on the war in Vietnam in Canadian media. While Canada did not play a role in Vietnam, the Canadians who followed reports and news broadcasted by American televisions had empathy with the victims of the war.(Mohsenianrad, 2008,p:99)

Although, McLuhan predicted that global village would be a reality in 2005, the new wave of globalization happened 15 years sooner than McLuhan's predictions. It seems the global village’s symbolic birth was in 1990 when the DBS satellite television and Satellite Television Asia Region (STAR) was started. Before that only the South Koreans in 1986 had an opportunity to watch NHK Japan television via satellites. (Dew and Sewon, 1993,p:4)

3.1.2 Globalization theory

The term globalization has a different connotation for different people. For businessmen or marketers, it means the easy online connection with different colleagues around the world, or their connection to stock markets around the world with one click. For scientists or university students globalization means, access to colleagues who are far from their office via video conference or access to new articles. For a farmer, globalization means global warming and climate change and bad harvest. Globalization also means Hollywood films and McDonald's for a family which has never been to the US. Globalization may mean for many the global flow of epidemic diseases like SARS or Spanish fever or international terrorism. What is at stake in all these simultaneous human experiences is the image of "a world without borders".

These days globalization has become a shared category to describe the worldwide events. Many things are imputed to the term globalization. International media, free trade, information technology, global culture, international environmental problems and international terrorism and many other issues are supposed to be explained by the term. For Anthony Giddens globalization means "*the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.*"(Giddens, 1990,p.64) Thus interconnection becomes the key word in the age of globalization. Because of the intensification of mutual bonds between different states and nations in this global age a decision or an activity in one part of the world has decisive consequences for other parts of the world.

There are two main approaches towards the history of globalization. While some scholars argue that modern globalization is a result of hundreds of years of gradual globalization, others argue that the phenomenon is product of the modern world. Malcolm Waters who advocates the first argument believes that globalization has had a linear development. In Waters' view, globalization emerged in 15th and 16th century. It changed, however, irregularly via traditional sea trade, development of the old empires, war and plunder.(Waters, 2001,p:22) In his "The Three Waves of Globalization" Robbie Robertson argues that as a "*human dynamics*" globalization has always been with us. According to Robertson "*globalization is about human interconnections that have assumed global proportions and transformed themselves. If we focus on globalization simply as a modern strategy for power, we will miss its historical and social depths. Indeed, the origins of*

globalization lie in interconnections that have slowly enveloped humans since the earliest times, as they globalized themselves. In this sense, globalization as a human dynamic has always been with us, even if we have been unaware of its embrace until recently.”(Robertson, 2003,p.3) The first group also believes that the development of technology, and natural and social sciences are a result of technicians, engineers and scholars from different parts of the world throughout history.

The advocates of the second argument argue that modernity and globalization have a common history. For Jurgan Habermas “The Project of Modernity” is not a very old phenomenon. (Foster, 1985,p:4) According to the second argument the revolutions that have erupted since the 16th century have changed the situation in world situation and offered a new perspective that is in affinity with globalization. Anthony Giddens mentions two main events that affected globalization: first, the communication transformation in 1960s and satellites sending information from around the world and second, the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union in the 1990s. Giddens argues that while the Soviet Union had no ability to compete with international electronic commerce, the essence of communism became pressured by Western media. The Soviet Union and its East Europeans allies were no longer in the position to protect their ideology which was under attack by western radio and television. The “television revolutions” that took place in 1989 did not only broadcast street protests in one socialist country, but also encouraged people in other countries to do the same. Giddens believes that the new globalization processes became a reality as a result of these two major events in the 1980s and 1990s and their global consequences.(Giddens, 2002,p:14)

There is no consensus on the concept of globalization. There are different sorts of globalization such as economic globalization, cultural globalization, political globalization with their different advocates. However, all these can be interpreted as dimensions of globalization which are affecting each other and developing together. Jurgen Habermas defines globalization as a process that takes place beyond national borders in trade and communication. He believes that globalization is the expression of new relationships between human beings, technology and nature. He also believes that the economic globalization is the most important part of globalization.(Habermas, 2000, Habermas, 2001) Anthony Giddens also mentions in the book “Beyond Left and Right” that the globalization is more than an economic process. “-globalization is not only- , or even primarily, an economic phenomenon, and it should not be equated with the emergence of a world system. Globalization is really about the transformation of space and time. I define it as action at

distance and relate its intensifying over recent years to the emergence of means of instantaneous global communication and mass transportation.”(Giddens, 1994,p:4)

It should be mentioned that despite the fact that globalization affected all aspects of human life; those affected have not always benefited from the process. Many people around the world have suffered from globalization effects. What we call global terrorism, environmental disasters, and epidemic diseases and so on are the damaging results of globalization.

3.1.3 Communication age and network power theory

Since the dawn of human history economics has always been a motivating foundation to link states and nations. “The Silk Road” which connected Europe to Middle East and Asia and the adventurers of “Marco Polo” had economic justifications and consequences. Both the road and the people in these events expressed the need for human communication beyond borders and languages for Asian and European people. Modern globalization appeared as the consequence of new transportation and communication technology. After the emergence of steam engines and steam ships, the cost of transportation decreased in the 18th and 19th century. According to Chanda “ freight cost have fallen 70 percent between 1920 and 1990.”(Chanda, 2003) Since the 1990s, new international economic organizations such as GATT, WTO and NAFTA which have encouraged free trade in the world, multinational corporations, NGO's, UN agencies have been represented as consequences of modern globalization. In line with these new developments the new communication technology from the telegram, the telephone to the internet have changed business and trade transactions around the world and affected the lifestyle of ordinary people.

In his “*The Rise of the Network Society*”, Manuel Castells describes globalization as network societies. He argues that what has been emerging in the process of globalization is “Network Society”. This “Network Society” has been a result of a “revolution of information technology” since this technology made global economy an interlocking networks. For Castells the network society has a capitalist character of a capitalism that relies on information technology. He refers to three main historical roots of the emergence of network society. First, revolution of information, second, restructuring of capitalism based on central

planning and third, cultural movements in the 1960s and 1970s such as feminism, environmental movements and new religious and ethnical movements.(Castells, 2010,p:5)

For Castells the new information and communication technology is the context in which economic globalization emerged. He explains global economy as *“an economy with the capacity to work as a unit in real time, or chosen time, on a planetary scale. (...) world economy was able to become truly global on the basis of the new infrastructure provided by information and communication technologies, and with the decisive help of deregulation policies implemented by governments and international institutions.”*(Castells, 2010,p.37). However, new communication technologies created the condition in which the structure of power had changed. In his “Communication Power” Castells emphasizes on the role of communication network on power structure: *“power is the relation capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actor in ways that favor the empowered actor's will, interests and values.”*(Castells, 2009,p.11) He claims that power cannot be found in the character of human beings but in their network. David Singh Grewal describes network as *“an interconnected group of people who linked to one another in a way that makes them capable of beneficial cooperation.”* (Grewal, 2008,p.20) A network has various members who can transfer information and ideas or exchange goods. The network is a community of people with *“mediating standards”* and *“membership standards”* as its rules. Members of this community have to follow the rules. Grewal claims that a “network power” is a network in which these standards *“enable cooperation among members of network.”* (Grewal, 2008,p.10) Castells shares Grewal view on the effect of standards or “protocols” and dynamics on the network power. *“The notion of network power consists in the joining of two ideas: first, that coordinating standards are more valuable when greater numbers of people use them and second that this dynamic-which I describe as a form of power- can lead to the progressive elimination of the alternatives over which otherwise free choice can be collectively exercised .”*(Castells, 2009,p.12)

Castells uses psychology and neuroscience to analyze the network power and political campaigns in the US. He explains how the Bush administration’s systematic propaganda and transmission of false information to the public via mass media affected public opinion and made them receptive to the war in Iraq.

Castells identifies four different forms of network power: (a) networking power, (b) network power, networked power, and (d) network-making power.(Castells, 2011,p:773) Each of these forms of power defines specific processes of exercising power. For instance in

the case of networking power: *“the power of the actors and organizations are included in the networks”*.(Castells, 2011,p:773) Castells explain the *“mass self- communication concept”* as an important form of networking power.(Castells, 2009,p:55)

For Castells what is at stake in network power is *“the power resulting from the standards required to coordinate social interaction in the networks.”* (Castells, 2011,p:773) According to Castells network power theory, while network power offers great opportunity for its members and its dynamic system, it does not allow traditional control of its members. Its survival and success depends on changing standards and protocols of inclusion / exclusion. (Castells, 2009,p:20) What we can observe in networked power is *“the power of social actors over other social actors in the network. The forms and processes of networked power are specific to each network.”* (Castells, 2011,p:773) Just as in every human community, a hierarchical system can be revealed in every network. Networked power is about members with more power who can easily be distinguished from those with less power. Network-making power is about a condition in which those with more power create networks to protect their interests. As Castells says it is a condition in which *“the power to program specific networks according to the interests and values of the programmers.”*(Castells, 2011,p:773) When a media corporation or a state sets up a network to impose its hegemony or pursue its interests they exercise network power.

As I have argued communication is the source of power in every society. Thus, the state which is capable of controlling the society’s communication system becomes the society’s undisputed power. However, it seems that with the increasing capacity of contemporary digital communication, the state is losing its control of media and by extension its influence in the public space. Thanks to its increasing reliance on citizen- journalists and the flow of information on the internet, public opinion is liberated from the state controlled media and their one-way communication techniques. These days, public opinion is strongly affected by social networks in which citizen-journalists publish their own reports without editorial intervention and receive feedback from their audience or readers directly. The emergence of citizen-journalist has had a decisive impact on the professional journalist since the latter seems to have lost his or her exclusive role as carrier of news and information while he or she is using social networks to cross the political red lines and censorship. It seems that the aim of crossing political red lines and censorship on a daily basis have united professional journalist and citizen-journalists to the extent that has made its impacts on every society’s power structure, particularly in societies in where freedom of expression has not been institutionalized. Thus social networks organize a new power structure that challenges the

power of the modern state that has its roots in the pre-information revolution. In the period prior to information revolution instead of increasing their own power in dealing with open network structures people had to subjugate to authoritarian social institutions that constituted state power. Communication and information technology changed people's relation to social institutions by offering them membership and the making of unlimited networks that are outside state control. This astonishing transformation has changed the vertical structures to horizontal cooperative structures.

3.1.4 Mass self- communication

In recent years, thanks to the effort and creativity of citizen-journalists we have seen street protest in different parts of the world. An ordinary citizen participates in street protests. He or she takes a short video with his or her mobile phone and uploads the video to YouTube so that audiences from different parts of the world can watch a sketch of the event and share it with their friends on social networks. Castells defines the entire event as "*mass self-communication.*" (Castells, 2009,p:58). This communication, which is the communication between an individual and a global mass, goes on two levels: mass-communication and self-communication. "*it is a mass communication because it can potentially reach a global audience.(...) at the same time it is self- communication because the production of the message is self- generated, the definition of the potential receiver is self-directed and the retrieval of specific message or content from World Wide Web and electronic communication networks is self-selected*"(Castells, 2009,p.89)

The Emergence of mass self- communication through the internet has equipped citizens with a new ability, the ability to produce their own message while they are the audiences of other citizens. As reporters and audiences citizens tell their story through social networks. As citizens remove media cooperation that has traditionally played the role of sharing their stories with other citizens they change the established power relations. Social networks have given each individual the capacity he or she needs to build his or her own mass self-communication network in order to share information and challenge the established structure of power.

According to Castells "*Network-making power in the communication realms is characterized by the action of multimedia corporate networks, including business and government that interact with networked users who both consume media products and create their own culture.*"(Castells, 2011,p.782) Castells argues that there are three forms of

communication such as interpersonal, mass communication and mass self- communication that do not substitute one another. They are rather complementing each other in continuous interactions. With the emergence of mass self- communication on the internet and other horizontal digital communication systems both power structure and communication theories were affected by the event. (Castells, 2011,p:780) For example, the mass self-communication theory reclaims of “Gatekeeper Theory”⁴ (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009). Gatekeepers are controlling the free flow of information. They work as a sieve and do not allow for some information to be published. The facilities that enable every citizen to produce reports and information and transmit them to millions of audiences throughout the world make the role of the information gatekeeper insecure. However, the traditional gatekeepers such as governments, programmers, editors, and owners of mass media still try to find different ways of controlling the free flow of information. The new information technology, the internet and social networks have revealed hidden capacities of ordinary citizens who since the emergence of these technologies have made an impact on the nature of human communication, citizen’s relation to state power as well as on the traditional social power structures. The new communication technology has a direct effect on social movement and forms of political protest. I shall use the network power theory to understand and explain the journalist network power via Facebook during the Green movement in Iran.

3.1.5 Applying framework

In 1996, McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald offered a theoretical framework to study social movements. They initiated an analytical approach towards social movement's with regard to the movement’s *“emergence, development, and outcomes by addressing three interrelated factors: mobilizing structures, opportunity structures, and framing processes.”*(Garret, 2006,p.2) R. Kelly Garrett believes that it was a useful framework to study the relationship between social movements and new ICTs.

Let us look closely at the framework’s three main factors. R. Kelly Garrett describes mobilizing structures as a process that helps people organize *“collective action, including social structures and tactical repertoires”*. (Garret, 2006,p.3) He defines opportunity

⁴“Gatekeeping is the process of culling and crafting countless bits of information in to the limited number of messages that reach people each day, and it is the center of the media's role in modern public life.” (Shoemaker& Vos ,2009,1)

structures as the circumstance that is favored by the social movement. There is an obstacle that must be overcome as a result of the movement. For instance; “*The most common cited form of regulatory freedom is the ability to bypass censorship* (Garret, 2006,p.3) For Garret Framing processes is *the strategic attempts to craft, disseminate, and contest the language and narratives used to describe a movement.*(Garret, 2006,p.4) These three categories should be divided into sub- categories for understanding the details of the topics. The mobilizing structures in Garret's framework were divided into three sub-categories: *participation levels, contentious activity, and organizational issues.*(Garret, 2006,p:5)

3.2Public sphere

In his study of “Public dominion” in the 1960s, Jürgen Habermas conceptualized public sphere as a sphere between the state (who controlled the legal means of violence), and a private sphere. Habermas argues that public sphere has its root in salon and coffee houses in the middle seventeenth century in Great Britain, France and Germany.(Habermas, 1991,p:26) In his book “*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*”, Habermas calls public sphere a realm of social life which shapes public opinion and has an effect on public authority. (Habermas, 1991,p:30)

Nancy Fraser calls public sphere a modern theater in which discussions and arguments are the only means through which people can acquire partnership and cooperation. For Fraser public sphere is not a space for economic transactions in which there are sellers and buyers, but a place in which public opinion is shaped through discussion, analysis and understanding. (Fraser, 1995,p:287) This means citizens must have equal access to the public sphere to exchange information and discuss issues of public interests. Habermas argues that the public sphere has two main characteristics; it is open for the participation of all citizens and it is a free sphere for exchange of information. He has demonstrated that modern public spheres existed first in bourgeois societies throughout eighteenth century Europe. Until the eighteenth century the authority belonged to heads of states, members of aristocracy and religious hierarchy. These social classes expressed their authority in their public appearances without reciprocal relationships or exchange of meaning with the masses. Contrary to aristocracy the bourgeois class needs the exchange of information and meaning for its free trade. Gradually the exchange of information with regard to economics and trade in marketplaces developed into discussions on arts and politics in city halls and coffee houses as new public spheres. Habermas calls the discussions taking place in these

salon and coffee houses as the expressions of the eighteenth century “bourgeois public sphere”. According to Habermas monitoring government activities and political decisions were the main aims of bourgeois public sphere. The bourgeois public sphere demanded recognition of equal rights of all citizens to participate in the public sphere and rejected privileges of particular citizens compared to other citizens in this sphere. (Habermas, 1991,p:37) The eighteenth century public sphere was a place free from intervention of the state and in which the masses could join and discuss social, cultural and political issues. The discussion participants published the result of their discussions and exercised a direct influence on public opinion. The access of mass people to public sphere is the main characteristic of the “bourgeois public sphere”.(Habermas, 1991,p:27) As a consequence of approval of new rights of man and citizens in European states regarding freedom of expression the public sphere was expanded. Habermas calls the expanded public sphere “liberal public sphere”. (Habermas, 1991,p:xii) “Habermas *envisioned a place where community members could collectively form public opinion in an environment removed from the government or economy. Although Habermas’s public sphere model provides an excellent outline for political communication among citizens, it does not explain how politicians and organizations should fit into the mix. For a community to really encourage political communication, it has to be more inclusive*”(Westling, 2007,p.842)

According to Habermas with the emergence of mass media the nature of the public sphere has changed since the owner of mass media in collaboration with economic authorities exploited the public sphere. Habermas coined the term “Neo Feudalism” to explain the position that the owners of mass media and economic authorities have in the contemporary public sphere since contemporary economic feudalism indirectly controls public opinion via mass media.(Habermas, 1991,p:68) With the domination of mass media in the public sphere the logic of buying and selling became the dominant logic of the public sphere. Thus instead of transmitting meaningful exchanges of ideas between citizens the media became an instrument of advertisement that serves economic purposes. With mass media as an economic advertiser the audience becomes message consumers without influences on public opinion or on political power.

3.2.1 Return of public sphere

The World Wide Web (WWW) that emerged in the early 1990s and social networks that appeared a decade later built the groundwork for a new public sphere. In this new public sphere the more political and the more commercial, or the more public and the more private live side by side. *“A new communication realm, and ultimately a new medium, whose backbone is made of computer networks, whose language is digital, and whose senders are globally distributed and globally interactive.”* (Castells, 2009, p.70) The social networks on the internet are the re-emerged public spheres. The internet as an electronic social network includes a huge number of free and equal citizens from different parts of the world. Via the internet these citizens express their ability to discuss on different aspects of life without fear while their governments may monitor or control the media. While exchanges and relationships in the social networks do not have a commercial character, mass media have become increasingly commercial. Everyone can publish a text, video, audio for millions of audiences on the internet and receive direct feedback while mass media are still under the control of their owners and are broadcasting the point of view of their owners.

There are two main approaches towards re-emergence of the public sphere after the growth of the internet. There are those who hold optimistic views and claim that the internet has the ability to become a real public sphere. Others with the pessimistic view claim that because of the lack of significant factors constituting a public sphere, the internet cannot become a reliable public sphere. Castells argues that the internet provides direct access to news and information and it provides opportunities for discussions and arguments in the electronic sphere which is independent from the intervention of mass media. According to Castells, the internet allows citizens to create their own political or ideological networks in cyberspace. (Castells, 2010, p:7)

In contrast to Castells, Lee Salter argues that the internet cannot recreate the bourgeois public sphere since the bourgeois public sphere shaped a united public while the internet has allowed divided social interests to produce plurality of wills. (McCaughey and D.Ayers, 2003, p:121) For some analysts internet as a virtual space has basic difference with bourgeois public sphere. *“First, verification of information on the internet, (...) is a complex process requiring the will and time that many are not prepared to invest. Second, the lack of the shared life world, or even shared culture or background of international [or even national] internet user (...) finally, the much-championed anonymity of the internet makes the assessment of sincerity very difficult indeed.”* (McCaughey and D.Ayers, 2003, p.136) These

analysts argue that there are features of virtual networks such as their transitory nature based on non-alignment with destructive consequences for real social life. Those who do not consider the internet as a public sphere argue that transitory nature of the internet and categorical lack of commitment among its users disqualifies it as a public sphere. (Stevenson, 2002,p:48)

3.2.2 Applying framework

Peter Dahlgren conceptualizes the public sphere on social networks with regard to three dimensions: *structures, representation, and interaction.*

The structures dimension has to do with *formal and institutional features such as* media organization, political economy, and control. On the internet the structural dimension can be revealed with regard “*to the way in which the communicative spaces relevant for democracy are broadly configured. This has to do with such things as the manner in which cyber-geography is organized in terms of legal, social, economic, cultural, technical, and even Web-architectural features.*”(Dahlgren, 2005,p.149) The representational dimension is about media output in both mass media and small media. “*In this dimension, one can raise all of the familiar questions and criteria about media output for political communication.*

The dimension of interaction, is related to Dewey(Dewey, 1946) and Habermas who argue that “*public should be conceptualized as something other than just a media audience.*” For Dewey and Habermas the public exists as “*discursive interactional processes*” in which *citizens encounter media, use the output and interact with each other.*(Dahlgren, 2005,p:149)

4. Methodology

Since the outbreak of the Green Movement in 2009 doing research on Iran has become a risky subject. Since then, hundreds of journalist and political activist have been arrested and exiled and while the leaders of the Green Movement are still in house arrest it is a risky job to do field work inside Iran on Iranian journalists and their activities in social networks. As a result of the pressure imposed on Iranian journalists by security forces, it has not been easy to get journalists to speak openly about their social network, or introduce me to other journalists.

