

## SECURE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CRISES

Michał Matyasik

*Institute of Political Science and International Relations of the Jagiellonian University  
Jabłonowskich St. 5, 31-114 Kraków, Poland*

*E-mail: [michal.matyasik@uj.edu.pl](mailto:michal.matyasik@uj.edu.pl)*

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**Abstract.** The aim of the article is to present and examine a unique role of social media in correlation with contemporary secure and sustainable development path by observing social and political processes, which in several instances led to a violent conflicts and crisis. Fundamental task of the article as well as its research goal is to give an answer to two questions – does the social media can be used to trigger revolutions and how military powerful entities as NATO and US are prepared to utilize the social media as a part of military efforts. First part of the article is focused on scientific approaches towards secure and sustainable development, followed by NATO's and US military doctrinal approach to the use of the social media. After review of interrelationships between security and sustainable development, that part of the article covers such documents as NATO Military Concept for NATO Strategic Communication (2010), NATO Strasbourg-Khel Summit Declaration (2009), NATO Strategic Communication Policy (2009), US Capstone Concept for Joint Operations (2009), US Commander's Handbook for Strategic Communication and Communication Strategy (2010) and revised US Capstone Concept for Joint (2012). The second part of the article is focused mainly on presentation of the usage of the social media in selected conflicts which took place in Lebanon, Kuwait, Kenya, Iran, Egypt, Tunisia, Nigeria and another accord in long-lasting war between Israel and Hamas (so called operation Pillars of Defense). The article is concluded with final remarks addressing role of social media in processes of secure sustainable development of considered countries.

**Keywords:** security, social media, crisis, military doctrines, Arab Spring, social and political changes

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### 1. Introduction

Security and sustainability issues of development are related to an array of phenomena, which have been amply discussed in scientific literature (Stańczyk 2011; Smaliukienė *et al.* 2011; Tvaronavičienė, Grybaitė 2012; Tvaronavičienė 2012; Lankauskienė Tvaronavičienė 2012; Makštutis *et al.* 2012; Borseková *et al.* 2012; Raišienė 2012; Ercsey 2012; Teivans-Treinovskis, Jefimovs 2012; Peleckis *et al.* 2012; Vosylius *et al.* 2013; Čepėnaitė, Kavaliūnaitė

2013; Kaukas 2013; Šileika, Bekerytė 2013; Cernakovs-Neimarks *et al.* 2013; Tvaronavičienė *et al.* 2013; Peleckis 2013; Raudeliūnienė *et al.* 2013; Mačiulis, Tvaronavičienė 2013; Račkauskas, Liesionis 2013; Balkienė 2013; Baikovs, Zariņš 2014; Antanavičienė 2014; Vasiliūnaitė 2014; Prause, Hunke 2014; Baublys *et al.* 2014; Norkevičius 2014; Laužikas, Mokšėckienė 2013; Wahl, Prause 2013; Tvaronavičienė 2014; Giriūnas, Mackevičius 2014; Bileišis 2014; Šabasevičienė, Grybaitė 2014; Dze-myda, Raudeliūnienė 2014).

ICT and cyberthreats play take a separate niche among all dimensions of secure development (Każmierczyk 2012; Białokórski 2012; Dudzevičiūtė 2012; Matei, Savulescu 2012; Laužikas, Dailydaitė 2013; Fuschi, Tvaronavičienė 2014; Raišienė, Jonušauskas 2013; Figurska 2014) and can affect us by plethora of life facets (Białokórski 2012; Vosylius *et al.* 2013).

ICT threats had been discussed since the seventh decade of last century. It was in late 1960's when a team of scientists working for the US Department of Defense had been tasked to create a digital network (called ARPANET - later on evolved into the Internet), that could connect military databases. What was originally designed to serve exclusively military purposes, recently turned out to be the major channel of communication for millions of people around the world and plays important social role that could be compared to a communication revolution in 1960's brought by a satellite TV. The Internet nowadays is not only a tool to gather and exchange information, as initially designed, but is serving many other significant purposes. Foremost, the Internet is a great marketing tool, but what is the most important, it started to be used to initiate and manage political activities. In democratic countries where freedom of speech is protected as well as in countries where regimes hold a total control over all aspects of public sphere, the Internet helps people to gather and achieve different political goals. Well known example of "Arab Spring" speaks for itself. The Internet and the social media also play a significant role in social conflicts and as a natural disaster management tool. Therefore, taking into account its importance, the Internet and especially so called "social media", are in a scope of interest of military and other institutions operating in areas of crisis.

There is several terms to describe a level and quality of social changes followed by introduction of the Internet and the social media. Particular scholars, like Alexander Bard and Jan Soderqvist – believe that the new post-modern world can be characterized, thanks to computerization and innovations, by the ability of the society to break barriers in almost every aspect of life. Most social activities will or already had moved to a virtual reality where people are getting know each other, doing business and where new issues of security arises. There are several actors interested in such a virtual reality – common people, private entities, and governments – those who succeed, later can

become leaders and will hold a true power. A. Bard and J. Soderqvist called such a new social reality with a term – "Netocracy" (Olchowski, Mencil 2012: 31). A number of other scientists use expressions like "Web 2.0", "global village" or "real time web" (Adamski 2012). According to J. Staszewska – the modern way of using the Internet can be described by influence of the users on content of web sites (Adamski 2012). The Internet is not only a source of information but a platform of cooperation. A new society has a strong influence on e-reality which is being created by it. A new society can oppose old realities; can invent new directions of development and takes responsibility for its content. It might sound a bit too academic and too general but as we will see later on, those ideas were very efficiently and swiftly implemented during the "Arab Spring" and in several other social and political conflicts which took place in past few years.

The Internet had been a communication revolution, and that fact is beyond any questioning. But a next step in that revolution took place when the first social media were introduced to users. The social media may be defined as "[...] web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (Boyd, Ellison 2008: 211). At the end of 2013, over 70% of the Internet adult users had access to social media websites. The social media are the most popular among younger users (18-29 years old) with a score around 90 % (Social Networking Fact Sheet 2014). It is beyond any doubt that the social media started to play a substantial role in modern societies. Apart from their entertainment and social aspect, they are being used to pursue political and social changes. They can serve as a great tool to manage and coordinate aid during natural disasters. The use of the social media can also bring several serious threats to internal and international security when are being used to promote and support criminal activity – so called "soft cyber terrorism" (Olchowski, Mencil 2012: 35). Therefore, the social media in recent years turned out to be in a scope of interest and activity of governmental and military institutions which are trying to tune in to swift social and virtual-reality changes.

The study outcomes presented in the article are con-

nected with two research questions – does the social media can trigger a social and political revolutions and what is the approach of military institutions to the role of the social media nowadays. The article had been divided into two main parts. The first one presents NATO and U.S. military doctrinal approach to the use of the social media. The second part provides examples of social, political and military conflicts and how the social media were utilized during those conflicts. That part will focus on conflicts that took place in Lebanon, Kuwait, Kenya, Iran, Egypt, Tunisia, Nigeria and so called “the first social media war” between Israel and Hamas. At the end of the second part I will address in a concise manner to the use of the social media in case of natural disasters. And in final conclusion I will address to both research tasks presented above.

## **2. NATO and U.S. military doctrinal approach to the social media**

### **2.1. NATO doctrinal approach to the social media**

In April 2009, as a part of 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NATO establishment, Heads of States and Governments participated in a meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Strasbourg – Kehl and drafted a declaration. In that document, among the other important issues and plans, it had been stated, that: “[...] it is increasingly important that the Alliance communicates in an appropriate, timely, accurate and responsive manner on its evolving roles, objectives and missions. Strategic communications are an integral part of our efforts to achieve the Alliance’s political and military objectives. [...] We underscore our commitment to support further improvement of our strategic communications by the time of our next Summit.” (NATO Strasbourg-Kehl Summit Declaration 2009: 4).