In the wake of the Green Movement the Iranian Parliament's Education and Research Committee declared that Iranian students abroad should not be allowed to write on Iran's internal affairs as part of their academic studies. They recommended Iran's Ministry of higher education to refrain from approval of academic degrees in Humanities and Social Sciences awarded outside Iran based on research projects on Iranian affairs.(ICANA, 2011) *"The director of student affairs at the Education Ministry announced on March 8 2011 that those studying abroad -- both students on government scholarships and those paying their own way -- are forbidden to submit a thesis related to Iran. Mohammad Hussein Majlisara added that it may be possible for students on Education Ministry scholarships to be provided with research material from the ministry itself regarding Iran, should there be a need."*(RFE/RL, 2011) Another member of the Iranian Parliament's Education Committee said that Iranian students who would like to study and do research on topics related to Iran should get permission from Iran's Ministry of Higher Education and coordinate their work with supervisors and co-supervisors who are teaching and researching in Iranian universities.(ICANA, 2011) A year after this statement they kept saying that Iranian students must "choose a supervisors and co-supervisors from Iranian universities". (Hamshahri, 2013)

4.1 Qualitative study and the interview method

According to Bloom and Crabtree in a semi-structured interview *"The interviewer elicits information about the meaning of observed behaviors, interactions, artifacts and rituals, with questions emerging over time as the investigator learns about the setting."* (Dicicco-

Bloom and Crabtree, 2006,p.3) This means through semi-structured interviews we get the opportunity to find the hidden layers of social issues. The interviews extend our information about feeling, behavior, challenges and individual thoughts.

Moreover, I used snowball sampling techniques to move from one interviewee to the next. Snowball sampling or chain referral sampling is a method that is used extensively in qualitative sociological research. In this sampling the researcher finds a first sample and then asks him or her to show the next sample. *By definition, snowball sample, is created through a series of referrals that are made within a circle of people who know one another.*(Berg, 2006,p.1)

For this study I interviewed 32 journalists inside Iran. Because of the necessity of mutual trust I told Iranian journalists about my master thesis project in Norway. As a result, many journalists refused to answer my questions. However my ex-colleagues accepted to answer my questions provided that they could remain anonymous. It was quite understandable with regard to the political situation that followed the disputed 2009 presidential election. Moreover, my ex-colleagues helped me to establish contact with many other journalists (snowball sampling) I conducted about 27 face-to-face interviews and many more over Skype. The journalists I interviewed worked in political, social, economic and art sections of news agencies, newspapers and magazines in Tehran. I interviewed 13 female and 19 male journalists. All of the journalists I interviewed had a university degree and had done at least three years of journalistic work. I did not record my interviews. The use of a recorder would have ended in self-censorship of my interlocutors. So I tried to take notes as much as possible during the interviews. In order to take full control of the interviews I divided my questions into main questions and sub-questions. I spent a great amount of time in every interview since the interlocutors had the propensity to talk about their own personal concerns and their life style. It was really hard and took a lot of time because my interviewee's became friendly very soon and they liked to speak about themselves and their life styles.

Face-to-face interviews provided me the opportunity to read the body language of my interlocutors and take note of some other cultural elements. As an Iranian I did not have any problems with finding the meaning of cultural elements. Face-to-face interviews allows 'synchronous communication'. According to Opdenakker *"Due to this synchronous communication, as no other interview method FtF interviews can take its advantage of social cues. Social cues, such as voice, intonation, body language etc. of the interviewee can*

give the interviewer a lot of extra information that can be added to the verbal answer of the interviewee on a question.” .(Opdenakker, 2006,P.3)

I had no problem contacting people during my fieldwork, but as a student of a western university I became a suspicious person in the eyes of the people I wanted to interview. It cost a lot of time and energy to overcome this obstacle and establish a reliable climate. Officially, Facebook is an illegal website in Iran and Iranian authorities deny Iranians access through filtering this social network. However, Iranian members of Facebook use anti-filters to access Facebook. If they are asked by authorities about their membership on Facebook they would deny it. Memberships on Facebook became a more sensitive subject during the Green Movement.

I think because of the political situation in Iran, semi-structured interview is more useful compared to other forms of interviews since it presupposes corporation between interviewer and his or her interviewee while the interviewee remains anonymous. However, one of the weaknesses of face to face interview is ‘visibility’ (Opdenakker, 2006, p.3) sometimes; in face to face interview the interviewer guides the interviewee by his or her special behavior, body language or nonverbal communication. In order to avoid this problem the interviewer has to control the reactions. Moreover, awareness about this kind of effect and interview protocols (framework for questions) helps to reduce this effect.

4.2 Facebook observation

As I mentioned before, my study is based on semi-structured interviews and observation and visiting data posted on journalist's Facebook pages during the Green Movement. I am a member of an extensive network of Iranian journalists and activists and I have accesses to their Facebook pages. I have visited more than 120 Facebook pages and collected data from May to October, 2009 in these Facebook pages when the Green Movement was at its climax. I have analyzed news, pictures and video clips from this period. With the retreat of the Green Movement in mid-2010 many Facebook pages became inactive. However, the 2013 presidential election encouraged many Facebook users who had been inactive for quite a long time to reactivate their Facebook accounts.

For me the 2013 presidential election became a great opportunity since it made access to Facebook pages of journalists in Iran much easier. Observation Iranian Facebook pages during the Green Movement can help me illuminate of how Iranian journalists, as a

representative of civil society, are using Facebook as a form of network power. Moreover, a journalist of the Green Movement period used Facebook and other social networks as a free media to publish the report and news which were censored by Iranian government. Visiting the page of journalists helped me understand the link between social events and movements in the virtual world. It also helped me to design my questions and interview protocols.

In addition to journalists with their individual Facebook pages, there are journalists with different fields of interests or commitments with collective Facebook pages. We can observe Facebook pages called 'Economic Journalists', 'Iranian Journalists', 'Comprehensive Style of Journalism', 'Hardships of Journalism', 'Sport Journalists', 'Green Journalists', 'Independent Journalists' and so on. In order to visit these pages, I asked my journalist friends to invite me to their pages.

These collective Facebook pages work as a part of an alternative public sphere in which journalists broadcast news and discuss different challenging views. They are relentless in their critique of the social and political situation and the treatment of their fellow journalists in Iran. As a result, Facebook has become a forum for new ideas and discussion of new topics. They publish their reports on these publicly accessible Facebook pages while other journalists write their comments and critiques. This discussion process helps journalists understand the strengths and weaknesses of their reports.

Facebook helps journalists exchange news about their own situation. If a journalist is arrested, social networks such as Facebook inform others about the news. Journalists are using social networks not only as a public sphere for discussing reports and news but it is also a kind of Iranian journalist association to follow Iranian journalists' demands. The "Iranian Journalist Association" has been closed since 2009 and now Facebook public pages become a new way for them to contact each other and follow the journalist rights.

5. The context

5.1 Media and politics in Iran: a short history

Modern communication technologies and media played a decisive role in the Iranian constitutional revolution in 1906-1909, in the movement for Oil-nationalization in the 1950s, in the 1953 coup against the movement and in the 1979 Islamic revolution. Telegraph and newspapers played a crucial role in the constitutional revolution. In addition to newspapers radio and telephone played the same role in the movement for Oil-nationalization. In addition to all these technologies, the cassette player played a decisive role in the 1979 revolution.

As a result of the 1953 coup organized by the CIA and the MI6 against the Iranian government led by Prime Minister “Mohammad Mossadeq”, the reign of the Shah was restored and his power consolidated for 25 years. One of the main reasons behind the success of the coup against Mossadeq was that the American and the British intelligent organizations such as the CIA and the MI6 succeeded in its use of local newspapers in their propaganda campaign against Mossadeq and his government. *“They controlled four-fifths of the press and put out false propaganda as well as anti-government articles, some of which were written by CIA experts.”* (Katouzian, 1990,P.189) Not only local newspapers but also the radio station BBC Persian played a role to influence the Iranian public opinion against Mosadeq and his government. According to Kermit Roosevelt one of the leading figures in the coup, BBC Persian Radio worked as British propaganda tools. The night before the coup, MI6 sent a message to the Shah via BBC Persian Radio. The message was meant to assure the Shah that the British government is supporting this coup. (Roosevelt, 1979) Stephan Kinzer writes in his *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror* (2003) that: *“Roosevelt told the Shah that he was in Iran on behalf of the American and British secret services, and that this would be confirmed by a code word the Shah would be able to hear on the BBC the next night. Churchill had arranged that the BBC would end its broadcast day by saying not “It is now midnight,” as usual, but “It is now exactly midnight.” Such assurances were hardly necessary, the Shah replied. The two men understood each other.”* (Kinzer, 2003,p.9-10)

In 1978 when Ayatollah Khomeini was exiled to France his supporters in Europe began to use mass media to inform the world about their struggle against the Shah. Khomeini found

himself at the center of attention of the world media. *“Many of the world's most noted journalists from major news channels journeyed to this once- quiet village to sit on the carpet and interview this new unusual revolutionary leader.”* (Sreberny and Mohammadi, 1994,p.120). Khomeini supporters in France used another tool of communication to connect with the people inside Iran. They used cassette tapes to record Khomeini's speeches and sent them to Iranian revolutionary groups inside Iran where they produced hundreds of thousands of copies to be distributed among Iranians who opposed the Shah. *“In Khomeini's rented house, two tape machines were kept permanently running, recording his speeches and announcements.”* (Sreberny and Mohammadi, 1994,p.120) It seems that cassette tapes as a tool of communication between the leaders of the revolutions and the masses created the Islamic revolutions' momentum that resulted in overthrowing of the Shah. *“Cassette tapes in the 1970s were a relatively new and important innovation in communications technology and played a pivotal role in the lead-up to an event that transformed Iranian history.”*(Elson et al., 2012,p.1)

Radio, television and newspapers became important tools of communication for the newly established Islamic state through which it mobilized people to deal with internal political conflicts and external aggressions such as the war with Iraq. The main purpose of the Iranian state media during the 8 years with Iraq was encouragement and persuasion of young people to join the war front. They described the war as “Holy Defense” and told the participants in the war that as warriors of a holy war they must be prepared for martyrdom.

Two decades after the end of the war internet became a popular tool of communication among young Iranian people. 30 years after the Islamic revolution, in the 2009 presidential election, Iranians used this new tool of communication for political purposes. They used social networks operating in the internet such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs to express their political views and to declare their electoral preferences. In fact Facebook had been blocked in Iran from 2006 till several months before the 2009 presidential election. However, several months prior to the election the Iranian government lifted the ban on social networks. Young Iranians used this short period of unblocked Facebook and rapidly joined the networks with clear political aims in mind; declare their democratic demands publicly and support and work for presidential candidates who could realize those democratic demands. Even a short unblocked time is enough for people who know and understand the significance of social and political opportunities.(khabar, 2012b)

Lifting the ban on social networks worked was a double edged sword for the Iranian government. On the one hand, the government tried to show the world and the Iranian

people that they were going to hold a free and fair election. On the other hand, it intended to use social networks to support the conservative candidate, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad since Ahmadinejad acted as if he was the most popular figure in Iran. Contrary to what the Iranian government expected the great majority of the people who joined the social networks supported the reformist candidate Mir Hussein Mousavi and continued to do it after the disputed election results. After the disputed results of the election social networks became a powerful communication tool to organize streets protests against the Ahmadinejad governmental. *“New Internet-based social media tools, such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, have replaced cassette tapes as forward-looking communications technologies.”*(Elson et al., 2012,p.1)

I conceive of the political history of modern tools of communication in Iran since the turn of 19th century as the backbone of my discussion of the situation of media and freedom of speech in this country. I shall argue that social networks that came to the fore with the outbreak of the Green Movement in 2009 have played a decisive role in this political history since they have formed a “network power” to overcome this situation.

5.1.2 Media in post-revolutionary Iran

Since the Islamic revolution, the reality of social and political life in Iran has forcefully been distorted by Western media. Iran has become in the eyes of those Westerners whose only source of information is mass media a closed country in which a theocratic political system governs a religiously fundamentalist society. According to this dominant perception in the West civil society in Iran does not have a life of its own, independent from the control of the authoritarian state.(Semati, 2007,p.1) The general perception of Iran created by Western media ignores the way Iranians experience the social, cultural and political processes that started in their society long before the 1979 Islamic revolution. Iranians are aware of the complexity of these socio-cultural and political processes and the way these processes have shaped their state, their society, their cultural preferences, their ideological inclinations and political orientations and even their electoral choices. It is not easy to understand contemporary events in Iran without taking into consideration the vast impact of these processes and their paradoxical nature. We can observe the paradoxical nature of these processes in the ways Iranians respond to the Islamic state media policy as well as to the

contents of the programs the state media broadcasts. In Iran the state has a monopoly on Radio and television. However, it cannot control citizen's media inclination since millions of Iranians watch foreign programs via satellite broadcasted television channels.. While possession of satellite television is forbidden by law in Iran and Iranian police force confiscate satellite dishes that Iranian citizens display in their balcony or rooftops, over 60 percent of the Iranian households have installed satellite dishes which enable them to watch foreign based satellite televisions channels.(Khabar, 2011) The roofs of residence buildings and apartment complexes throughout in Iran are packed with satellite dishes.



Source: <http://shomanews.com>

The ban on satellite television was in fact part of the resistance against a cultural onslaught that was theorized by conservative forces in Iran in the early 1990s.(Aftab, 2011) Right after the victory of the Islamic revolution in 1979, the leaders of the Islamic state presented an Islamization project which consisted of restructuring the judicial system based on the “Islamic Sharia law”. The Islamization project included as well an educational system and cultural policies to spread revolutionary Islam and a revolutionary Islamic lifestyle. State Radio and TV, Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) which is owned by the state and supervised by Iran's leader took the task of advertising these new state policies at a daily bases. By law, Iran's leader has the authority to appoint and dismiss the head of IRIB every 5 years. According to article 175 of the Iranian Constitution “*The freedom of expression and dissemination of thoughts in the Radio and Television of the Islamic Republic of Iran must be guaranteed in keeping with the Islamic' criteria and the best interests of the country. The appointment and dismissal of the head of the Radio and Television of the Islamic Republic of*

Iran rests with the Leader. A council consisting of two representatives each of the President, the head of the judiciary branch and the Islamic Consultative Assembly shall supervise the functioning of this organization.”(IranChamber, 2013a)

As I mentioned above, using satellite dishes is illegal in Iran and the police can confiscate satellite and destroy the dishes that they find when they are publicly displayed, when they are visible on building roofs and in balconies. However, the law does not authorize the police to search for satellite devices inside people’s residence.



Source: ISNA <http://isna.ir/fa/imageReport/92070704198/>

However, especially after the eruption of the Green Movement, the illegality of satellite television has not prevented the increase of Persian language programs broadcasted by BBC Persia or Voice of America (VOA) to reach Iranians inside the country. By means of satellite devices Iranians have access to these TV channels. After the disputed presidential election in 2009 and in response to Iranian people’s consumption of satellite TV that are loaded with subversive political messages, the Iranian government have been using jamming to prevent satellites televisions to reach Iranian people. Yet “*Television programs by VOA’s Persian News Network and a number of radio broadcasts by U.S.-supported news organizations have been affected by the Iranian jamming. The interference has been aimed at a communications satellite system used by many countries.(...) The BBG condemned the jamming and called it censorship aimed at interrupting the free flow of objective news and information to the Iranian people.*”(VOA, 2009) Although health centers inside Iran warned

about the negative effects of the jamming on people's health the governments practice of jamming against unwanted foreign TV channels has not been stopped.

IRIB is a huge organization with 15 national, 10 international and 34 local television channels. The international television channels have programs in English, French, Kurdish, Urdu, Bosnian, Turkish and 6 international radio station in 27 languages.(IRIB, 2013) All these huge programs are broadcasting the Islamic Republic's ideology and the official views of the state. (Semati, 2007,p:5) In his analysis of IRIB in "*Authoritarian Face: Iranian TV, 1990-2000*" Majid Mohammadi demonstrates that IRIB violates the rights of Iranian citizens in different ways. It disregards copyright in every field and on every occasion; television cameras are in every meeting, in every street protest or press courts. However, these documented events are never broadcasted as news, but kept in IRIB archives to be used against the participants of these social and political events. According to Mohammad, due to the monopoly of IRIB by the conservative forces Iranian Radio and TV not only disregards the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, it also disregards the rights of the majority of Iranian citizens. The disregard for the majority of Iranian citizens becomes more obvious in times of election and electoral campaigns when IRIB takes side with candidates whose political views reflect those of the head of the IRIB. (Mohammadi, 2001)

There are newspapers and magazines in Iran that are owned by private persons as well. However, anyone who aims to publish a newspaper or a magazine has to acquire a license from Iran's Ministry of Culture. Another problem is the lack of state guarantees to ensure continuity of newspapers or magazines since they can be banned if the security forces or the judiciary system accuse these newspapers or magazines of working against the Iranian political system. The security forces can create a legal or even illegal dossier in which a newspaper or a magazine is accused of insulting the leader, compromising national security and putting national interests in danger. Such accusations are usually supported by the judiciary system and results in government bans of newspapers or magazines or even arrest and imprisonment of journalists. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists "*Iran is the second worst jailer of journalists in the world, after Turkey, with 45 behind bars*"(CPJ, 2012) There are many forbidden topics that Iranian journalists cannot write about. There are dozens of the red lines that journalist cannot cross(Sharif, 2013). They cannot for instance criticize the Supreme Leader or write about the assets of Grand Ayatollahs. However, there are red lines that newspapers and journalists are not fully aware. These unknown red lines become known when newspapers are banned and journalists are prosecuted and jailed. As a result every, in order to refrain from crossing the unknown red lines editors or journalists

illustrate their own imaginary red lines. The imaginary red lines are the source of self-censorship among newspaper editorials and journalists. Iranian journalists have been criticizing government's monitoring and censorship policies and call into question the legality of punishments based on the unknown redlines. They criticize Iranian government censorship policy because, as they argue, the unknown redlines blur the difference between legitimate and illegitimate, and legal and illegal critiques in Iran. Iranian journalists argue that the main obstacle preventing the expansion of the domain of freedom of expression in Iran is self-censorship from which they must liberate themselves. They are well aware; nevertheless, that liberation from self-censorship cannot be done without government's recognition of legal critique in the public sphere by making clear what characterizes a legal critique and how legal critiques are distinguished from illegal critiques.