Even though, the social media were not mentioned directly in the declaration, the signatories left no doubt, that communication should be a key activity of NATO and it needs further development. Encouraged by political declaration, NATO Secretary General presented in September 2009 a draft on NATO Strategic Communication Policy (NATO SCP). The reasons behind presenting the draft were stated plainly: “Today’s information environment, characterized by a 24/7 news cycle, the rise of social networking sites, and the interconnectedness of audiences in and beyond NATO nations territory,

directly affects how NATO actions are perceived by key audiences. [...] NATO must use various channels, including the traditional media, internet-based media and public engagement, to build awareness, understanding, and support for its decisions and operations.” (NATO SCP 2009: 1). In the document it had been stated, that implementation of the new communication strategy must follow several principles: messages must be consistent on all levels of command structures; it is desirable to engage in the information environment, including social media; messages should be accurate, clear and efficient; all NATO capabilities should be engaged and finally, soliciting public views and adapting efforts are necessary as well (NATO SCP 2009: 2–3).

The Secretary’s General draft policy had also introduced specific guidelines for the use of social media in NATO activities (NATO SCP, p. 5). In general, the policy allows to use the social media by all NATO military and civilian staff. The social media should be used to discuss and portray the profession and day-to-day activities, but there is several precautions that have to be observed. Any utilization of the social media cannot compromise operational security, reveal confidential issues, comment on NATO and nations policies concerning security issues and violate the national laws of the country of origin or of the staff member. In August 2010 NATO Allied Command Transformation working on application of political recommendations and further development of military doctrines, introduced a document – NATO Military Concept for NATO Strategic Communication (MCfNSC). In the document, we can read, that “despite the high level of interest and attention, Strategic Communication is still a field in its initial stages of development, both for the Alliance and the Nations” (MCfNSC 2010: 1, par. 1–2). Therefore, we can assume, that this document is another attempt to clarify, organize and coordinate all NATO’s activities concerning Strategic Communication and to some extent, a role of social media. The document points out, that a priority of Strategic Communication, is “[...] to ensure the NATO’s audience, whether in the Nations or in a region where a NATO operation is taking place, either friendly or adversarial, receives truthful, accurate and timely information that will allow them to understand and assess the Alliance’s actions and intentions” (MCfNSC 2010: 1, par. 1–4). The same document provides military guidance for units responsible for conducting Strategic Commu-

nications and delineation of responsibilities. According to the document, that responsibility lays in hands of Public Affairs, PsyOps and Info Ops officers.

More about a role of the social media in military efforts may be find in a chapter 4-6, which describes a necessity of empowerment as many personnel as necessary, in order to act swiftly and accurate. According to the document: “[...] the use of new and emerging technology such as internet or mobile telephone based Social Media has resulted in a requirement to release information in as close to real time as possible; as events unfold, not minutes or hours later. By empowering more of our people to communicate, NATO will help ensure that it is not only the best source of information about the Alliance that gets out, but the first, best source as well” (MCFNSC 2010: 4, par. 4–6b). At the end, the doctrine points out one remarkable issue, that strategic communication is a critical factor in prevailing in a battle of competing narrations, but it is not a separate and independent process, therefore should be integrated into operation planning phase and executed since the very beginning of every operation (MCFNSC 2010: 9, par. 7–1).

During the NATO summit in Lisbon 2010 Heads of States and Governments accepted two important documents, both of political background – Declaration and Strategic Concept. It is quite unfortunate, that neither in the Declaration nor in the Strategic Concept a special and important role of strategic communication and social media in itself were not mentioned at all. On one hand, it might be justified by a fact, that these topics are already well covered by military doctrine i.e. NATO Strategic Communications Policy and Military Concept for NATO Strategic Communication. But on the other hand, taking into account dynamics of conflicts in North of Africa and other selected countries, and rising power of social media, it would be advisable to continue development of political and military doctrines and apply accurate approaches in accordance with ongoing development of international relations and modern conflicts.

## **2.2. The U.S. military doctrinal approach to the social media**

The US military doctrine has also been developing in accordance with constantly changing contemporary conflicts environment. In January 2009 the Depart-

ment of Defense introduced the Capstone Concept for Joint Operations (CCfJO). The concept in general is a vision of a new model of joint forces military operations in 2016-2028. According to the text the US have overwhelming military superiority over its enemies, but due to a diffusion of power in globalized environment, new challenges are arising: “[...] a variety of non-state actors – often motivated by extremist religious or ethnic ideologies – are emerging with some of the power of states. [...] Many operate across state or even regional boundaries. They rarely adopt the centralized structure of states, which would expose them to greater external pressure, but instead take the form of popular movements or distributed networks, usually empowered by the connectivity of the Internet.” (CCfJO 2009: 3). That major threat to international military operations, is not the only one. The concept points out that due to accelerating transparency and connectivity, modern military operations are becoming more sensitive to public perception, especially affected by pictures of victims of violence. Such transparency may also pose a great threat to operational security, since flow of information and messages in the Internet is rapid and usually beyond any control.

Following remarks and directions included in the Capstone Concept, the US Department of Defense presented in October 2009 reviewed Strategic Communication Joint Integrating Concept (SCJIC). According to the document “The concept deals with the challenge of influence - convincing others to think and act in ways compatible with our objectives, whether this means causing others to adopt a specific course of action or simply understand us better and accept us more.” (SCJIC 2009: ii). In detail the document points out four basic strategic communication goals: to improve US credibility and legitimacy and at the same time to weaken enemies’ credibility and legitimacy, convince people to support US military and political efforts and finally, to cause adversary to take or refrain from specific actions (SCJIC 2009: iii). In order to achieve these goals the document derives eleven capabilities necessary to implement strategic communication. One of capabilities, concerning an issue of ability to access, produce and maintain information, requires from military personnel to have a profound knowledge on complex social communication system and various media channels (SCJIC 2009: iv). In the document, we may also find a very interesting evaluation on how new means of com-

munication in the “Information Age” will affect joint operation: “This future world will be characterized by increased visibility and transparency. The future joint force commander will have to assume that every action of the force will be observed and reported to a variety of audiences. Every action will therefore send a signal, whether intentional or not, that can be received and interpreted differently by a variety of audiences. [...] in the future there will be vastly greater numbers of information sources – such as weblogs or podcasts [...] Not only will more people than ever before have access to more information, but each will also become a potential information source, contributing images and text, facts and opinion to the global network.” (SCJIC 2009: 7).

More precise and practical guidance on communication for military personnel had been presented in June 2010 by US Joint Forces Command and Joint Warfighting Center – Commander’s Handbook for Strategic Communication and Communication Strategy (CHfSCCS). Among the others, the handbook is addressing an issue of so called “battle of narrative” which is being defined as: “a full blown battle in the cognitive dimension of the information environment. [...] a key component of the battle of narrative is to succeed in establishing the reasons for and potential outcomes of the conflict, on terms favorable to your efforts. Upon our winning the battle of narrative, the enemy narrative doesn’t just diminish in appeal or followership, it becomes irrelevant. The entire struggle is completely redefined in a different setting and purpose.” (CHfSCCS 2010: xiii, II-13). The handbook covers several other practical issues like unified communication policy on all levels of operation planning and executing stages, provides guidance and identify shortfalls. The handbook refers also to the issue of a specific role of media and social media as well. The most challenging issue is connected with continuous and rapid information flow, assisted by modern technological advance and media distribution methods, therefore “[...] requires responsive, agile process and capabilities to preserve and enhance the credibility and influence of the United States” (CHfSCCS 2010: xi). It is crucial to maintain an effective channels of dialog with community, the message has not only to be sent but also received and understood. Therefore, it’s important to stay in permanent touch with recipients and one of the useful means to achieve this goal, is to use social media to communicate. There might be some

difficulties when communicating with local population mostly by means of social media, since access to the Internet is still very limited in underdeveloped and torn apart by conflicts countries. But in some instances, those who have access to the Internet and at the same time are active users of social media, may be the one who can control decision-making process, execute political powers and can influence dynamics of social unrests (CHfSCCS 2010: III-11).