In addition to newspapers, the internet is controlled by government in Iran. Compared to internet policies of Western governments, Iranian government follows a restricted internet policy. The result is Iranian citizen's limited access to the internet. A cybercrime law that includes 56 articles was passed by the Parliament in 2009. The cybercrime law criminalized certain internet activities.(Hamshahri, 2011a) An Iranian cyber-police (FATA) was established to enforce the cybercrime law in 2011.(Hamshahri, 2011b) The cyber police discovers, at daily bases, the "the internet criminal activities" and arrests and imprisons the perpetrators. In fact the internet access was reduced in the second year of Ahmadinejad's presidency. In 2006, following the instruction issued the Ministry of Telecommunications the internet speed faster than 128 kilobytes per second was forbidden.(Reuters, 2006) Internet users in Iran argued, at the time, that the main reason behind the decision was reduction of the ability of the internet in Iran to download western movies and music. Again, after the disputed presidential election in 2009 and in the climax of the Green movement the Ministry reduced the internet to less than 128 kilobytes to make it impossible to upload pictures or videos of street protests against the Islamic Republic on the internet. By monitoring the internet, the Iranian government controls the internet communication in Iran. The cyber police use different technologies in its internet monitoring system to discover people with suspicious internet activities. In 2008 Nokia a telecommunication company sold monitoring technology to Iran "*further accusation arose upon the release of this information, as Nokia was then linked to suspicions of e-mail and text-message filtering that occurred during protest [2009]*" (Kamalipou, 2010,P.29)

In 2011 the government announced that it was launching "Halal Internet" that which will be independent national internet. The government believes that this kind of internet is helping

Iran to protect its security while struggling with western soft war.(Ziaeeopor, 2011) But the main purpose of the project was in fact control of the exchange of information between Iranian citizens and the world. The Iranian government was accused by internet users that it was following a North Korean national internet project.

5.2 Freedom of expression in Iran

According to the ranking of the world's most repressive media climates in 2012 released by "freedom house" Iran is among the 10 worst countries for journalist.(Puddington, 2013) Many Iranian newspapers and news agencies were closed down because they had broadcasted news, photos or articles on the popular protests against the official results of the 2009 presidential election. In recent years, many Iranian journalists have experienced arrest, harassment and exile. Another predicament of Iranian journalists is restrictions against their collaboration with Persian international news channels such as BBC Persian and Voice of America. According to the journalists working in these news channels, they will be prosecuted if they visit Iran. These journalists claim that their families are under relentless pressure of security forces and subject to arbitrary prosecution. BBC director general, Mark Thompson claims that families of the BBC Persian journalists have been harassed by Iranian authorities. *"In recent months a number of relatives of members of BBC Persian staff have been detained for short periods of time by the Iranian authorities and urged to get their relatives in London to either stop working for the BBC, or to 'co-operate' with Iranian intelligence officials. In other instances, passports of family members have been confiscated, preventing them from leaving Iran. This has left many BBC Persian staff too afraid to return to the country, even to visit sick or elderly relatives. Some have had their Facebook and email accounts hacked."* (Thompson, 2012)

Iranian journalists are not the only group to be affected by the limited freedom of speech in Iran. Iranian writers complain about government restriction and censorship as well. They claim that new books are banned for different reasons and many previously published books are not allowed to come out in new additions. About 250 titles were banned in 2012 and several hundred others still waiting for the license for publication. Recently, *Cheshmeh*, a known publishing house had its license revoked.(Khabar, 2012a) In addition to journalists and writers filmmakers face many types of restrictions. In collaboration with the judiciary system the Ministry of Culture in the Ahmadinejad government ordered the closure of the

House of Cinema(Mehr, 2013b) which worked as Iranian filmmakers' trade union as well as the closure of Iranian Journalist Association. (Farda, 2009)Jafar Panahi sentenced to 6 years jail and Mohammad Rasoulof also sentenced to one year jail.(Kaleme, 2011) the Rouhani government reopened the House of Cinema(Mehr, 2013a) but has not been successful to lift the ban on the Journalist Association because of the opposition from the Judiciary system.

5.2.1 The internet and freedom of expression in Iran

Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have been filtered since the 2009 election. However, the filtering of social networks does not prevent a great portion of 46.7% of the Iranian population who are now connected to the internet to become active members of the social networks. The Iranian government does its best to control they ways Iranian people are connected to the world. As I mentioned above cybercrime law was passed by the Iranian parliament in 2010 and a special police force, FATA, was established to discover and prosecute the cybercriminals. What FATA does in reality is blocking unwanted websites and social networks and arresting bloggers and social network activists. In November 2012, Sattar Beheshti, an Iranian blogger was arrested. He was accused that his activities in the social networks and Facebook were “putting national security in danger”. He was beaten to death by FATA in the Evin prison. Mr Beheshti wrote an official letter of complaint to prison authorities in which, he described in details how he had been subjected to torture and ill-treatments. However, according to the Iranian parliament's Committee for National Security the main cause of Mr Beheshti's death was psychological pressures for which no body should be blamed.(ISNA, 2005)

5.3 Iran and the internet: a short history

When the director of the Institute for Theoretical Physics and Mathematics (IPM) in Tehran sent an e-mail to the administrators of University of Vienna in January 1993,(Rahimi, 2003), no one could have imagined that there would be more than 42 million Iranian internet users in 2012. (InternetWorld, 2012)Universities were the first places that were connected to the internet. In 1993, in collaboration with the Institute for Theoretical Physics and Mathematics (IPM) Tehran's Sharif University and Gilan University, in Northern province of Gilan, were connected to the internet via UUCP protocol. In1994, the newly established Neda Rayaneh Institute (NRI) organized the first bulletin board system (BBS) and constructed the first

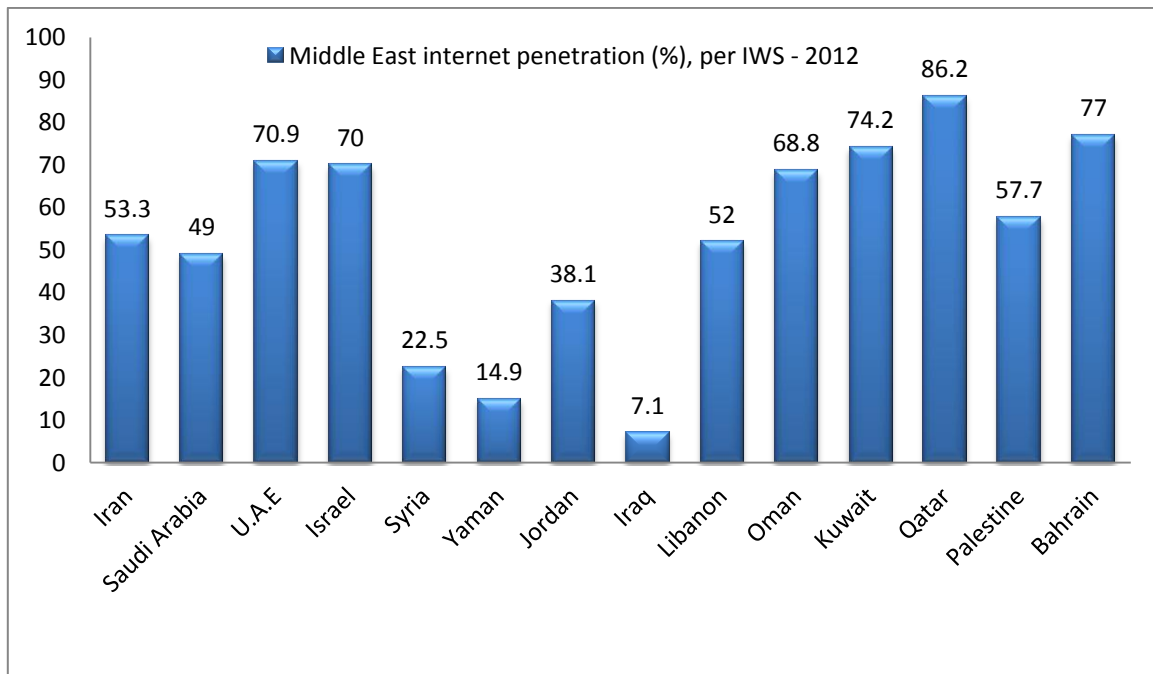
Iranian website. Rayaneh is the Persian term for computer. The Neda Rayaneh Institute assisted “Hamshahri”, the Tehran based Persian newspaper, in publishing the newspaper on the web. At the time, Iran was connected to the internet via the satellite Cadvision by a Canadian provider. NRI established Iran's first commercial provider (ISP) in the same year.(ISNA, 2005) The Iranian provider (ISP) became a dynamic institution that has improved the quality of internet in Iran.

In 1995, Iran's parliament passed a law that allowed establishment of “Data Communication Affairs” companies, under the supervision of Iran's Telecommunication Company. However, since 1997, the website of the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) was hosted by an English provider (England Telecommunication Company) and then by an American provider (GPG).(ISNA, 2005) In 1998, the “Unicode” project started to search about Persian texts. The project was supported by the Sharif University, Ministry of Science, Council of Informatics, Statistical Center of Iran, and Science and Arts Foundation based on England. The project tried to find a standard Farsi font in cyberspace.(Esfahbod and Pournader, 2002,p:43)

In 1999, the Iran Gate.net Company was established in Esfahan. The company provided ISP services for Esfahan's internet users. At the end of 1999 Iran became a member of the Unicode consortium. In 2000, weblogs became very popular in Iran and in a short period of time thousands of Iranian bloggers dominated Iran’s cyber space. In 2001 the first Iranian blog service (Persianblog.ir) was established. Persianblog.ir provides Farsi cyberspace for Iranian blogger. Seven months after its establishment the Persianblog.ir was giving its services to more than 21000 bloggers. (Bakhtaei, 2004) According to a 2010 report of Statistical Center of Iran, 16 years after the establishment of the first ISP in Iran, there were 2978 active internet companies in Iran. 62.3 percent of Iranian internet companies worked as coffee nets and the rest provided other services such as ISP, WIMAX, PAP and ISDP.(StatisticalCenter, 2012) During 2010, the highest rates of Internet penetration in Tehran belonged to males with 17.9 percent, young (age 25-29) with 8.1 percent, and high education with 25.5 percent, and single with 16.7 percent, and employed with 19.8 percent.(kashani and Zare, 2012,p:83)

The emergence and development of ICTs in the Middle East in recent decades has made significant social and political impacts on this region. These new technologies have become important tools for ordinary people in their struggle for liberty, democracy and human rights.

(Golkar, 2011,p:63) Iran was one of the two countries in the Middle East that were connected to the internet as early as 1993. With government support the internet had been developing very fast in Iran in the 1990s. However, with ascendance of prodemocracy and reform oriented forces to power 1997-2005, conservative forces in Iran looked at the emergence of blogging and then Facebook and twitter as serious threats to Iran’s national security. Yet despite the restrictions imposed by Iranian security forces and the judiciary system, according to an "internet world state" report the number of internet users in Iran has increased from 250,000 in the year 2000 to 42,000,000, in 2012. According to the same report the penetration per IWS was 53.3%. While Iran ranked first with regard to the internet users in the Middle East, it ranked as 6th with regard to penetration.(InternetWorld, 2012)



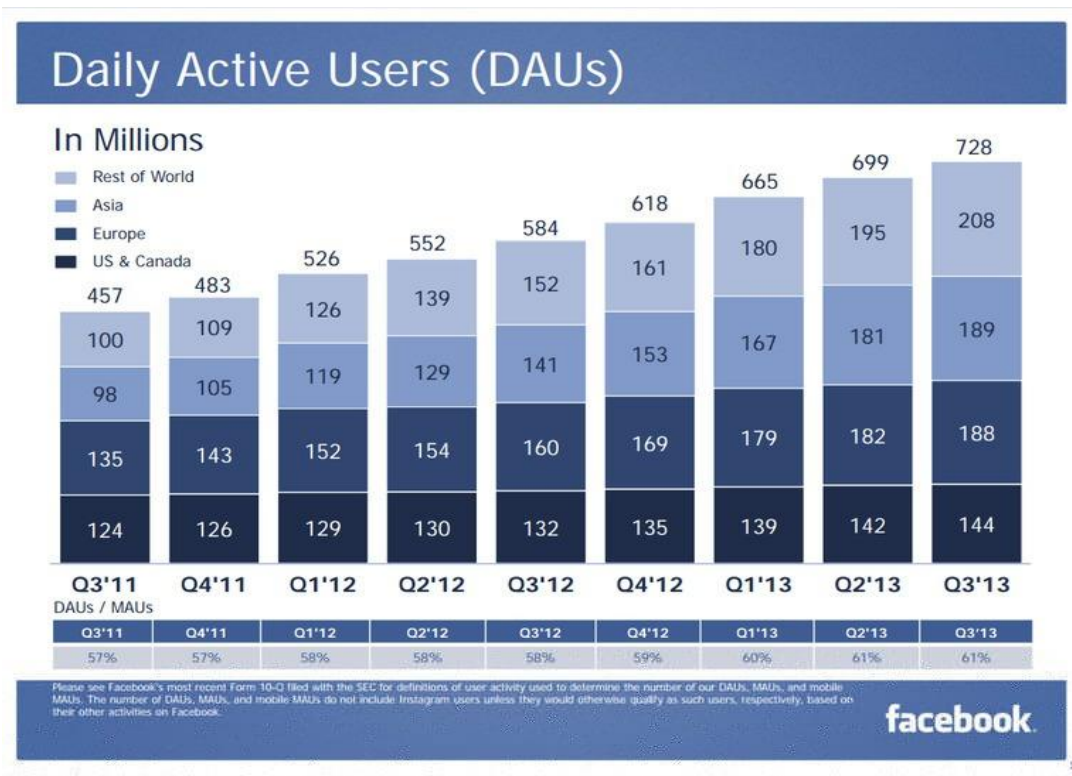
Source: internet world state

The percentage of internet users in Iran is relatively high compared to other countries in the Middle East. While Iran is ranked 19th with regard to population its blogosphere holds the third spot in terms of number of users and is only behind the US and China.(Elson et al., 2012,p:12). There are more than 500,000 active Persian weblogs with about 7 million visitors. Since about 70 percent of Iranian population is below the age of 30 most internet users in Iran are young and educated. (Golkar, 2011,p:53) the Iranian youth, at first took refuge in the internet since they believed that it was free from government intervention. For them the internet constituted a public sphere that treated its members equally and gave equal opportunity to anyone who desired to express her or his opinions about social, cultural and

political problems publicly. However, the internet as a totally free public sphere did not last long. It soon became soon the target of the government's interferences. The government blocked websites of its political opponents and limited the speed of the internet. It filtered social networks, passed strict cyberspace laws and arrested bloggers and internet activists. The government's attempts to control the internet indicated that those in power in Iran started to understand the power of social networks and the way it shaped the political horizons of ordinary citizens. The internet has created new opportunities for women, youth and minorities in their daily struggle for dignity, freedom and democracy to challenge dictatorial policies of the Iranian government. In their daily struggle, through words, photos and videos they upload on the internet they cross red lines and go beyond censorship and speak their mind.

5.3.1 Facebook in Iran

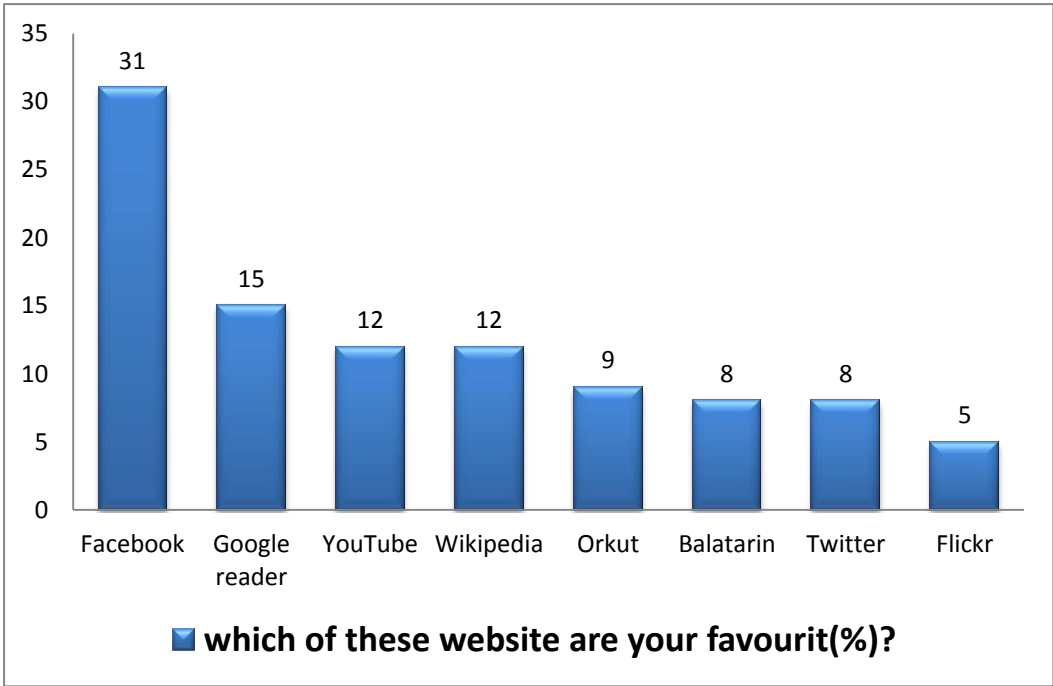
Facebook with more than one billion active users is one of the most popular social networks in the world. According to "Facebook reports, third quarter 2013 result": "*Daily active users (DAUs) were 728 million on average for September 2013, an increase of 25% year-over-year. Monthly active users (MAUs) were 1.19 billion as of September 30, 2013, an increase of 18% year-over-year.*" (Facebook, 2013) Based on this report, Mark Zuckerberg believes that the Facebook team was prepared for the next step, to bring the next five billion people online.