The revised Capstone Concept for Joint Operations had been introduced in September 2012 (CCfJOrev.). The new concept focuses on main modern threats to international and operational security like: terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cyberspace terrorism, development, disaster and humanitarian relief (CCfJOrev 2012: 1–2). In general, the new concept doesn’t address to strategic communication issues and only tangentially covers the use and role of social media stating, that “Social media can catalyze protests in days that popular movements once took months or years to build. The penetration of mobile technology especially in developing nations will dramatically increase the number of people able to access and share information rapidly. [...] As we have learned in Iraq and Afghanistan, military actions will receive intense media scrutiny, a dynamic that potentially invests otherwise inconsequential actions with strategic importance.” (CCfJOrev. 2012: 2–3). Even though, the concept correctly describes importance of the social media and the way that they may affect future operations, does not provide any guidance or answers on how to utilize them to achieve operation goals and positive effect, to a common benefit to military as well as to civilian population.

### **3. The use of social media in contemporary social and political crisis.**

For the first time in modern history social media were activated in context of “Cedar revolution” in Lebanon and during social protests – “Orange movement” in Kuwait. But those examples were not the only when the use of the social media triggered public debate followed by political and social changes. In countries like Kenya, Iran, widely covered by mass media revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia, Nigeria as far as so called “Twitter war” between Israel and Hamas, the social media played a crucial role as well.

### **3.1. Lebanon**

On February 14<sup>th</sup> 2005 a car-bomb explosion in Beirut killed twenty-two people including former prime minister and a leader of opposition party and at the same time one of the most popular politician – Rafiq Hariri. That assassination was another accord of war in occupation of Lebanon territory by Syrian armed forces. In following days, the opposition and family members of R. Hariri called for mass protests against occupation and pro-Syrian government. The message had been aired on TV and radio but also by SMS messages and the Internet. The government, in order to prevent riots, shut down TV, radio stations and newspapers but couldn't do much to prevent activities on the Internet. In following days most of the streets of Beirut were taken over by marchers and protests gathering hundred thousands of people (Cedar revolution). Finally, supported by overwhelming public sympathy, the opposition won elections and took a control over the parliament and the government. Hasty and to some extent unexpected change of power on a political scene had initiated peace talks and at the end led to withdrawal of occupation forces in April 2006.

### **3.2. Kuwait**

Another example of the use of the social media as a tool to enhance and coordinate civil protest was a case of "Orange movement" in Kuwait. The movement, initially set-up by youth citizens, was a protest against patriarchal and family-business ties system of government. Younger members of society who felt excluded from political decision-making process had initiated a campaign using mostly Twitter to express their demands and expectations. Political opposition had further facilitated social demands by calling to mass non-violent protest which for several days took over streets of major cities in Kuwait. The government facing unprecedented social activity had chosen a way of concession instead of violence and repressions. In 2005 the parliament had approved amendments to electoral law and for the first time in history of Kuwait allowed women to vote and run for parliament. Shortly after, the first women – Masouma al-Mubarak has been appointed as a cabinet member. In following years, even though a political system is still very conservative and corrupted, new political system alterations has been implemented. Citizens had acquired far more grater space for free

debate and new, more democratic laws has been introduced. It is interesting, that a debate in the Internet had been coordinated and relied on experiences from other examples of political activity which took place in Arab world at that time. One of the most useful and active social media portals had been Twitter channel: "Egyptian advice for Kuwaitis", where social activists from different countries were exchanging views, solutions and experiences.

### **3.3. Kenya**

In December 2007, after disputed elections, Kenya experienced violent clashes and humanitarian crisis resulting in 600.000 internal displaced persons, approximately 1200 deaths leading to a long-term economic recession. Turmoil was caused by historical ethnical inequality, mass corruption of political elites and land disputes between privileged landlords and poor masses vegetating from day to day. In case of Kenya, a role of social media was not as remarkable as in cases of Lebanon or Kuwait. In fact, both adverse political parties and their sympathizers used blogs and SMS messages as a cheap and efficient tool to disseminate false statements accusing others of frauds and urging citizens to acts of violence against each other. In 2007 only approximately 5 % of Kenya's population had access to the Internet but posts from blogs and selected radical SMS messages were broadcasted over a radio increasing reach to 95 % of population (Goldstein, Rotich 2008: 8). This unique, at that time in Kenya, merge of traditional media, new social media and social journalism resulted in fueling clashes and quite likely led to a higher toll of deaths and destruction.