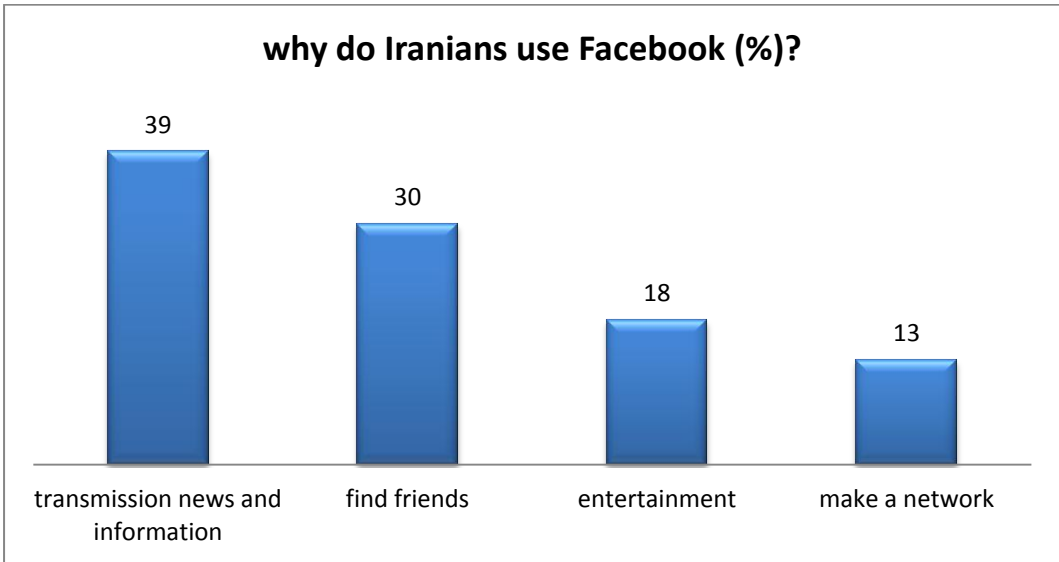
Source: Facebook reports third quarter 2013 result

Facebook was founded in 2004 and quickly spread throughout the world. Since its foundation Facebook became popular in Iran but it has been blocked since 2009. However, despite its official blocking millions of Iranians are members of Facebook. There is no official estimate of the number of Facebook users in Iran but according to a recent research, “*Demographics of social network users*”, There were 12.5 million Iranian Facebook users in 2012. And the rate of Facebook penetration in Tehran was 12.3 million. According to the same research the highest rate of Facebook users in Tehran, belonged to young (with 3.8 percent), highly educated (with 11.3 percent), single (with 6.7 percent) and employed (with 6.5 percent) males (with 7.1 percent). This study added that the Facebook penetration in Tehran for female users was 5.2. (kashani and Zare, 2012,p:83)

According to another research; “*penetration of social networks in Iran*” in 2009, 78 percent of the internet users in Iran were members of social networks of which 31 percent were members of Facebook.(Ziaepor and Aghili, 2009,p:33-38)

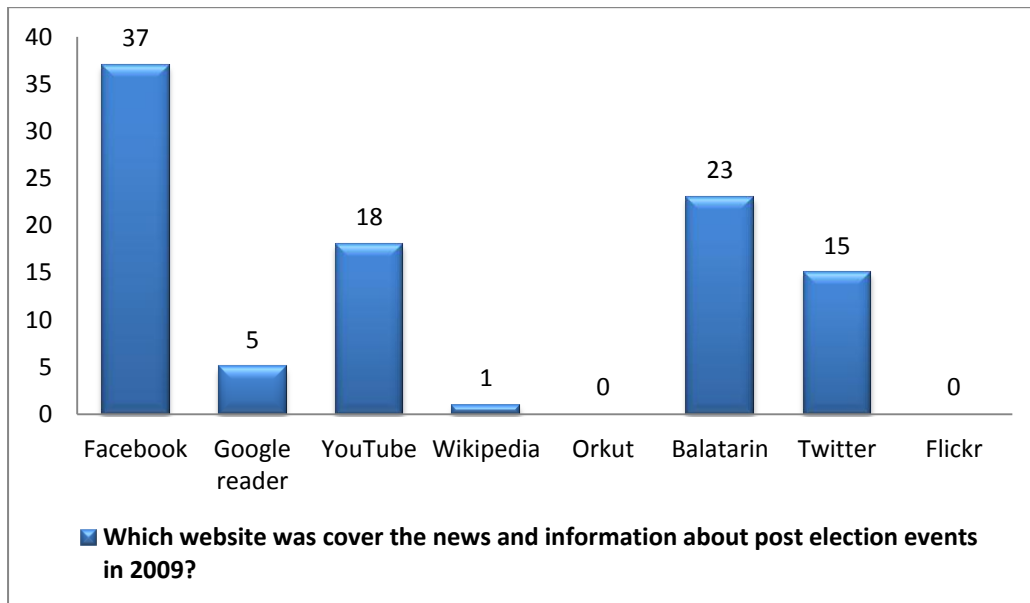


39 percent of Facebook members used the network for transmission of news and information, 30 percent used it for finding friends, 18 percent for entertainment and 13 percent of Facebook users sought to become part of a network. (Ziaeeopor and Aghili, 2009,p:36)



In 2009, 62 percent of the internet users in Iran had a weblog while 55 percent of Iranian internet users were members of Cloub (Iranian social network). It seems that as a result of government censorship and blocking of global social networks a huge number of Iranian members of social networks switched to Iranian social network. It should be mentioned that 37 percent of respondents in this research believed that Facebook played a significant role in

covering news and information about post-presidential election events in 2009.(Ziaeeopor and Aghili, 2009,p:39)



Although Facebook has been blocked in Iran since 2009, the office of Iran’s supreme leader has a Facebook account (Khamenei.ir). On this Facebook account we can see “The Center for Preserving and Publishing the Works of Grand Ayatollah Seyyid Ali Khamenei” Until early November 2013, the supposed Facebook account of Khamenei had 62.913 likes (10.11.2013). Recently Iran’s supreme leader issued a Fatwa (formal legal opinion) regarding activity on Facebook. According to the Fatwa, Facebook is not permissible if it is used to spread corruption, lies, and false claims that harm Muslims. Otherwise it's permitted.(ISNA, 2012) In addition to Khamenei, Iran’s president Hassan Rouhani has a Facebook account that is linked to the president official website (www.president.ir). Until early November 2013, Rouhani’s Facebook page had 102.182 likes (10.11.2013). Rouhani has a Twitter account as well. Rouhani’s Facebook account played a significant role in his presidential election campaign.

With 571,996 likes until early November 2013, Iran’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Javad Zarif, has become the most popular political Facebook account among Iranians everywhere. (10.11.2013). Zarif joined Facebook 4 years ago, but his popularity on social network has grown since he became Iran’s Foreign Minister. He is the first member of government in the Islamic Republic who uploads to his page directly and gives his daily reports on Iran's foreign policy to the people via Facebook. His Facebook page has become a reliable source for international (FinancialTimes, 2013) as well as Iranian newspapers (Shargh, 2013,p.3) and

news agencies (Khabar, 2013c). The advantage of Zarif's Facebook is that it allows every visitor of the page to write his or her comments without any censorship. The page has given Iranian citizens an opportunity to engage in a meaningful dialogue with a high ranking government official. Such opportunities have never existed before. The reciprocal nature of Zarif's Facebook has made it, in the eyes of its visitors a public sphere.(JameJam, 2013,p.2) since Zarif posts his reports on Facebook inside Iran, he has become a symbol of bypassing government censorship of global social networks. This means he is opposed to blocking of social networks in Iran. Zarif's use of Facebook caused discomfort among conservative forces in the Iranian parliament. They have protested against Zarif's activity on Facebook. Javad Karimi Ghodosi, a conservative member of the Parliament Committee for National Security argues that Facebook activity of Ministry of Foreign Affairs is against Islamic law and it could damage country's security.“ I am really surprised by Mr. Zarif's using anti-filters and posting his reports on Facebook.”(Seirnews, 2013) Despite fierce objections from the conservative forces in Iran Javad Zarif is using his Facebook account to keep his connection to the people.

When the popularity of Zarif's Facebook became a fact, other members of the government were attracted to Facebook. These days they use Facebook to establish direct contacts with the people. Iran's Vice President, Eshaq Jahangiri with 35.953 likes, spokeswoman of the Ministry of Foreign, Affairs Marzieh Afkham, with 12.835 like, Massoumeh Ebtekar , Head of Department of Protection of Environment with 13,802 like and Shahindokht Mowlaverdi, Vice President in Women's Affairs are members of Rouhani government who are Facebook users. With the exception of Zarid and Jahangiri, the aforementioned members of the government with Facebook account are women. In order to connect to Facebook, all of these members of government have to use anti- filters. The Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Ali Janati, claimed recently that all social networks including Facebook should be unblocked.

“The blocking of Facebook has been done by *The Filtering Committee* and it is not under the responsibility of the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance. We have only one delegate in the committee but we will try to negotiate on unblocking Facebook so that people can connected to Facebook legally.”(Mohaghegh, 2013,p.1) Its seems that the middle aged members of Iran's government, who have chosen Facebook to get connected with the people, have understood that they cannot ignore the political role of the young generation to deal with predicaments of the current situation. These members of government have realized that in the

same way they used radio cassettes, the most advanced technological devices in the field of communication at the time in the late 1970s, to communicate their views to the people regarding the Islamic revolution, the new generation of Iranian youth have been using Facebook for many years to promote democracy and demand their political and civil rights. During the Islamic revolution Iranian youth used cassette record systems to transmit revolutionary messages and especially Khomeini's speeches to the people. Now the members of the revolutionary generation in the government positions have learned to use Facebook, the device that the current generation of youth has been using to transmit their democratic messages for years.

It is worth mentioning that politics is only one aspect of Facebook activities. Many Iranians use Facebook to advertise their business affairs, NGO activities, academic or educational preoccupations. As a place for business transactions some female members of Facebook use the network to advertise their barbershop, hairdressing salons, tailoring, fashion and clothing businesses. While it is illegal to use a woman without hejab for advertisement, advertisements on Facebook are full of Iranian women without hejab. Businesswomen advertise their work samples on Facebook, with women without hejab. (Afary, 2009) According to a study entitled “*visual analysis of Iranian youth on Facebook profile pictures*” while according to the legal codes, Iranian women have to use Islamic dress in public places they tend to dress un-Islamic on Facebook profile pictures. “*The analysis showed that women have stronger tendency in presenting themselves in contrast with the offline social norms, and codes such as dress codes. In their profile pictures females mainly wore Un-Islamic clothes. It was discovered that more than 70 percent of them were depicting themselves with Un-Islamic clothes, even though moderate.*” (Hajinejad, 2010, p.56) It seems that Facebook has created an opportunity for Iranian women to present themselves as they wish. They advertise their business, participate in political events and are active in campaigns for women’s rights in Iran. For example, an online women organization campaigning for women rights called “The Feminist School”, has a Facebook page with 36,725 likes. The organization represents Iranian women engaged in women rights and civil rights campaigns in Iran. Facebook has played an important role in the struggle of Iranian women for their political and civil rights. (Katouzian and Shahidi, 2008, p:86-106) They have made Facebook a new means of communication to present their arguments and views regarding their social and political rights. With 42 million internet users and more than 12.5 million Facebook users, the internet and social networks

have become new tools through which youth, women, religious and ethnic minorities and people with different lifestyle express their views and demand their rights.

5.4 The Green Movement; the political context

The 2009 presidential election results that was announced by Iranian state media shocked millions of Iranians of who supported Mousavi. According to the official results Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was re-elected. People did not believe the official results. They started to express their opinion about the election results as they were commuting in the streets of Tehran by Taxi or Buss or by the metro. During the day that the election result was announced, people discussed every aspect of the election: the unprecedented election turnout, the overwhelming visibility of Mousavi's supporters in the streets in the days preceding the election and the feeling of electoral victory they experienced at polling stations. All the evidence pointed to the conclusion that the election was rigged. The reform oriented presidential candidates, Mousavi and Karroubi, shared the popular view regarding the election results. They expressed their views on their web sites and social networks pages. They both rejected the official election results. In the afternoon of the same day, people poured in to the streets of Tehran to protest against the official election results. They carried banners stamped with the following, simple question “where is my vote?”

The protesters took the color Green to symbolize their actions. Green was the color of Mir Hussein Mousavi’s election campaign. Those protesting in the streets of Tehran believed that Mousavi would have been declared as Iran’s president if the election had not been rigged. Street protests in the streets of Tehran and several other big cities became known rapidly as the “Green Movement.” Mousavi represented the major faction among prodemocracy and reformist forces in the 2009 presidential election. Mehdi Karroubi represented the more radical but less popular faction in the prodemocracy movement in Iran. Street protests made Mousavi and Karroubi leaders of the Green Movement. The leaders of the Green Movement were not new faces in Iranian politics. Mousavi was Iran’s Prime Minister for eight years during the War with Iraq in the 1980s and Karroubi was the speaker of Iranian parliament from 1988 to 1993 and then again from 2000 to 2004.. They became under house arrest in February 2010 and still are under house arrest.

Mir Hussein Mousavi used Kaleme website, Facebook and Twitter to keep in contact with the protesters. Karroubi used the Saham News website for the same purpose. In the statements released on Facebook and other social networks they renewed their contacts with their supporters and prepared them for new demonstrations. Advocates of the Green movement used social networks to update people about the time and place of the demonstrations. While international news agencies and TV stations were full of news about the Green Movement, Iran's state media either ignored the Movement or blamed its activists as thugs or as lackeys of Western powers. Few days after the eruption of the Green Movement foreign journalists were expelled from the Iran and independent newspapers were not allowed to transmit any news to report about the event. As a result, the Green movement activists used social networks to connect to each other and to the people. The most enthusiastic activists of the Green movement were not people with connection to the leading figures in the movement. They were ordinary citizens who promoted the movement and were fascinated by the movement. They were fascinated with the sense of solidarity and compassion that the movement had created among people from all walks of life. The Green movement was understood by its participants as the movement of the people in which young and old, male and female, more educated and less educated, poor and rich, religious and secular played equal roles. Despite the fact that not all of the participants in the movement were members of cyber social networks they knew someone who had access to the networks who came with updated news about the movement. Many who had access to the social network started their day by going to their universities or their workplaces. After finishing their assignments at universities or workplaces they took part in the street demonstrations and took pictures and vides of the event. Then, they returned home when the demonstration was over and uploaded the picture and videos they had taken of the demonstrations on YouTube. Few hours later they could see their own journalistic work in international news channels to which they had access through satellite television. The high volume of tweets about Iran during the first days of the Green movement led some analysts to call it the "Twitter revolutions" (Papic and Noonan, 2011) "*On 16 June 2009, Reuters and other global media outlets reported that the US State Department had asked Twitter to delay a scheduled server upgrade, ostensibly in order to ensure Iranian users maximum access to the service.*"(Pleming, 2009)

It is worth mentioning that American leaders tried to reach the leaders of the Green Movement but failed. In fact the Leaders of the movement refused any direct or indirect

assistance or involvement of Western powers in the Movement. In a number of his public declarations, Mousavi warned activists of the movement to involve foreign powers in the Iranian affairs. Hillary Clinton mentioned in an interview in October 26, 2011, that the leaders of the Green Movement were against US support. She compared Iran and Libyan protest and said: when the Libyan began their protest, they said: we want all the support we can get from the world, but it was different in Iran. The leaders of the Green Movement did not want our help.(US.Department, 2011)

Although exchange of information in the Green Movement was happening in the virtual world its consequences were real street protests. The conservatives in power could have allowed internet activity if it did not play a political role in Iran. However, the obvious relations established between mass street demonstrations and the social networks led the conservatives to crackdown both. Within few days hundreds of journalist, activist and ordinary citizen participating in the street demonstrations were arrested, tortured and jailed. Many were shot to death in the streets of Tehran. The story of a young female student Neda Agha-Soltan who was shot to death in the street of Tehran became an international news sensation since the video of the event was taken by a cell phone and uploaded on You Tube and then broadcasted by international TV stations. As soon as “Nada” became a symbol of the Green Movement, Iranian government tried to distort the event. While the government was claiming that Neda was a victim of a plot carried out by Western powers, out of fear of a popular commemoration it prevented Neda’s family to hold a funeral for their daughter. As a response, Karroubi, one of the leaders of the movement, used Facebook to encourage people to hold a public funeral for Neda. *“The hashtag (#) “Neda” become a trending topic on Twitter by the end of the day. When the regime prohibited Neda's family from holding a public funeral, Karroubi used a Facebook posting to call for public mourning of the young woman.”*(Elson et al., 2012,p.18)

While it was blocking the social networks and jamming satellite televisions, the government used extreme violence on the streets to curb the situation. It reduced the internet speed, expelled international journalists, arrested Iranian activists and journalists and shut down reformist newspapers. In the end the Iranian government issued the house arrest of the protest leaders, Mousavi and Karroubi. The enormous pressure imposed on the leaders of the Green Movement and the violence exerted against the movement’s activists by the government extinguished the movement for more than two years, from February 2010 to the

presidential election in June 2013. Four years after the disputed presidential election in 2009, the 2013 presidential election became once more a hot issue in Iran. Through social networks supporters of Hassan Rouhani presented him to the public as a reformist candidate who aimed to challenge the conservative forces that had supported the crackdown of the Green Movement. They constructed the scene of the presidential campaign as a struggle between advocates of democracy, reform and the Green Movement against the defenders of status quo. This strategy was effective and resulted in the election of Rouhani as Iran's new president. Once again, social network became victorious in its battle against the state media that was trying to erase voices that challenged the power of unelected institutions monopolized by conservative forces. However, despite their successful challenge to state media in Iran, social network can neither replace mass media nor is able to change the political system or its behavior. Activities in social network are useful, but activities in front of the screen of a laptop can never replace activities on the street. As the experience with the Green Movement has shown, the people who left the street to escape government violence could not continue the movement in the comfort of their home and in front of their computer screen. Green Movement began to disappear from the streets, when its advocates started to report about street demonstrations without further verification. While citizen journalism emerged as a series of efforts to use social networks to speak truth to power, fabrication of stories about the Green Movement and its presence in the streets worked against the very notion of citizen journalism. For some analysts; *“Social media may have provided the informational sources to do so, but not the force to counter the Basij’s street violence.”* *Meanwhile, those who believe Twitter and other social network technologies will enable ordinary people to seize power from repressive regimes should consider the fate of Iran’s protestors, some of whom paid for their enthusiastic adoption of Twitter with their lives.”* (Burns and Eltham, 2009,p:306) The most important question regarding social networks is not whether they can overthrow a dictatorial regime, but to what extent do they represent an alternative democratic public sphere. A public sphere can be called democratic if it is shaped by political forces that remain true to democratic principles and will make an impact on political reality through peaceful political actions. In the case of the Green Movement, there occurred physical assault of security forces by demonstrators in the last street demonstrations. The violence exercised against security forces indicated inability of the social networks to prevent violence exercise by the activists of the Green Movement. The social networks failed as well to condemn the violent actions perpetrated by Green Movement activists against security forces. In failing to prevent or condemn the violence

exerted by prodemocracy activists the social networks lost the credibility they have been establishing during the Green Movement as a democratic and peaceful alternative public sphere that considers all citizens as equal and is based exclusively on rational arguments and peaceful actions.

5.4.1 Key players in the Green Movement

The Green Movement was a spontaneous and non-violent protest against the official results of the 2009 presidential election. The protesters argued that the election was rigged and their votes stolen. The first street demonstration, took place on June 15, 2009. The demonstrators demonstrated in total silence. According to Tehran's Mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, three million people participated in the first demonstration.(Hashemi and Postel, 2010,p:265) Despite the tough reaction of security forces to the subsequent demonstrations the Green Movement activists remained peaceful. The Green Movement called into question the legality of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's reelection as Iran's president. Ahmadinejad belonged to the conservative faction in the Iranian political system. The conservative faction in general and Ahmadinejad in particular had the support of Iran's supreme leader. With the backing of Iran's leader the conservative faction controlled almost all state institutions including Iran's judiciary system and security forces. In addition to state media which broadcasted false information to discredit the Green Movement's activists and leaders, conservative forces in Iran used the judiciary system and security forces and every legal and illegal means to suppress and control the Movement. Denied of access to mass media, the leaders of the movement, Mousavi and Karroubi, used social networks and SMSs to communicate with their supporters.

There are a number of political figures who played a role in the Green Movement. Some defended the Movement while others opposed it. Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Mir Hussein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi are important political figures who opposed or advocated the Movement. Ayatollah Khamenei has been Iran's supreme leader since 1989. He became Iran's leader after Ayatollah Khomeini's death. Khomeini was one of the main founders of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its leader for 10 years from 1979 to 1989. Khamenei was Iran's president for 8 years from 1989 to 1989. According to the Iranian constitution Iran's leader is the highest political and military authority in the country. (IranChamber, 2013b)Iran's leader has the authority to

appoint members and heads of different powerful state institutions such the Guardian Council of the Constitution , Judicial system, Expediency Council, the Revolutionary Guard, and state owned Radio and Television (IRIB) and two main state owned newspapers such as Keyhan and Etele'at and a number of other social and economic organizations. By giving the Guardian Council the authority to disqualify a great number of prodemocracy and reform oriented candidates in every parliament, presidential and Assembly of Expert elections, Iran's leader interferes in the Iranian elections. Many Iranians understood Khamenei's unconditional support for Ahmadinejad and his full approval of the dubious election as indications of his complicity in the rigged presidential election.(Elson et al., 2012,p30)

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was Iran's president from 2005 to 2013. He introduced himself to the electorates as a believer in the principles of the Islamic Revolution. During Ahmadinejad's first four years in office conservative forces used the term Asoulgara (principalist) as their marker.(khabar, 2013a) The conservatives had never been satisfied with being labeled as conservative by their prodemocracy and reform oriented opponents. Ahmadinejad claimed that he wanted to lead the country in the way the humble Prime Minister Rajaiy 1980-1981 did. He wore inexpensive and simple clothes similar to the revolutionary Rajaiy. In response to the question that his appearance did not look like a president Ahmadinejad responded by saying that he did not need the appearance of a president since he wanted to become people's servant. (Khabar, 2013b) Ahmadinejad criticized corrupt politicians who lived luxurious life while millions of poor people were in daily struggle to have food on the table. By corrupt politicians he meant politicians who supported political reforms in Iran.(Donyaeeghtesad, 2006,P.2) Ahmadinejad got the support of rural areas and urban lower classes as well as many fierce critics of the Iranian political system. Millions of people who voted for Ahmadinejad in 2005 did not know that he belonged to the most conservative part of the conservative faction in the Iranian political system. Ahmadinejad was criticized during his first term in office for his foreign and economic policy as well as his approach towards independent media and freedom of speech. *"Ahmadinejad is fiercely opposed to the reformist socio-political agenda and, by extension, the Green Movement.*(Elson et al., 2012,p.30) That is why Ahmadinejad become the main target of the 2009 street protests in the early days of the Green Movement. Thanks to the support of the leader he became Iran's president for the second term in office in 2009. However, at the end of his second term in office Ahmadinejad lost the support of the leader because of their disagreements on a number of issues. The most significant disputed issue between Khamenei and Ahmadinejad was their disagreement on whether Ahmadinejad had

the authority to dismiss his Intelligence Minister or not. The dispute emerged when Ahmadinejad dismissed his Intelligent Minister and Iran's leader who detested Ahmadinejad's decision and ordered the Minister to remain in his position.

Mir Hussein Mousavi was Iran's Prime Minister during Iran- Iraq war, from 1981 to 1989. Though he had been a member of the Expediency Council since 1989, Mousavi was almost invisible in the Iranian political scene. He never gave an interview and had never expressed his political views during these years. He worked as university teacher and became known for his painting and architectures during this period. While Mousavi was invited by former president Mohammad Khatami to declare his candidacy for the 2009 presidential election he refrained from the idea. However, soon after, Khatami declared his own candidacy with immense support of the prodemocracy and reform oriented forces, Mousavi entered the presidential race as an independent candidate who belonged as he claimed to both political factions. Thus he called himself a *reform oriented principalist* (Asulgaray-e Eslahtalab). What distinguished Mousavi from all other presidential candidates was the way he treated his wife; as an equal partner. Unlike all other presidential candidates he had always his wife beside him in presidential campaigns. Despite his supporters protests Khatami withdrew his candidacy as soon as Mousavi entered the presidential race. Khatami stood behind Mousavi with full force and urged his supporters to support Mousavi. Thanks to Khatami's backing Mousavi received enormous popular support during his presidential campaign. Flags with green color that symbolized Mousavi's presidential campaign were distributed in Millions throughout Iran and his meetings were the most crowded political meetings. This led him and his supporters to expect an easy electoral victory over his main rival Ahmadinejad.

The reform oriented Mehdi Karroubi was Iran's parliament spokesperson from 1989 to 1992 and from 2000 to 2004. Karroubi became presidential candidate in 2009 for the second time. The first time he became a presidential candidate was 2005. With about five million votes in 2005 presidential election Karroubi became third in the first round of the election. With only few hundred thousand votes more than Karroubi, Ahmadinejad succeeded to go to runoff election to beat Hashemi Rafsanjani. Karroubi accused security forces for rigging the election in Ahmadinejad's favor. Karroubi claimed that if the election was fair he would have gone to runoff election. When he was offered membership in the Expediency Council by Iran's leader he rejected the offer. After his electoral defeat in 2005, Karroubi established a political party called Etemad-e Meli (national confidence) that was represented by a newspaper with the same name. He entered the 2009 presidential race with the support

of his political party. According to the official results of the election no more than few hundred thousand electorates voted for Karroubi. He interpreted official results and especially the number of his own votes as clear signs of the electoral fraud in the 2009 presidential election. Yet, despite of the small number of the votes he received, according to the official results of the election, Karroubi became one of the two main leaders of the Green Movement. As a result his party and its newspaper were banned and he was put under house arrest in 2010. There were expectations, after Rouhani's election as Iran's president, that Karroubi, Mousavi would be released. These expectations have not yet been met.

5.4.2 The chain of events in the Green Movement

The Green movement was the first major political movement that seriously challenged the Islamic Republic after its establishment in 1979. There were at least 9 months of continuous street protests in Iran in 2009. Many street protest participants belonged to the generation of Iranians born after the Islamic revolution. On the one hand, they were young and educated and they were able to use new communication technology in their preparation for political protests on the street. On the other hand, they could use this same technology to represent of their political protests to the outside world. These young Iranians learned how to act both as political activists on the streets and as journalists in representing their political activities to the world. The concept of citizen journalist emerged as a combination of activism and journalism in the Green Movement. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that despite differences between the Green Movement and the Arab Spring citizen journalism that was born in the former was repeated in the latter.

Now that I have discussed the role of the political figures that represented the two rival groups in the Green Movement, I would like to say a few words on the chain of events that shaped the Movement.

Where is my vote?

On June 13, few hours after the official announcement of results of the 2009 presidential election, at least three millions of Tehran's residents poured to the streets and demonstrated their disapproval of the election results. Tens of thousands of people demonstrated in several other big cities for the same cause and on the same day. The main demand that the demonstrators put forward, was "where is my vote?" The demonstrators did not chant any slogan against the Iranian political system nor against its leader Khamenei as it was the case

in the Arab Spring. The demonstrators did not chant the main slogan of the demonstration. They walked in total silence while carrying banners of “where is my vote?” In the following day students of different universities throughout Iran organized daily protests inside university campuses. While street demonstrations and student demonstrations were in full force, security forces used excessive violence to curb demonstrations. They arrested at the same time a great number of reform oriented political figures, journalists, activists, and academics. *“By June 16, 120 lecturers at the University of Tehran had also resigned in protest. Mousavi called for a day of mourning on June 18, and massive mourning rallies—reminiscent of those held in 1979 during the Islamic Revolution—took place as Iranians honored dead countrymen as martyrs.”*(Elson et al., 2012,p.18) It was for the first time after the Islamic Revolutions that the call for protest against the government was responded to by ordinary people. On June 18, another mass demonstration took place in Tehran. The demonstration stretched 10 km from Emam Hussein square to Azadi square. Mousavi held a short speech in the demonstration and encouraged people to continue their protests until those in power responded to their democratic demand. At the end of the demonstration Basiji militia shot and killed a number of demonstrators.

Khamenei speech

The mass demonstrations in Tehran with their clear demand of annulling the election results forced Iran’s leader to respond to the demand. Iran’s supreme leader scheduled to hold a speech On June 19, in the first Friday prayer after the presidential election.(Keyhan, 2009,p.1) People who were dissatisfied with the election results expected his impartial meddling in the dispute. However, he did not respond to the popular expectations. Khamenei not only approved the election results in favor of Ahmadinejad but also declared his ideological and political affinity with him as a person. While declaring his affiliation with Ahmadinejad, he criticized the leader of the Green Movement for disregarding the legal procedures that can be used in electoral disputes. Yet his defense of legal procedures in electoral disputes did not prevent him to declare that the election was free and fair and no complain regardless of its magnitude could reverse the election results. Khamenei warned the leaders of the Green Movement to distance themselves from foreign powers that support street demonstrations in order to spread chaos and disorder in Iran. His final words in the speech were that he would crackdown any attempt that could cause anarchy and disorder in Iran.(Khamenei, 2009) After the leader’s ultimatum security forces became more violent in their dealing with the demonstrations. A direct result of Khamenei speech was that instead

of Ahmadinejad who had been blamed for the rigged election Iran's leader became the target of street protests. Since he failed to remain impartial in the dispute between demonstrators and the Ahmadinejad government, Iran's leader became the new target of the street demonstrations.

Tragic death of Neda Agha-Soltan

On June 20, a young Iranian woman, Neda Agha-Soltan was shot and killed in a street demonstration in Tehran. The video of the event which was recorded with the cell phone of a citizen journalist was broadcasted by international television channels and social networks all over the world. The video of tragic death of Neda not only exposed the violence exerted by the Iranian government against peaceful demonstrations but also revealed the significance of citizen journalists in shaping public opinion both on a national and on an international levels. In order to escape the responsibility it had in the event, the Iranian government accused foreign elements of the killing of Neda. However, many eyewitnesses claimed that she was killed by a member of the Basij militia.(Ghazi, 2011)

Mass trials

On 1st August 2009, Iranian government started to broadcast mass trials on state television. During the mass trials hundreds of reform oriented politicians, journalists, political activists were accused of disruption of public order, damaging public properties, attacking Basij militia. Active members of social networks were accused of broadcasting photos of street demonstrations that were used by foreign media in their propaganda against the Islamic Republic. (Etemad, 2009,p.1) in order to substantiate the accusations many defendants were forced to confess that they were part of a larger conspiracy called "Soft Revolutions" against the pillars of the political system.(FarsNews, 2009a) Iranian conservatives who dominate state institutions in Iran call their own institutions the pillars of the Iranian political system. Iran's leader is considered by conservative forces as the most important pillar of the system. While some of the defendants were released many others were sentenced to jail. Many Iranian activists and journalists who experienced mass trials revealed frightening aspects of the televised trials after taking refuge in Western countries.(Bahari, 2012)

Quads day

After the victory of the Islamic revolution Ayatollah Khomeini's declared the last Friday of Ramadan month in the Islamic calendar, Quads day. Quads day was meant to promote

Muslims around the world towards a united front to liberate Palestine. Since the 1979 revolution anti- Israeli demonstrations have been held in the Quads days throughout Iran. September 18, 2009 was the first Quads day, after the outbreak of the Green Movement. The former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani was scheduled to be the main speaker of the Quads. Rafsanjani had openly defended the demands of the street protesters since the outbreak of the Green Movement. Hundreds of thousands of Green Movement supporters and activists gathered around the University of Tehran to listen to Rafsanjani. Rafsanjani argued in his speech that the people demonstrating in the streets had legitimate demands since their demands were nothing more than what the Islamic Republic had promised since its establishment in 1979. Since this Quads speech which was his last public speech Rafsanjani has become one of the most popular political figures in Iran. As a result he has not been allowed to speak in the Friday prayers. He was replaced by hard line conservative clerics such as Ahmad Khatami.(FarsNews, 2009b) Many demonstrators were beaten and arrested before and after Rafsanjani's speech, yet advocates of the Green Movement participated in large demonstrations throughout Tehran. Demonstrators chanted slogans such as "Leave Palestine, think about us". The slogan was meant to expose the contradiction within Iranian government's words regarding liberation of Palestinians and its deeds against freedom of Iranian people. *"The Quads Day protests were among the last of the truly large-scale opposition protests after the election. In their aftermath, the government took steps to intensify pressure on the opposition movement and stamp out the demonstrations."*(Elson et al., 2012,p.19)

Ashoura day

Ashoura is a very important day in the Shia tradition. Shia people mourn over the martyrdom of Imamam Hussein, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad, his friends and family. In a bloody battle that took place in October 680, Hussein and his family and friends were brutally killed by the military forces that represented Yazid the second Khalif of the Umayyad dynasty. On December 27 on the day of Ashoura in 2009, Mousavi, the main leader of the Green Movement invited Iranian people to mourn over both the martyrs of Ashoura and the martyrs of the Green Movement. *"The rallies held that day were the largest, and also the bloodiest, since those held right after the election. Tens of thousands of opposition protestors took to the streets, resulting in several violent confrontations."* (Elson et al., 2012,p.20) For the first time, on the day of Ashoura, the demonstrators used the same language that the Iranian government had been using since the eruption of the Green

Movement to communicate with the activists of the Movements, the language of violence. They attacked and burned police cars and physically assaulted many members of the security forces. The demonstration resulted in 9 dead, many injured and arrested of demonstrators. The day after the event state mass media called the Ashoura demonstration adeseccration of the sanctity of Imam Hussein and called the leaders of the Green Movement, as mischief elements who should be punished relentlessly.

Witnesses were reporting to international news agencies that *“the sounds of gunfire in Tehran last night after a day in which at least five protesters in the city were killed and many more injured in the most violent clashes between opposition supporters and security forces in months. Four more were killed in the northern city of Tabriz, a stronghold of the reformist leader, Mir Hussein Mousavi, whose nephew was among those reportedly shot dead in Tehran.”* (Guardian, 2009)A couple of days after the event, the judiciary system claimed that *“eleven defendants were accused of ‘waging war against’ God” and being ‘corrupt on earth’ - both crimes punishable by death under the Iranian legal system. Two defendants were executed on January 28,2009”* (Hamshahri, 2010)After the unprecedented exertion of violence on the day of Ashoura and the threat expressed by the police force in Tehran that they would crash future demonstration even harsher the Green Movement activists left the street and used their entire effort to continue their political activities on social networks. For more than two years the Green Movement had no appearance on the streets. It seemed to external observers that the Iranian government succeeded to quelling the Green Movement.(Bastani, 2012)However, the 2013 presidential campaign proved that the prodemocracy movement in Iran may change its tactics but remains true to its goals. The color of the prodemocracy movement was changed from green to violet. Violet represented Rouhani’s presidential campaign. In support of Rouhani and his democratic platform former activists of the Green Movement together with other prodemocracy activists carried violet flags and banners and wore violet clothes. This indicated that the name of the prodemocracy movement in Iran may change but its contents will never be altered.

5.4.3 Re-emergence of the Green Movement

The Green Movement reemerged in support of Rouhani’s candidacy In 2013 when Iran was under political and economic sanctions imposed by the US, UN and EU. The sanctions are meant to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. The sanctions caused economic hardship in Iran. *“According to Iran’s oil minister, energy exports have declined by 40%.*

The Iranian government has reported an inflation rate of 30%, although some economists claim it is much higher. Iran's currency, the rial, lost 80% of its value in 2012 alone."(Nader, 2013,p.4) Rouhani started his presidential campaign, while Iranians were experiencing economic hardship caused by international sanctions and students, journalists, academics, political activists were experiencing political repression and a lack of freedom expression and assembly. The leaders of the Green Movement were still under house arrest, many political activists and journalists were still in jail and many others had fled the country. It was in the circumstances of political despair that the 2013 presidential election campaigns started. It seems that Iran's leaders understood the depth of the disastrous political and economic situation in Iran. A few months before the election, Iran's supreme leader started to give assurances to the Iranian people that he would respect their votes in the coming election. (Nader, 2013,p:1)Iran's leader knew that in order to deal with political isolation and economic sanction, Iran needed a government with popular support. However, his assurances regarding the fairness of the 2013 presidential election neither prevented his followers in the security forces to force former president Mohammad Khatami to refrain from candidacy nor troubled his appointees in the Guardian Council to disqualify Rafsanjani as a presidential candidate. (Nader, 2013,p:3) It seems that while Iran's leader understood the urgency of a popular government in Iran he would not allow political figures such as Rafsanjani and Khatami who were known for their sympathy towards the Green Movement to become Iran's president.(Mardomsalari, 2013,P.1)

A few months before the 2013 presidential election public opinion reacted with indifference to the election while radical elements within the Green Movement argued for boycotting the election. The radicals within the Green Movement argued that those who were going to hold the presidential election should not be trusted since they were the same people who held the previous rigged presidential election. Boycott of the presidential election was the motto of the social networks for many months before the election.

In the beginning, the number of social network users who encouraged others to participate in the election was very small but it suddenly changed when Rafsanjani and Khatami gave their support to Rouhani's candidacy. The reason Rouhani rose from the least hopeful to the most hopeful presidential candidate only few days before the election indicates the lasting impact of the Green Movement on Iranian politics. There were political figures whose sympathy with the Green Movement helped them to restore or kept their popularity. While Rafsanjani restored his political image among Iranians with the understanding he showed towards the

Green Movement, Khatami kept and even increased his popularity by supporting the leaders of the Movement and by establishing close connections with ordinary people who had been suffering during the Movement. Although Khatami has never used the term the Green Movement he supported families of those killed in the Movement and defended the imprisoned activists of the Movement.

In fact, there were two presidential candidates who sought the support of the advocates of the Green Movement despite the fact that they had never supported the Movement. Rouhani, and Mohammad Reza Aref were presidential candidate who tried to get the support of the prodemocracy forces and advocates of the Green Movement. Few days before the presidential election Khatami and Rafsanjani who represented prodemocracy forces in Iran argued that in order to increase the chances of an electoral victory for the prodemocracy movement one of the candidates should withdraw his candidacy. The members of the social networks supported the idea and they played an important role in this regard. Many in the social network argued that Rouhani had more chance to become Iran's next elected president than the less charismatic candidate Aref.

With Khatami and Rafsanjani's backing Rouhani represented the prodemocracy movement in Iran. In fact there was little difference between Rouhani and Mousavi's political platform. The difference between the two candidates was only the color of their presidential campaigns. The prodemocracy movement in Iran replaced Green with Violet as the color of its new campaign. As a result, social networks became violet in the 2013 presidential campaign. In fact the number of members on social networks multiplied from 2009 to 2013, and many members of violet social networks were not active in Green social networks. However, violet social networks included many members who supported Mousavi four years ago. Violet social networks used the networks to persuade people who were either reluctant to participate in the election or had decided to boycott the election. Rouhani supporters argued that the election was an opportunity for prodemocracy forces to demonstrate their popular backing to the conservatives and imprint their own signature on the election. They argued on social networks that the only way to imprint such a signature was to vote for Rouhani and his platform for change.

Unlike the previous presidential election, the results of the election were not announced on the next morning after the election. The delay in announcing the results of the election caused rumors about election frauds. However, regardless of what happened in corridors of

power in Iran, Rouhani become Iran's 7th president. "Mr. Rouhani called his victory, "victory of moderation over extremism".(Bahar, 2013,p.2)

As president Rouhani has to deal with many internal and external challenges. The most serious external challenge is his negotiations with world powers on the fate of Iran's nuclear program. In negotiations on Iran's nuclear program held in Geneva in November 2013 Iran was close to a deal with the world powers. However, French foreign Minister, Laurent Fabius worked against the deal which he succeeded to preventing it.(Kazemzadeh, 2013,p.8) on the next day Iranians active in the social networks targeted the twitter and facebook account of Fabius with relentless criticism.(Iran, 2013,p.3) Regarding internal challenges, Rouhani has to deliver the promises he made in his presidential campaign. Improvement of the economic situation and release of political prisoners are on top of the promises Rouhani made in his presidential campaigns. Since his election, Rouhani repeats his campaign slogan "moderation and wisdom". The slogan has become more popular in the social networks and it's different aspects has been discussed to promote democracy and human rights.

5.4.4 Green Movement and Arab Spring: differences and similarities

There is a popular joke in Egypt that expresses the status of social networks in the Middle East.