### **3.4. Iran**

Beginning from exile of Shah in 1979 Iran navigated towards one of the most oppressive regime in the world. Entire political power rested in hands of religious extremists and Iran slowly turned from one of the most important countries in the region to a minor state isolated from international community. In years 1980-88 Iran had fought long and devastating war with Iraq resulting in over 1 million deaths and devastation of local economy. In the middle of 1990's Iran regime started to support several terrorist groups and initiated nuclear program that have led to imposition of further economic sanctions by international community. For the first time the regime

had to face mass criticism and opposition in 1999 during pro-democracy student's protests. The answer of the regime was fast and definitive. Many protesters were arrested and subjected to tortures and other cruel punishments. All independent newspapers were shut down and the regime pronounced permanent censorship and a ban on any public gatherings. It was only a temporary measure which in a long-term couldn't prevent people from expressing their demands. In 2009 the regime announced reelection of Ahmedizani in presidential elections. According to official sources, vast majority of Iranian citizens has voted in support of Ahmedizani but realities were far away from official propaganda. International community and Iranian opposition claimed that the election was a fraud. The very same day when Ahmedizani was announced a winner, thousands of people protested on the streets. Initially, such a protest was nothing new in Iran and secret police as well as other forces could handle it swiftly the same way they did in past years. But there was one accident, which absolutely changed dynamics of protests. A 26-year-old female Neda Aghan Soltan was shot in the chest and a movie of her last seconds of life were recorded with a mobile phone and the very same day posted on YouTube channel. The movie, terrifying and cruel in itself, within next hours circulated a whole world and has been broadcasted by major TV stations like CNN and Al Jazeera, what at the end initiated a "snow ball" effect. The next and following days after accident the regime had to face over 3 million protesters. Riots lasted for several more months until 2010 when the regime finally putted an end to disorder with an excessive use of secret police forces and violent repercussions. Opposite to Lebanon and Kenya, in 2009 one-third of the Iranian population had access to the Internet (Wille 2012: 32). Even though that there was no free press in Iran at that time, a society had open access to the Internet and mobile phones which were very popular especially among youth. To communicate, organize and coordinate protests one didn't need regular media since the social media were accessible and in common use. People had all necessary tools and being inspired by the "Arab spring" felt empowered enough to challenge the regime. The government had been aware that a brutal force is not enough to prevail in a short term. As a counter-measure Iran transferred all Internet communication through state-controlled telecommunication company in order to acquire IP's

of protest's leaders. From now on, at the first sight of protests occurrence, the government was blocking access to Facebook and other major social media sites. Besides that, The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps – elite secret police – created Cyber Defense Command, which task is to monitor Internet activity in order to prevent any subversive actions (Wille 2012: 34). Well-coordinated repressions and limitation of access to the Internet and social media web sites at the end led to termination of civil unrest and failure of possible pro-democracy changes in Iran.

### **3.5. Egypt**

Unlike in Iran, a conduct of revolutionary movement in Egypt and Tunisia took opposite direction, where the social media played crucial role and at the end led to success followed by positive political changes. In June 2010, Egyptian Khaled Mohamed Said had been beaten to death by secret police officers. Photos of his brutalized body had been posted on Facebook page "We are all Khaled Said" and had tremendous effect on public opinion in Egypt as well as on international public perception. An individual who posted the picture and created the Facebook page was Wael Ghonim – Google regional marketing manager for the Middle East and North Africa. Only the first day that Facebook page gathered over 36.000 followers (Wille 2012: 25). The idea behind that action was – as expressed by W. Ghonim – to expose corruption practices among government and initiate positive changes of President Hosni Mubarak's regime. W. Ghonim who had a profound experience of using the Internet technologies and marketing techniques applied exactly the same rules to support his social media activities (Wille 2012: 25–26). At the beginning it was crucial to convince people to join his website (posting a picture of brutalized Khalid's body was a critical factor here). The second step was to encourage people to interact on a website by posting comments and by participation in discussions (W. Ghonim was a major facilitator of discussions). In the third step people were supposed to contribute to further development of the website by creating new concepts of activities and implementing them in a near future. And the final step was to transfer digital activism to the streets of Egypt. An observable effect of such plan were so-called "Silent Stands" when, in most cases younger people, were gathering on the streets of major cities wearing black clothes and peacefully stand-