Hosni Mubarak, Anwar Sadat, and Gamal Abdel Nasser are having tea in the afterlife. Mubarak asks Nasser "How did you end up here?" "Poison" Nasser answers. Mubarak then turns to Sadat. "What about you?" he asks. "An assassin's "bullet," Sadat says. Sadat and Nasser then turn to Mubarak, "and you?" To which Mubarak replies: "Facebook." (Lim, 2012,p.231)

Although the joke is constructed by humorous Egyptians, the information transmitted by the joke is true. What the joke does not tell us is that neither Nasser nor Sadat regimes were overthrown. They represented a political regime that continued with Mubarak until he was overthrown. Mubarak kept his life but saw his own fall. While according to the joke particular individuals caused the death of previous heads of the Egyptian state, Mubarak's overthrow was caused by social networks. People immersed in the social networks would say that the current dictators in the Middle East consider Facebook as a deadlier device compared than poison or bullets. However, the uncertainty in Tunisia, chaos in Libya, Yemen, mass killings in Syria, the deadly coup in Egypt, and survival of the Bahraini

kingdom despite its brutality, indicate that social networks may cause protest in the Middle East but they cannot bring democracy to this region.

Despite the similarities between the Green Movement and the Arab Spring with regard to the use of social networks to publicize information about political demonstrations there are differences between these two events. For several months since its emergence in June 2009 the Green Movement was on top of the international news and it was widely debated in social networks around the world. Arab users of social networks had certainly noticed the event and became familiar with the impact of Facebook in the event. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that there were Egyptian Facebook users who were familiar with the role that Facebook played in the Green Movement. Thus the Facebook users with their awareness of the political role of this particular social network initiated, propagated and organized street protests which lead to overthrow of the Mubarak regime. Certainly, the political uprising against Mubarak regime is understood within a chain of events that started with political protests in Tunisia in December 2010. However, analysts have not associated the Tunisian uprising with the social network in the way they have associated the Egyptian uprising with it. According to Egyptian journalist, Maryam Ishani; inspired by the Iranian experience in the Green Movement, activist in Egypt used the advantages of social networks to promote their protests. Even before the Arab spring Egyptian members of Facebook reflected on the Green Movement and discussed its weaknesses. *“They built on best practices and addressed the glaring weaknesses of the Iranian grassroots opposition movement.”*(Ishani, 2011,p.1)

The main similarity between the Green Movement and the Arab Spring is their use of modern communications technology. Activists in the Green Movement and in the Arab spring used social networks as tools of communication between citizens in order to challenge those in power. In both cases citizens communicated with each other and formed a mobilizing mechanism that escaped the controlling mechanisms of their governments. In the case of Egypt thousands of social network activists transmitted the information related to the uprising to the people via social networks and prepared them for street demonstrations. The Egyptian uprising had two important interconnected aspects: cyber social network as well as Al-Tahrir square. *“It is an over simplification to frame the Egyptian revolt exclusively as either a Facebook revolution or a people’s revolution. People and social media are not detached from each other.”*(Lim, 2012,p.232) True, in the course of the Arab Spring several Arab dictators were overthrown. Yet the social networks played only a decisive role in

overthrowing the Egyptian dictator. In addition to the role of social networks in Iran's Green Movement and in the Egyptian uprising, the two political movements have been evaluated with regard to their achievements. It is claimed for instance that while the Egyptians were successful in overthrowing their dictator, Iranians failed to do the same. The main problem with this comparison is that Iranians did not aim to overthrow a dictator or those in power. They simply put forward a specific democratic demand: rejection of the official results of 2009 presidential election and calls for a new election. The fact that they did not succeed to achieve their goal instantly does not mean that they did not contribute to democratization of the way elections are held in Iran. Iranian leader's recognition of the rights of the majority in the 2013 presidential election is an indication of the democratic contribution of the Green Movement. But the question why Iranian street demonstrations could not achieve immediate victories does not have a flawless answer since the question needs further elaboration. *"The natures of the riots, the protesters' demands and the dynamics of the discourse have been vastly different in the two cases."*(Amuzegar, 2012,p.35)

The natures of the riots:

The main targets of the popular revolt in the Arab countries were dictatorial regimes. The regimes of these countries symbolized by their leaders were identified as the real causes behind unemployment, poverty, corruption, high inflation and social and political inequality in these countries. In Iran, on the contrary, despite the presence of all of these economic problems, Iranians participated in the political protests known as the Green Movement to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with a rigged presidential election and electoral fraud. (Amuzegar, 2012,p.35) The protesters in Iran did not aim to change the political regime in Iran. They aimed to make it more democratic. Iranian protesters targeted Iran's leader after his support to Ahmadinejad and the brutal way they had been treated by security forces. They did not target the political regime in their street demonstrations. We should keep in mind that despite their criticism of undemocratic practices of state institutions in Iran, the leaders of the Green Movement such as Mousavi and Karroubi defended the Iranian political system and valued its democratic nature. (Abtahi, 2010)They claimed that the system was democratic but that it had become corrupted by dictatorial practices exercised by elements within the system that have lost their faith in the democratic promises of the 1979 revolution.

The leaders of the Green Movement believed that with active participation of Iranian citizens in politics the Islamic Republic had the capacity to reform and democratize itself. They saw the Green Movement as an opportunity for the Islamic Republic to renew itself provided that it recognized the democratic involvement of citizens in politics. While the main slogan in the Arab Spring was ‘the people want to bring down the regime’, in the Green Movement the main slogan was ‘where is my vote?’ Another difference between the Green Movement and the Arab Spring was that while the former was associated with its two main leaders, the latter movement lacked such leaders. In the Arab Spring the unemployed youth and the frustrated middle class, started spontaneous protests in the streets of Egypt. In the absence of political leaders Egyptian people organized their demonstrations and initiated their slogans via social networks. This means when the protesters started to chant the slogan ‘the people want to bring down the regime’ they were only certain of what they opposed not what other goals they wished to achieve. It seems that the Egyptian people saw the regime and Mubarak as one and the same thing. This is why when the Egyptian military forced Mubarak to resign many believed that the revolution succeeds to topple the regime in Egypt.(Aljazeera, 2011) However, the post-Mubarak events and the 2013 military coup tell us that despite its short period of tolerance for an elected president, Mohammad Morsi, the political regime in Egypt remained unchanged. On the contrary the Green Movement had no ambition to change the political regime in Iran. The Green Movement was an endeavor to force the leaders of the Islamic Republic to remain true to the Republic’s constitutional promises which they believed were democratic promises. *“These "opposition" leaders did not push for the theocracy's downfall. They wanted, in fact, to go back to Ayatollah Khomeini's "golden era," his "true teachings" and a strict observance of Iran's Islamic constitution.”* (Amuzegar, 2012,p.35)

Protesters behavior:

Another difference between the Green Movement and the Arab Spring was the reactions of protesters in each country to the way their political systems dealt with the political protests. When Iranian government’s put extreme pressure on the protesters, the protesters left the streets and took refuge on social networks to continue their political protests. On the contrary, in Egypt, as the Egyptian regime increased its pressure the protests became more consolidated and intensified. In Egypt protesters occupied Al-Tahrir square and stayed there until they got what they wanted; Mubarak’s overthrow.

Negative collective memory:

Iranians memory of violence in the 1979 Islamic Revolution and in the post-revolutionary political disputes that resulted in thousands death made them fearful of radicalization of the Green Movement. Although I cannot claim that I have a first-hand experience of the Green Movement, I observed the event in its different stages at close range. I have registered in my observation of the Green Movement that many parents who had experienced the Islamic Revolution participated with their young children in the first street demonstrations that shaped the Green Movement. These parents became alerted when they saw the increase of violence in the demonstrations. Regardless of who did exert violence in the street demonstration, parents tried to prevent their children to take part in the demonstrations. The argument was simple; they did not want their children to be part of another revolution since as they argued revolutions would bring more violence and disappointments. They substantiated their argument with the disappointments they experienced with the Islamic Revolution and its many unfulfilled promises. In general, Iranian protesters would refrain from bloody confrontations. They preferred peaceful protest to fill the gap between the protesters and the Basiji Militia who hunted them in the streets.(Kaleme, 2009)

Planned for using digital tools:

Most of the videos on the Green Movement uploaded on the internet that were shared by members of social networks were taken by cell phones. They were too shaky and vague to be broadcasted by international news media. This fact indicated the amateurish nature of the activity of citizen journalists in Iran. However, citizen journalism involved in Egypt's uprising, it seems, started with individuals who been trained by professionals. According to Ishani's report, in early 2010, a small group of Egyptians traveled to USA for media training. The focus of the training was video reporting. They were trained as part of the support that the US state department had been giving to nongovernmental organizations (NGO). The main courses were about basic camera operation, steady shooting, and how to use audio recording devices. In September 2010 the group went back to Egypt to provide media-skills training to members of the April 6 movement. “ *The goal was to prepare the movement's media wing to operate under intense pressure from national security forces during planned protests leading up to the November election.*”(Ishani, 2011,p.2) The training program took place in cities such as Aswan, Alexandria and Port Said.

Thus the trained Egyptians citizen journalists could use not only their camera but also the social network in general to promote and support street protests. From the fact that the Egyptian citizen journalists were trained by the US state department we should not come to the conclusion that they were trained to overthrow Mubarak. We can conclude as well that the citizen journalists of the Egyptian uprising were the unintended effect of a program initiated by the US state department to promote human rights and democracy in Egypt. They were probably trained to document abuse of human rights and organize non-governmental organization to empower civil-society as a precondition of democratization in Egypt. However, with the eruption of the uprising in Egypt those trained to document abuse of human rights and promote democracy seized the opportunity to participate and document the real struggle for democracy in Egypt. Thus they used their skill to serve the cause of the uprising that was Mubarak's overthrow. Here we can find the difference, as Ishani argues, between the Iranian and the Egyptian situation regarding citizen journalism. Contrary to Egyptian citizen journalists Iranian citizen journalists were ordinary people who had no teacher, no training and were not part of a larger plan formulated by a major world power such as the US. Iranian citizen journalists were self-taught individuals who used the new communication technology, which they had been using to pursue their private interests, to defend political rights of all citizens in a new political situation.

5.4.5 Selected interviews with Iranian journalist and activists

I interviewed a number of Iranian journalists and activists during my stay in Tehran in December-January 2012-2013. They were all members of social networks. They had their Facebook, twitter and weblog in which they reflect on their personal experiences and on issues of public concern. At a personal level, they post their reflections on the last movie and the theatre piece they have seen, on the last bit of music they have listened, on the last book they have read, on their last goodbye to a loved one, on the last time they enjoyed life in its fullness and so on. They post pictures and videos to share their experience with their network of friends, colleagues and relatives. At the public level they express their concern over the economic and political challenges that Iran is facing. They share their views on abuse of political power. At the public level, Facebook, twitter, and blog have become an alternative public sphere for discussing serious political and social subjects. I give a summary of my interviews with Iranian journalists and activists in the following pages. Then I discuss

important moments which occur in the interviews regarding the role of social network in general and Facebook in particular as a public sphere in the Green Movement.

Hamidreza is a young journalist who works for a reformist newspaper. He is a member of Facebook and Google+ in which he is connected to 300 friends. He is also a member of a Facebook journalist page in which he publishes “whatever he likes”, but whatever he likes must go through his self-censorship. He claims that “Facebook cannot be considered as a media. However, it is a good device through which people share news and information about the political situation. Despite the fact that Facebook contributed to mass mobilization in the Green Movement, I do not think it can influence public opinion in the way mass media does.” According to the crowd theory by Gustave Le Bon, when a group of people from different gender , nationalities and professions gather together in a public place accidentally and without organization and express their immediate emotions they form a crowd.(Bon, 2009) By referring to Le Bon’s conceptualization of crowd, Hamidreza tries to make a point regarding anonymity and outburst of emotions, irrationality and immediacy of a crowd. Does he mean that social networks should function as a public place for anonymous people who express their true opinion and outburst of emotions? Hamidreza claims that “I am using self-censorship to protect my safety from the abuse of security forces. Since I use my real name and post my photos in my Facebook page, I have never published those political views that I sincerely believe on social networks. My profile on Facebook makes it easy for cyber police to recognize me and arrest me. I prefer to publish my critical views of the government anonymously.” For Hamidreza claims that Facebook is not a safe place for political activity since it is monitored by the government. According to Hamidreza many members of Iran’s security services have become members of Facebook in order to penetrate networks and to report the cyber police. Despite his cautious approach to Facebook, Hamidreza considers Facebook “As a new opportunity for transmission of information and news. He believes that it is good to see that everyone shares news, videos and audios with many friends by one click. I think in countries with limited freedom of expression social networks can make a significant contribution to the expansion of the domain of freedom of expression.” At the end of the interview Hamidreza confesses that he has an anonymous Facebook page to bypass government monitoring in which he has more than 500 followers and in which he criticizes political, social and cultural conditions in Iran.

Zahra is an experienced journalist who has been working for a number of newspapers and magazines since the early 2000s. She has her own Facebook page through which she is

connected with 289 friends. She says that she spends more than 3 hours on Facebook every day. She was active on Facebook during the Green Movement. She claims that: “During the Green Movement I worked near Enghelab square where most demonstrations took place. Most of the time the government cut the telecommunication services in the area. As a result Facebook became the only tool to transmit news and information that were related to the Movement. Thanks to anti-filters I was linked to Facebook where I wrote about my daily observation of street demonstrations around the Enghelab square and answered questions raised by my friends about the situation. I informed them whether the time for a street demonstration was ready or not. It tried to make sense of the arrangements and density of security forces or the intensity of violence when a small demonstration erupted in the area. I became for my friends and families an exclusive Green Movement reporter based at the center of events, in the Enghelab square. Sometimes I wrote about street demonstrations while I was watching the event on the street from my office window. I consider those days as the greatest experience of my life and that great experience became possible through the internet. The internet enabled me to use social network as a powerful media to be connected with the world.”

Zahra talks as well about how she was immersed in the exciting and joyous atmosphere that the Green Movement had created. “In the early days of the Green movement I did not care about my safety, I considered myself as a journalist and a Green protester who had a responsibility to report what was happening in Iran. However, after the arrest and prosecution of a number of my friends for their Facebook activity, I realized that Facebook was not safe anymore. Yet I continued to report about the events that were related to the Green Movement. When I saw my friends beaten or killed in the streets or imprisoned, I became convinced that it was my duty to write about them, not only as a journalist but also as a human being.”

Zahra argues that based on her experience as a citizen- journalist in the Green Movement, she believes that Facebook has become a device that enables citizens to bypass both media gatekeepers and government censorship. However, she is worried about the monitoring of Facebook. “The government is monitoring Facebook. After the Green Movement, political activity on social networks is considered by the security forces as an action against national security. That is why, using social networks for criticizing Ahmadinejad became a risky affair after the outbreak of the Green Movement. The national internet project that was designed to prevent Iranians accessing global cyberspace may result in stifling dissenting voices and pose more limits on freedom of expressions.”

Sahar is a graduate in social communication and has been working as a journalist for 8 years. She was arrested and imprisoned for a short time during the Green Movement. She is a member of Facebook and Google+ with 1200 friends and followers. She believes that Facebook can help gather together individuals who may not share common opinions and function as a public sphere which gives equal opportunity to its members to discuss their public concerns. They can discuss politics and social issues, music, fashion and sports. She says that: “Like many other countries, Facebook in Iran was a friendly cyberspace for sharing music, interesting and funny messages. However, during the Green Movement it became an important tool for transmission of information and organization of street demonstrations. Since its emergence Facebook has influenced and has been influenced by social and political situations.” Sahar is a member of journalist professional pages and most of the time she finds some unique news and information on those pages. She says: “On journalist professional pages we can discuss social, cultural and political challenges our society is facing. We share our experiences with each other and comment on those experiences. Since we have not established a public sphere in real life to discuss political and social topics, we have created it on the cyber space. Many journalists and activists met each other in coffee shops and restaurants and transformed these public places into public spheres during the Green Movement while they were under surveillance and strict pressure of security forces. For example, coffee Prague in Keshavarz Boulevard became a wonderful place in which journalists and activists discussed issues of political significance. The security forces reacted by giving the coffee shop owner two choices. The owner of the coffee shop had to either accept camera surveillance of the area or close the place. With regard to the current situation in Iran, despite all its problems, social networks have been playing an important role as an alternative public sphere.”

Sahar has learned how she should deal with government monitoring of Facebook. She says: “I and my colleagues consider Facebook as a device to bypass censorship. I scrutinize the reaction of public opinion to specific news on Facebook. Since, from time to time, I publish my reports and articles on Facebook; I enjoy the feedback and comments from my friends. The feedback and comments help me to understand the reaction of a percentage of public opinion to my posted views on Facebook. During the Green Movement, I considered the feedbacks I received in my Facebook page to the news I was reporting, as opinion of the masses. Now, because of the government monitoring of Facebook, I delete my status, the photos I post or the news I report and the comments I receive in the next day. I do not archive

anything in my Facebook page. Because when I was arrested in 2009 for a short time, I saw during the investigation of my case in prison print of all my posts on Facebook and SMSs. Now, I am terrified that this same scenario could happen again.”

Shahram is a journalist in an Iranian news agency and he loves his job. He claims that it was Facebook that set the Green Movement in motion. He says “The day after the 2009 presidential election Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was declared as the re-elected president with 24 million votes. Many reformists were shocked by the news. They asked a simple question “where is my vote?” The only means of communication between ordinary citizens and reformist leaders were social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Mousavi's first statement in which he disputed the election results was shared on Facebook. As the news of Mousavi's protest spread on social network a huge demonstration took place in Tehran. While the government controlled mass media with stricter censorship during the Green Movement, Facebook became an easy, fast, and inexpensive tool of transmitting news and information about the Movement. After realizing the impact of Facebook on the political situation the government tried to impose its control on Facebook by blocking and reducing the internet speed. Advocates of the Green Movement responded with use of more effective anti-filter devices to bypass the governments internet blocking. We had only Facebook and other cyber social networks through which we could get information about what was happening around us in the city. It should be mentioned that Facebook was full of accurate and inaccurate news and rumors. So it took some time and energy to distinguish verified news and reliable information from the unverified news and inaccurate information. For example, rumors about Mir Hussein Mousavi's detention were published several times.”

Shahram, believes that Facebook has not been safe in Iran, especially after the eruption of the Green Movement in 2009. Yet he claims that an unsafe public sphere is better than nothing. Shahram argues that “Facebook has become a spying tool in Iran and in the rest of the world, but it should not prevent us to seek different ways to bypass controlling and monitoring of Facebook by the governments. Social networks indicate a turning point in Iran's political history, since no governments is able anymore to control a nation of more than 70 million people who have access to the internet. Social networks have become a media for people from different social and cultural backgrounds, with different political, religious and sexual affiliations. You are connected with people from middle class background, to reformists, to ethnic and religious minorities, to women, to homosexuals and to people with different

political persuasions. Facebook has built a virtual society but functions as a real pluralistic society in which all citizens have equal rights to express their views.”

Saeed is a journalist who has been working for a number of newspapers for many years. When he was student at the University of Tehran, he was arrested for nine months. He argues that every symbol and sign used in the Green Movement indicates that it was a revolution of the young generation. He says; let’s take Facebook as an example. The young generation has dominated Facebook since its emergence in Iran and the decisive role of Facebook in the Green Movement is beyond question. He claims that; “The difference between the Green Movement and previous political movements in Iran is that activists of the Green Movement used social networks like Facebook. Facebook gave the sense of self-esteem to the young generation. With the outbreak of the Green Movement Facebook helped the youth form a new collective identity. “We are countless”, distributed first via Facebook and SMS, became one of the favorite slogans of the youth in the street demonstrations. In order to find out weaknesses and strengths of their own actions and in order to be prepared for their future political actions, they looked at the shared photos and videos of demonstrations on Facebook with care. They have learned from what they experienced in the Green Movement; that they could make political changes if they really wanted to contribute to changes.” Saeed added: “Citizen-journalism emerged during the Green Movement and it reemerged in Arab countries during the Arab Spring. It helped protesters to tell their story to the world without mediation of mass media, and the world responded. For example, the short video about Neda Agha-Soltan, who was shot and killed in a street demonstration, shocked the people inside and outside Iran. I remember the day after the video was uploaded on YouTube. Many people spoke about the event in public places. The world reacted to this tragedy in different ways. An international artist wrote a song about Neda, the US president referred to her death in his speech, and she became the subject of meetings and speeches throughout the world. The reaction of the world to this particular event demonstrated the power of social networks and their ability to transmit the voice of the Green Movement to the world.”

Shida is another journalist who writes reports about environmental issues and the city of Tehran in general. She is a member of Facebook with more than 500 friends and followers. Like other journalists she used Facebook as a tool for transmitting news and information during the Green Movement. She shares the belief with many other journalists that Facebook was the main reason behind the street protesters. She says: “the protesters managed to organize street demonstrations through Facebook. However, Facebook was exploited by

security forces as well. Members of security forces became cyber activists. They exaggerated the violence exerted against street protesters and spread rumors about things that did not happen at the time such as kidnapping and killing of demonstrators and arrest of the leaders of the Green Movement. The rumors on Facebook aimed to scare people so that they would refrain from taking part in the street protests. These rumors were eagerly shared on Facebook and made devastating impacts on the self-confidence of protesters. As a result protesters decided to stay at home and follow street demonstrations via Facebook. Other enthusiastic activists who were more eager to take part in the demonstration despite the frightening rumors were kept at home by their parents. Parents argued that they would not allow their children to die in the same way that Neda did and then watch the video of their last breath on Facebook.”

6. Facebook and the Green Movement

6.1 mobilizing structures

As mentioned in chapter 3, I use Garrett's analytical framework in this study. Garrett's analytical framework has its origin in McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald's analysis of the nature of social movements. Garrett analysis "*explain[s] the emergence, development and outcomes of social movements by addressing three interrelated factors: mobilizing structures, opportunity structures and framing processes*" (Garret, 2006,p.2)

According to Garrett mobilization structures are mechanisms which provide proper conditions for collective actions. Mobilization structures include social structures and tactical repertoires. Social structures consist of formal configurations such as churches and informal configurations such as activist networks. Tactical repertoires refer to actions that protesters are familiar with and able to perform. Mobilization structures contain three sub-categories such as participation levels, contentious activity, and organizational issues. (Garret, 2006,p.2)

In my view the mobilization structures that made the Green Movement a political reality in Iran consisted of journalists and activists who used Facebook as a network power to increase the level of participation in the Movement and develop the level of contentious and organizational activity of the advocates of the Movement.

6.1.1 Participation level

Social networks such as Facebook have an important role to increase participation level. Facebook offers *on-demand access* to the existing information to all. All people have access to relevant information quickly and easily. Facebook also allows its users to contextualize new information. Social networks like Facebook have the ability to create a *flexible information environment*. (Garret, 2006,p.9) By means of the three mechanisms which I discuss below, Facebook increased participation level of the Green Movement:

Reduction of participation costs: the number of internet users in 2009 was 32,200,000. In the wake of the Green Movement most of the internet users in Iran were educated and socially and politically active people. During the Movement they made Facebook a center of

exchange of information between journalists and activists. They published political news and articles. Access to the internet in Iran does not cost too much. Students have free access to the internet in Iranian universities. The little cost of access to the internet made internet the cheapest and fastest means of communication between supporters of the Green Movement. However, as I have demonstrated in my interviews, the cheap access to the internet as a means of communication between participants of the Movement worked as a double edged sword. When the government increased its pressure on the Movement's activists, the advocates of the Movement preferred to continue their political activities at home and in front of their computers, on the internet and through social networks. This means that increase of activities of the activists of the Green Movement in social networks such as Facebook resulted in the reduction of the number of street demonstrations and the number of demonstrators in every demonstration.

Promotion of collective identity: During the 2009 presidential election campaign, supporters of the reform oriented candidates used social networks to connect with each other. They established internet websites such as “Kaleme” for a reform oriented newspaper with the same name. These websites helped the advocates of the reform oriented candidates to construct a collective political identity. After the dispute over the election results this collective identity became a network power against the Iranian government. Journalists and activists as public opinion shapers played an important role in promoting this collective identity. They provided news and information and shared the news with the people at large on public pages on Facebook. Moreover, during the presidential campaigns supporters of Mousavi in particular managed to form the largest team of campaign organizers and activists throughout Iran. They organized the largest meetings and held the more appealing political speeches that shaped the Iranian public opinion. After the election journalists and activists continued their cyber activities. All these cyber activities were collected by Iranian security forces and the judiciary system as incriminating evidence to prosecute and sentence cyber activists and members of social networks to jail.

Creation of a cyber-community: Facebook integrated activists of the Green Movement as a cyber-community. Within this cyber-community every Green Movement activist had the opportunity to communicate with a great number of activists by one click. As activists of the Green Movement they wrote about their experiences, about how they prepared themselves for the coming street demonstration, about how a demonstration was initiated

and how it attracted the attention of the passer-by people who seemed indifferent at first but became the most enthusiastic among the demonstrators. They wrote about their experience of reporting on the demonstrations and on the responses they received from different parts of the world. They wrote about the power of Facebook to connect people from different parts of the world as if they were in face-to-face contact. The color green became the symbol of the cyber-community that advocated the Green Movement. They made green the color of their profile pictures and added the inscription ‘where is my vote?’ on their Facebook pages. This inspired some courageous activists to use Green scarf or T-shirt in public places to show their solidarity with the Green Movement. Journalist and activist advocating the movement put pictures of arrested journalists or martyrs of the Movement on their Facebook pages.



Two examples of Iranian profile pictures during the Green Movement

Source: Facebook

6.1.2 Contentious activity

Social networks are the fastest way of spreading news and information. News about a street demonstration in one city may cause demonstrations in another city. The quality of news and information makes validity and reliability of information and news significant issues. Validity and reliability of news and information establishes a relationship of trust between broadcasters and consumers of information and news. The broadcasting of information and news through social networks follows the same logic. If the validity of news about a political protest is compromised by those broadcasting the news, the protest can easily be represented as vandalism.

Because of the flow of inaccurate online information the quality and validity of online information depends on who communicates the information. If a particular social network advocating a apolitical protest is unable to identify and remove inaccurate information

regarding the protest, it cannot form a network power against the government during the protest.(Garret, 2006,p.13) In the wake of the Green Movement websites such as “Kaleme”, “Jaras” and “Saham” became credible sources of online information because of their ability to distinguish between inaccurate information and accurate information. For example, a few days after the eruption of the Green Movement news about detention of Mousavi and Karroubi were broadcasted by online media and people would go to these websites in order to find out whether the news were credible or not. However, after the blocking of these websites in Iran, social networks in which Iranian journalists and activists posted news about the Green Movement became reliable sources of information. The situation became complicated when many journalists and activists who connected the leaders of the Movement with the masses were arrested. In fact citizen journalism in Iran emerged as a result of the sudden absence of professional journalism and experienced political activists in the Green Movement. Faced with a journalistic void protesters tried to act as activist-journalists of the Movement in order to deal with the lack of valid sources of information about the Movement.

An important obstacle that members of social networks could not do anything about was government control over the new communication technology in Iran. Government control over the new communication technology made online activity in general and activity of the members of social networks to be at their mercy. Wherever and whenever demonstrations were going to take place, the Iranian government would cut off access to the internet and stop Mobil phone connections in that particular area and at that particular time. In fact this demobilization tactic of the Iranian government prevented demonstrations from building up in many occasions(Jaras, 2010b) Prior to this demobilization tactic, demonstrations in Tehran and other big cities were arranged by the Green Movement activists with the consent of the leaders of the Movement. However, the leaders of the Movement had never invited people to demonstrations; they claimed many times that their participation in the demonstration was their response to people’s invitations. Activists of the Movement published announcement about the time and place of demonstrations on their websites and on their Facebook and transmitted the information to many others via SMSs. As soon as the information about the coming demonstration became public the Iranian government started to disturb Mobile phone services and reduced the internet speeds, jammed satellite television and blocked social networks as part of its demobilization tactics.(Jaras, 2010a)

6.1.3 Organizational issues

Social networks create new kinds of organizations in social movements. These organizations represent both opportunities and threats to activists of social and political movements. “*The technologies facilitate the adoption of decentralized, non-hierarchical organizational forms, and make movement-entrepreneur-led activism more feasible.*”(Garret, 2006,p.15) In the Green Movement social networks such as Facebook created some kind of virtual organization in which members were not dependent on a leader in the traditional sense. For example, during the Green Movement different organizations such as ‘Green Martyrs Organization’ worked for supporting prisoner or families of those killed in the street demonstrations. However, these organizations remained virtual organizations and in reality they did not do anything of significance for the victims. The main problem with virtual organizations is that the Iranian government does not recognize these organizations and consider their activity to be illegal. Contrary to traditional organizations with committed members and with their hierarchical leadership active in a real social context, the cyber organizations are not strong enough to achieve their goals.

6.2 Opportunity structures

Opportunity structures are situations that favor social movement activities. The new communication technologies offer a variety of opportunities to social movements. The new communication technologies enable activists of the social movements to ‘*bypass censorship*’. There are two aspects of the internet that enable it to bypass censorship: first, it is highly ‘*interconnected*’ and second, it has the ability to ‘*automate the process of delivering a message*’.(Garret, 2006,p.19) This means no one can prevent the flow of data or a message from reaching its destination. But if citizens do not have free access to the internet, or if the government controls cyber gateways to monitor messages and information, such opportunities cannot offer very much help to social and political activists. However, regarding free access to the internet, people find devices to bypass government blockage of internet websites. Despite the government’s attempt to prevent free access to the internet during the Green Movement, social networks, SMSs and satellites televisions, journalists and activists evaded censorship through different means. However, as the government became more skillful in its censorship of the new

communication technology, activists used more sophisticated means to bypass censorship on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube and satellite television. They used different anti-filters and VPN system to bypass the government blocking of the internet. Iranian internet users use updated versions of anti-filters that are available for free on the internet. Regarding the jamming of satellite television, people are more creative. In order to counteract satellite jamming, people use a simple device that consists of a metal tray or steel grid with a plastic cover in front of the satellite dish.



Sours: sikhunak weblog <http://sikhunak.wordpress.com>



Sours: sikhunak weblog <http://sikhunak.wordpress.com>

Most of these creative styles of counteracting censorship in Iran are shared on the social networks or weblogs. Iranians' continuous campaign to bypass censorships imposed on the internet and satellite television is part of the Iranian struggle for people's right to information and freedom of expression. According to Garrett: *"the capabilities available to those who temporarily evade efforts to control the flow of information online are more important than the dream of unchallenged regulatory freedom."*(Garret, 2006,p.20)

In the wake of the Green Movement in 2009, the Iranian government decided to build a national internet called 'Halal Internet'. Internet users in Iran feared that national internet would disconnect Iranian internet users from the global internet system and impose a kind of digital discrimination. Iranian journalists and activists argued that the project would put further limitations on freedom of expression and isolate Iranians from the rest of the world. Now that Hassan Rouhani is Iran's president many hope that the president will prevent the national internet project.

During the Green Movement citizen –journalists played a significant role in bypassing censorship in general. They used their cell phones as a tool to record and film whenever and wherever a demonstration took place and would share the video on YouTube or Facebook. The international media used the work of these citizen-journalists in their news programs. BBC Persian, for instance, created a link on BBC's webpage for citizen- journalism in which activists in Iran could upload their reports and videos on BBCs website. The Iranian experience with mass-self communication in the Green Movement did not disappear after the retreat of the Movement. The Green Movement made mass-self communication a part of the Iranian political and social reality. In fact, mass-self communication played a decisive role in Rouhani's electoral victory in the 2013 presidential election.

6.3 Framing processes

"Framing processes are dependent on the flow of carefully crafted movement information, in the form of frames, across networks of influence."(Garret, 2006,p.20)

New technology has created this frame of networks. While mass media outlets have supported the established authority, new communication technology creates opportunities to bypass mass media gatekeepers. Social networks provide ordinary

activists and journalists as well as people a space in which they can express their views, exchange news and information, and publish their articles. Mass media has never been able to create such opportunities. Now that mass media gatekeepers are sidelined, activists of a social or political movement have a chance to choose different sources of information to generate their movements. In the Green Movement, journalists used social networks to publish articles and reports that the Iranian media could not publish because of the imposed censorship and gate keeping. Thus far, I have discussed the benefits of the absence of gatekeepers in social networks. There are, however, weaknesses caused by the absence of gatekeepers in social networks which should be taken into consideration if we intend to produce a balanced assessment of the role of cyber-networks in social and political movements in general and in the Green Movement in particular. For instance, during the Green Movement social networks were full of accurate and inaccurate information regarding the Movement. The fusion of accurate and inaccurate online information, generated by social networks, damaged the credibility of cyber-networks and spoiled activists and journalists who were associated with the networks. However, trained journalists used their skills to respond to this particular problem. They opened a Facebook page in which they distinguished between reliable news, information and reports from the unreliable ones. By acting as social network gatekeepers, journalists and activists advocating the Green Movement managed to create Facebook pages and accounts which gradually became reliable sources of information for internet users in Iran. Journalistic reports were published on Facebook and visitors could read the report and write their feedbacks. Negative feedback indicated that the information was unacceptable and unacceptable information was usually shared by fewer readers. Fewer readers of particular information on Facebook pages controlled by Green activists and Journalists indicated that this particular information had lesser impact on public opinion.

7. Facebook and public sphere

In my view, Dahlgren's *three dimensions framework* enables us to conceptualize the function of Facebook as one of the main pillars of the alternative public sphere that emerged in cyber space in Iran during the Green Movement. Dahlgren's three-dimensional framework consists of the structural, the representational and the interactional. The structural dimension refers to the situation of independent media that promote freedom of expression and NGOs and institutions that defend freedom of speech. The representational dimension addresses the extent to which equal opportunities are given for different perspectives in public debates on issues of public concern. The interactional dimension deals with interaction between citizens from different backgrounds (public opinion) as well as between citizens and media. (Nordenson, 2010,p.66)

7.1The structural dimensions

According to "internet world state website" Iran had more than 42 million internet users in 2012 which represents 53.3% of the entire population. Penetration, in 2009 was; 48.5% of the Iranian populations were internet users. Most of the internet users in Iran are young and educated people with a strong social network consisting of families, relatives and friends. The internet has become the main source of news and information for Iranian people since internet users in Iran transmit information and news on internet to the members of their families, relatives and friends who do not have access to the internet. This means the influence of the internet goes beyond the internet users. Despite the increase in internet users in recent years, about half of the population does not have access to the internet. However, as I mentioned above, that fact that a great portion of population does not have access to the internet does not mean that they do not have access to the flow of online news and information. Another important factor on the structure dimension is freedom of expression. As I mentioned before, the Iranian government uses different methods to limit prodemocracy activists and journalists' access to the internet. Through its cyber police it monitors websites and social networks and through intimidation, arrest and torture, it tries to minimize internet activities that may influence the political situation in Iran. Since access to the internet is not free in

Iran and NGOs are limited and prodemocracy forces do not have access to state media one may conclude that the Iranian prodemocracy internet activists do not have a considerable impact on public opinion. However, the significant role of cyber social networks in two presidential elections in of 2009 and 2013 demonstrates the decisive impact of the Iranian prodemocracy internet activism on public opinion. The popular campaign in Iran that is aimed to force the government to recognize free access to the internet is in fact a strong indication of the network power of Iranian internet users.

7.2The representational dimension

According to the law, in the Islamic Republic, the state has a monopoly over mass media such as radio and television. State radio and television are supervised by Iran's supreme leader. Before the arrival of the internet, people in Iran were used to listening to foreign radio and television programming as well as to radio and television programs broadcasted by opposition forces. Now, the internet is competing not only with the state owned mass media but also with satellite television. In addition to written material, internet is full of videos and audio that violates the monopoly of the state has on mass media. With the increase of internet users, the number of those who watch and listen to online videos and audio, increases. This makes the state's control of radio and television in Iran redundant.

Social networks are very popular in Iran at the moment. Young Iranians have learned in their experience with social networks in order to be heard they must 'hear' the voice of others. They learned to respect plurality of views while presenting and defending their own views. They used social network in the Green Movement to express what they wanted to achieve politically. When they made their profile pictures green they expressed their political affiliation to the Green Movement that was a movement against election fraud. Their silence in the largest mass demonstration since the revolution indicated their degree of tolerance and peacefulness. We may find the explanation for the Green Movement's peaceful nature in the formation of social networks and cyber-community. Despite their angry tone against Iran's supreme leader for his support of Ahmadinejad and beating of security forces in the street demonstration, Iranian advocates of the Green Movement, a majority of which were Iranian youth, did not cause the death of a single member of the security forces. The fact that for the first time

in Iran's modern history, the Iranian people formed a collective political identity that was inclusive to their political opponents indicated the beginning of a new political era in Iran. In the course of the Green Movement a number of conservatives who opposed prodemocracy forces in their entire political life joined the Movement. Mohammad Nurizad is a case in point in this regard.(Nurizad, 2010)

All political movements are mixed with emotions and excitements. Emotional reactions to different events were obvious in the Green Movement. Being engaged emotionally in a political movement prevents activists and journalists from using fairness and accuracy in evaluating the movement. There were anonymous members of Facebook whose lack of fairness and accuracy damaged the Green Movement. For example, on the Ashoura day protest (December 27) anonymous members of Facebook, in the name of secularism, posted articles and photos that many members of the Green Movement considered as an insult against Islam. Ashoura day protests became the Green Movement's the bloodiest demonstration. The Iranian Government had been claiming that the Green Movement was a 'soft revolution' against Islam and religious beliefs of the Iranian people. Iran's state TV used photos posted by the anonymous member of Facebook to prove the claim that the Green Movement was an anti-Islamic Movement. In addition the violence exerted against the security forces by protesters was used by Iran's state TV to show the violent nature of the Movement. After the Ashoura demonstration, the Iranian government claimed that it would crack down any attempt to organize new demonstration since the demonstrators had proven that it was not the government that they were protesting against but Islam and religious beliefs of the Iranian people. Regardless of the claims of the Iranian government, the Ashoura events demonstrated that in the absences of gatekeepers, Facebook cannot always maintain fairness and accuracy. The Ashoura demonstration proved that social networks could be used to spread biased information that work against the interests of the majority of the members of a Facebook group or page who are engaged in a democratic movement in which peaceful protests are the only legitimate means to achieve democratic changes.

7.3 The interactional dimension

According to Dahlgren, the interactional dimension deals with, on the one hand, the interactions between citizens and, on the other hand, the interaction between citizens and media. Mass-self communication is a kind of interaction that includes the interaction between citizens and between citizens and global media. As I mentioned in chapter 4, this type of communication includes mass global audiences that are self-generated, self-directed and self-selected.

In the Green Movement, mass self-communication emerged through activity on social networks. Ordinary citizens who never had access to media started to write and share their messages with others and while they were selecting and reading messages and reports posted by others they and were giving feedback to each other. After the government expelled foreign journalists from Iran in the wake of the Green Movement and imposed censorship on the mass media, citizen-journalism emerged as a form of mass-self communication in Iran. Citizens used social networks for sharing their messages and information. They published their own reports on political events. They recorded videos or photos of demonstrations and uploaded them on YouTube and shared them on Facebook and other social networks. Then the network members started to add a point or information that might have been missed in the first report. Few hours later major international news agencies used these reports on their news programs and conducted interviews with eye witnesses. In fact Citizen-Journalism in Iran was born in this cycle of transmission of news and information during the Green Movement.

7.4 Discussions

7.4.1 A Green Network power

Social networks in general and Facebook in particular played a variety of roles in the Green Movement. They reduced participation costs, and by creating a cyber-community promoted a collective political identity. However, besides their benefits they caused some harmful impacts on the Movement. The positive and negative effects of the social networks make them a double edged sword. There were three reasons which, in my view, made social

networks a double edged sword in the Green Movement. First, with increase of the violence exerted by the Iranian government on demonstrators in the streets the protesters chose a low cost way to promote the Green Movement. They stayed at home and used social networks to express their political protests. Second, we should keep in mind that the Green Movement was, in fact, a combination of street protests and social network activities as a result of which pictures and videos of exerted violence in the streets were shared on social networks. However, instead of creating excitement among members of the social networks, pictures and videos of violence shared on the social networks magnified the image of violence in the streets and created fear of further violence. Thus, the fear of future violence discouraged members of the social networks to participate in the street demonstrations. Third, one of the main problems of Facebook and social networks is the issue of anonymity. Anonymity in social networks caused rumors and unverified information about the fate of particular political prisoners and well-known journalists and so on.(Baniyaghoob, 2012) It is claimed that many rumor makers in the social networks worked for the security forces. Some of my interviewees who were imprisoned during the Green Movement claim that the investigators of their cases knew everything about their cyber activities and what they said in their emails or SMSs. (interview with Sahar) As I mentioned above, in measuring the advantages of the social networks such as Facebook, we should not underestimate their disadvantages. For instance by glorifying violence, Facebook can reproduce violence and cause devastating rumors about individual members of the network. Furthermore, Facebook may isolate individual members of social networks from other people on the street and put them in front of their computer to exercise low cost protests.

In terms of collective identity and formation of a cyber-community, Facebook made a significant impact on the Green Movement. Through Facebook and other social networks political activists built a strong network which functioned as an information center for all advocates of the Green Movement. They coordinated their activities throughout the country via Facebook. By presenting their Facebook with green colors and slogans of the Green Movement advocates of the Movement formed a coherent and strong collective identity.

Prodemocracy forces that include advocates of democratic reforms and the Green Movement do not have access to state radio and televisions. This lack of access to mass media has led prodemocracy forces to use Facebook. However, since Facebook and other social networks are under control of the government their communications are always monitored and sometimes disrupted. The government blocks Facebook and reduces the internet speeds whenever there appears to be a chance for political protest in Iran. Yet, despite the obstacles

made by the Iranian government Iranian members of social networks use anti-filters to bypass the blocked internet pages in order to gain access to free flow of information. Government's efforts to monitor and censor the internet and social networks are always responded by creative methods by internet users in Iran. The efforts of internet users to go around censorship in Iran are interpreted by conservative forces who dominate the government as a soft war (Jang-e Narm) against the Islamic revolution. While advocates of the Green Movement used social networks to transmit information, organize demonstrations, create citizen- journalism, form collective political identities, the government used the same networks to broadcast state propaganda, inaccurate information and rumors to discredit the Movement, its leaders and its activists.

7.4.2 A Green public sphere

In addition to Dahlgren's three dimensions framework, Iranian social networks in the Green Movement can be understood through Calhoun's conceptualization of public sphere. According to Calhoun public sphere has five important characteristics. First, independency is the main characteristic of a public sphere. Independency of public sphere means citizens who participate in public discussions should not be dependent on an economic organization or function in agreement with the government's political considerations. Second, pluralism of views and variety in discussions are another important factor on public sphere. All discussions and analysis must be valid and reasonable. The third character of a public sphere is flexibility of its participants which means participants in a discussion must tolerate each other and listen to opposite points of view. The fourth character for a public sphere is that its members develop arguments raised by citizens. The Fifth characteristic of a public sphere is that it must be an easy and accessible sphere for all citizens which means all citizens and all different ideas must have a chance to be heard in the public sphere.(Calhoun, 1992,p.113)

Now the question that I would like to raise is; do social networks and cyber space constitute a public sphere? As I have demonstrated throughout this study Iranian citizens have participated in public discussions on social networks. Their economic situation did not make an impact on the outcomes of the discussions. The participants in the discussions have not been in line with the government's political considerations. Internet users had equal opportunities to take part in the discussions on social networks. The participants in the discussions on the social networks used documents and empirical evidence and arguments to

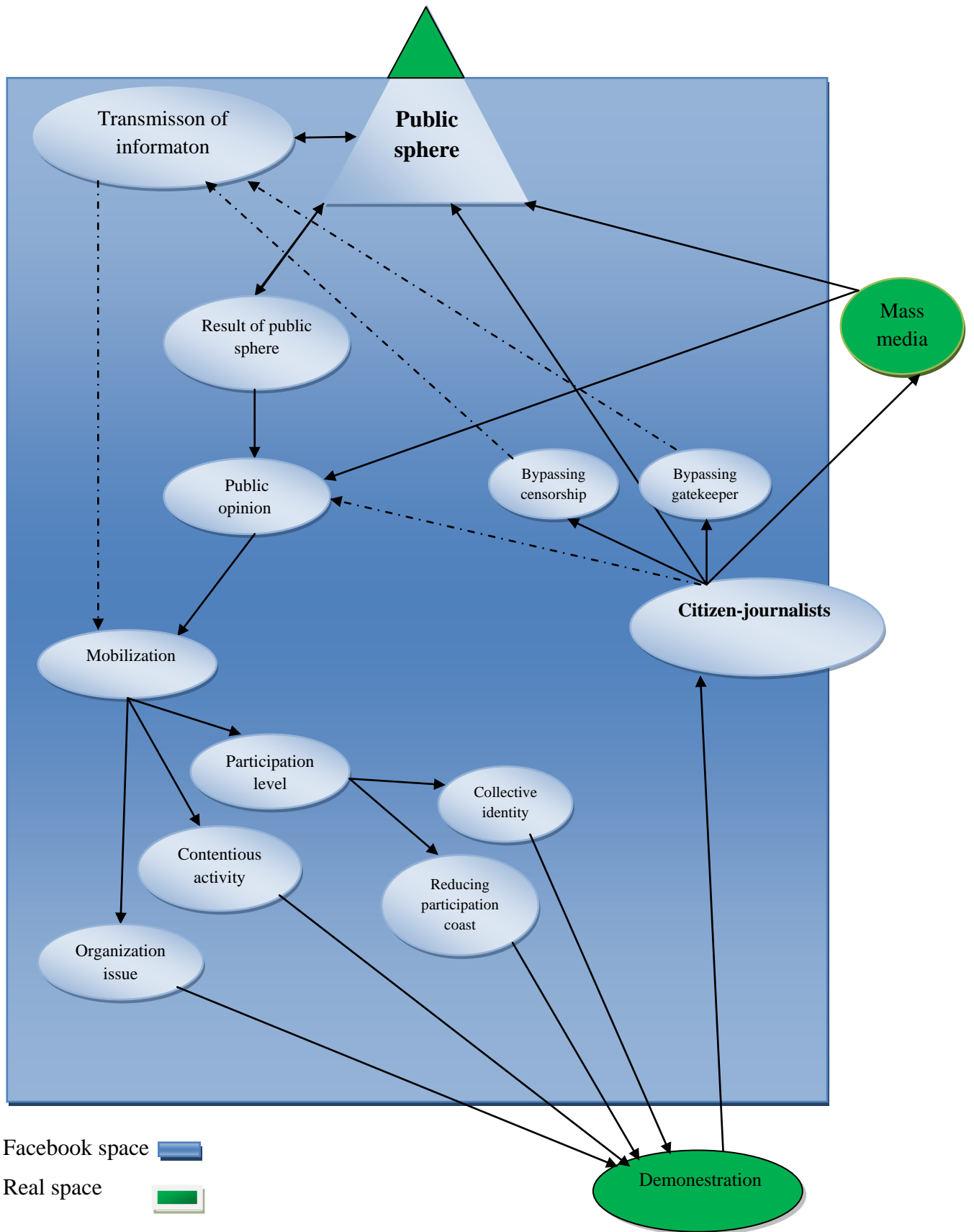
demonstrate the validity of their claims and points of view. Since most cyber debates take place in text version the audience can read and think carefully and respond without anxiety. Physical presence of audience and their voice and body languages are absent in social networks and this situation help them to control their emotions. In cases they use webcam or hear each other's voice they have a better chance to evaluate their opponents without prejudice and rudeness. Moreover, the comment system and the ability of social networks to give feedback is a great opportunity for criticism and response to a claim.

Another benefit of social networks is that discussions and arguments on the social networks seem endless since access to the internet is possible everywhere and at any time. There are no time and space restrictions in cyberspace and people everywhere have an opportunity to follow a debate and leave feedbacks. Moreover, easy and equal access to the social networks is possible for ordinary people. People regardless of their age, gender, religious affiliation and opinion can have their own profile and write about the social and political issues. Social networks have a great potential to be a public sphere but at the same time they suffer from some limitations. During the Green Movement Facebook became a public sphere in which people from various backgrounds discussed election frauds. When the Iranian government blocked Facebook equal access to Facebook became impossible. One of the significant limitations of social networks as a public sphere was its inability to include Iranians middle aged Iranian people. Iranian Middle aged people who were not familiar with social networks as an alternative public sphere remained outside the Iranian cyber community and thus did not contribute to narrow the gap between the real and virtual public sphere, between Facebook and the street.

We can see in the figure 1, page 86, we can see that Facebook functions as a public sphere and network power in Iran during the Green Movement. The blue space that represents Facebook before the 2009 presidential election was expanded after the election and during the Green Movement. As Facebook provided fast and easy Transmission of news and information it became a space in which Iranian citizens contacted each other and discussed the post-election events. As a public sphere it influenced public opinion and contributed to political mobilization of citizens. Facebook's political mobilization increased the level of participation in the Green Movement. Facebook became the expression of decentralized and non-hierarchical organizations during the Movement. Facebook allowed or rather encouraged its members to become contentious or argumentative activists. By reducing the cost of political activity and protest Facebook created a collective political identity among its members. The collective political identity that was created by Facebook increased the

likelihood of street demonstrations and in doing so connected the cyber (alternative) with real public sphere in Iran. Citizen-journalism emerged as a result of the connection between cyber and real public sphere. Citizen –journalist became a kind of mass self- communication which could bypass both government censorship and media gatekeepers. Traditional mass media also used citizen- journalist reports on their program and published the Green Movement news in the world and the feedback and result of them influences directly to the public sphere and public opinion as well. This process was repeated constantly.

figure1: role of Facebook during the Green Movement in Iran



8. Conclusion

The Green Movement, the political movement that erupted after the 2009 presidential election represented a turning point in Iran's contemporary politics. The Green Movement can be measured with regard to its contents as well as with regard to its forms. Regarding its contents, the Green Movement has been a nonviolent movement and instead of targeting the political regime in Iran in its entirety, the Movement has focused on specific democratic demands. The Green Movement mobilized millions of ordinary Iranians on the streets as well as on social networks to force the Iranian government to recognize their political rights. One of the significant features of the Green Movement, regarding its contents, has been that unlike many democratic movements around the world, the Green Movement has defended its independence from foreign powers and rejected any formal support offered by the US government. With regard to form, which has been the main concern of this study, the Green Movement has created, since its eruption, a cyber-public sphere to disseminate news and information about the movement and discuss its politics. The cyber public sphere created by the Green Movement includes Facebook and other social networks that are accessible on the internet. The cyber public sphere has enabled advocates of the movement with access to the social networks to play a role in dissemination of the democratic demands of the movement among the networks' members and among the people at large. Facebook has become one of the significant tools in the struggle for democracy in Iran in recent years. I have tried to demonstrate in this study two important roles that Facebook played in the Green Movement. On the one hand, while the real public sphere in Iranian cities was occupied by the government and security forces during the Green Movement, Facebook created an alternative public sphere to put forward the demands of the Movement. On the other hand, while the government exercised its power through naked violence on the streets of Iranian cities Facebook worked as a network power. Iranian users of Facebook and other social networks have protected the cyber public sphere they have created and made a maximum use of it during the 2013 presidential election. They succeeded to overcome not only government censorship but also the media campaign against prodemocracy forces carried out by conservative forces in Iran. Despite their monopoly on mass media and their financial strength coming from different state institutions and the support they received from military forces in Iran, conservative forces in Iran did not manage to achieve an electoral victory in the 2013 presidential election.

Prior to the 2013 presidential election mass media in Iran were not allowed to report news and information about the Green Movement. Such restrictions on public sphere made Facebook the alternative public sphere in which citizens from different backgrounds were connected with each other and exchanged news and information regarding the Movement. As Facebook established itself as the most significant part of the alternative public sphere in Iran from 2009 and onwards, mass media started to pay attention to the possibilities it had created for free exchange of information. Thus Facebook became a popular theme on mass media. Prior to the 2013 presidential election printed media in Iran did not pay much attention to Facebook and its abilities. However, the outcomes of the 2013 presidential election prompted mass media to reflect more seriously on the contents of the exchanged news and information on Facebook and other social networks.

I have tried to demonstrate, in this study, the context in which social networks established an alternative public sphere which allowed a network power to function in Iran. Now, the question that can be raised is; how inclusive are social networks in Iran in their functions as a public sphere and networks of power? I am aware of a number of shortcomings regarding social networks in Iran. For instance, there are restrictions imposed by the Iranian government on social networks in general and Facebook in particular. The blocking of Facebook, censorship and reduction of internet speed which work against free and equal access for every citizen to social networks are examples of such shortcomings. Other shortcomings that can be listed are of technical nature such as a lack of infrastructure and education in rural areas. These types of shortcomings have as well negative effects on equal access of citizens to the alternative public sphere established by social networks. Despite all shortcomings there is a consensus among advocates of democracy in Iran that an incomplete public sphere is better than the complete absence of a public sphere.

The reason that prompts advocates of democracy and members of social network in Iran to defend and cherish the existing cyber public sphere is that social networks including Facebook played irreplaceable roles as both a public sphere and a network power during the Green Movement. In their capacity as a public sphere and a network power, social networks mobilized people on the streets to demand their democratic rights. However, in order to function as a public sphere and a network power, social networks in Iran had to help Iranian citizens to overcome two obstacles. They had had to bypass both traditional media gatekeeping and government censorship. In the early days of the Green Movement, Iranian citizens overcame both obstacles.

As an alternative public sphere, Facebook created for its members a forum in which they could debate aspects of electoral fraud in the 2009 presidential election to come to the conclusion that only a rigged election could have guaranteed Ahmadinejad's electoral victory. It was the persuasive effect of this argument that led the Iranian people to demand their electoral rights that they believed the Iranian government did not respect. In this way, as an alternative public sphere, Facebook became the most significant mobilizing force behind the eruption and continuation of the Green Movement. Facebook helped Iranian youth to become familiar with the nature of political disputes in Iran. It encouraged them to take part in the formation of a collective political identity to challenge the monopoly on political power by conservative forces. As an alternative public sphere, Facebook became both cause and effect of the Green Movement. In fact citizen journalism, Facebook and other social networks as an alternative public sphere and the Green Movement are interrelated concepts in Iran. They cannot be imagined independently. For instance when citizen journalists bypassed government censorship and various gatekeepers successfully, they reported on the Green Movement through Facebook and YouTube. Facebook and other social networks helped in turn citizen journalists to bypass not only government gatekeepers but also media gatekeepers who functioned as editors to control the flow of information. Facebook and other social networks created the unprecedented opportunity for ordinary people to present their views whether through words or through pictures without interference of a system of censorship. Facebook and other social networks created the condition which made mass self-communication that shapes public opinion by means of an alternative public sphere, possible. Wherever the real public sphere is controlled by the government this alternative public sphere, if created, would challenge the government and force it to recognize other social forces that demand their political rights.

I have demonstrated throughout this study that Facebook may function as a double edged sword. For instance, Iranian security forces used Facebook and other social networks to publish rammers and false news that exaggerated the violence exerted on the streets against demonstrators. The use of the Iranian security forces on Facebook caused fear among activists of the Movement and forced them to leave the streets. As a result, they assembled in front of their laptops in an alternative public sphere that had no impact on the real public sphere. Both the exaggeration of the violence on the streets and spreading of unverified rumors on Facebook were possible because Facebook lacked gatekeepers who could distinguish false information from verified information. Monitoring of the social networks was another disadvantage of Facebook since the government used Facebook for spying on

activists and journalist' pages. In addition to these shortcomings, the government could block social networks and reduce the internet speed in order to disconnect members of the social networks from each other and stop the alternative public sphere from functioning.

In my view news and information reported by Iranian citizen-journalists became as valuable and credible as news and information reports traditional media since the news reported by international media became almost dependent on the activity of the Iranian citizen-journalists. The most important role that citizen journalists played in Iran was their role in shaping public opinion.

It seems at the surface that Facebook organized huge demonstrations on the streets via a number of clicks in the internet. The mechanism, virtual or real, behind the street demonstration during the Green Movement is more complicated than it seems. In the early days of the Green Movement, Iranian protesters were gathering together on virtual public sphere without limitation of time and place and without governmental interference. They discussed the most significant political issues of the time, the disputed results of the presidential election. By reducing the internet speed and blocking anti-government websites and Facebook the government imposed new technologies of censorship. Advocates of the Movement used anti-filter devices and bypassed the censorship. When the government realized that the new technologies of censorship did not work, it used its agents as anonymous characters on Facebook to break up the cyber or alternative public sphere from within. False information and rumors against the leaders of the Green Movement and even exaggeration of the violence exerted by security forces on Facebook worked as tactics of demobilization. Gathering of information about active members of Facebook and other social networks by cyber police created fear and uncertainty among members. As the activity of Iranian cyber police increased active members of social networks in general and Facebook in particular became perplexed whether they were going to be arrested or not. One of the demobilization tactics used by cyber police was publicizing of photos of citizen-journalists in the internet as perpetrators of violence in the street demonstrations.

The experience with the Green Movement has had a deep impact on the younger Iranian generation. They have experienced the meeting point between politics and technology and their reciprocal interactions. They learned from the interaction between politics and technology that regardless of how the government treats its political opponents they should value nonviolent protests since nonviolent protests cut off the vicious circle of violence.

Many were arrested, beaten and killed during the Green Movement but the advocates of the Green Movement did not cause the death of a single member of the Iranian security forces. They learned as well that their withdrawal from the streets did not mean they were defeated politically. They left the streets since they did not want to see their country become another Libya or Syria where opposition forces understood their own victory as the total defeat of their opponents namely their governments. The advocates of the Green Movement and active of the social networks retreated from the street demonstration and waited for another political opportunity. The new political opportunity emerged in the 2013 presidential election. By contributing to the election of Rouhani as Iran's president they achieved their first political victory without destroying their political opponents. The dilemma that prodemocracy activists have had to deal with until recently was; how should they reconcile their demand for democracy in Iran based on the rights of every citizen to elect and to be elected with Iran's right to remain a sovereign state since sovereignty or independency is one of the most important factors that constitutes a democratic public sphere. Calhoun argues that members of a public sphere should not be dependent on their government. I would like to add to Calhoun's argument that a true public sphere should not be dependent on any government. True democratic forces in Iran represented by advocates of the Green Movement have demonstrated that they are the advocates of a true public sphere. While they remained true to the essence of the concept of public sphere they saw the results of the dependency of oppositional forces in Syria and Libya on the most democratic governments in the world which have been nothing but anarchy, death and destruction.

When Iranian members of social networks changed their profile pictures from "Where is my vote?" to "Here is my vote" they symbolized, knowingly or unknowingly, a political victory which does not necessitates destruction of an opponent.



Source: Facebook

If Iran's negotiations on Iran nuclear program with the world powers results in normalizations of Iran's relation with the West, it is not the Iranian economy that would flourish most, but Iranian democracy. Prodemocracy activists know that in the absence of tension between Iran and the West they will no longer be accused of being an instrument of Western powers to destroy the Iranian political system and violate its sovereignty.

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