ing in silence back to police officers ready to scatter any unauthorized public gatherings. Immediately, such actions were being posted on YouTube channel and got attention of international media. It brought tremendous effect on Egyptian society and all activists who no longer felt alone but instead of that felt empowered by cohesive and well organized actions and developed a self-confidence and power to act. Shortly before W. Ghonim created his Facebook website, in February 2010 a former UN nuclear chief Mohammed El Baradei came back to Egypt and stood up at the forefront of protests against regime of President H. Mubarak. Opposition demanded urgent political and economic reforms but above all, protesters demanded resignation of the President. Social media activities of youth overlapped with distinctive political demands. In following months, entire country was taken over by peaceful protests as well as fierce clashes between protesters and regime's authorities. The government, being aware of the influence of social media on protest dynamics, took several steps to prevent it. Regime's secret police tried to identify the leaders of protests as well as to block selected websites and blogs. Besides that, the government created Electronic Committee whose task was to influence public opinion in order to generate a different complexion on government's activities. Nevertheless, all those efforts were ineffective and H. Mubarak decided to resign from his office. In March 2011 Egyptians approved new constitutional reforms and new electoral law.

### 3.6. Tunisia

In December 2010, 26-year-old Mohamed Bouazizi, inhabitant of Sidi Bouzid in Tunisia and a street vendor, set himself on fire in an act of desperation. His life was a constant struggle with poverty and corrupted officials who on a daily basis demanded bribes and several times confiscated his merchandise. His act of self-immolation had been a turning point in "Jasmine Revolution" in Tunisia. A video of his family demanding justice and protesting in front of one of government buildings had been recorded on a mobile phone and later on posted on YouTube. Within hours the video had been watched by thousands of viewers and in following days a story of that single Tunisian martyr had been broadcasted by CNN, Al Jazeera and other TV stations in Arab countries getting enormous attention. In several Tunisian cities large groups of people demanded changes and

blamed the government for corruption, unemployment, poverty and political repressions. The government and the President Ben Ali, who by protester had been perceived as a symbol of regime, tried to quell protests, announced state of emergency, but it didn't convinced protesters to abandon their ultimate goals. After a month of violent clashes between police and protesters, Ben Ali announced his willingness to initiate pro-democracy reforms, yet it didn't stop the revolution. In January 2011 Ben Ali with his family self-exiled to Saudi Arabia. In next months the new interim government announced new elections and initiated preliminary reforms concerning constitutional law, human rights, freedom of expression and anti-corruption measures.

### 3.7. Nigeria

Once again the social media as a practical tool to communicate and gather support to achieve political goals were used in Nigeria during elections in 2007 and 2009. But that time, the social media played dual role – a positive one as well as a role of instrument to spread hostile propaganda. Nigeria is a country with typical post-colonial problems. Since its independence in 1960 Nigeria is being torn apart by ethnical and religious disputes, numerous coups and corrupted elites. In 2002 a new threat emerged – Boko Haram, also known as Nigerian Taliban. This group representing Islamic extremism is using acts of terror in order to establish its own country following Sharia law. Since 2002, during a struggle between governmental forces, Christian militias from the south and Islamist from the north of the country, all sides to that conflict started to utilize social media tools, especially Twitter and microblogs associated with Nigerian newspapers (Chiluwa, Adegoke 2013). On one hand, the social media were serving as a great tool for citizens to discuss and question propaganda and act of violence committed by all parties. Several interesting initiatives emerged for the first time in Nigeria: micro-journalism, blogs reporting violations of law, websites grouping human rights activists etc. But on the other hand, the social media had also served as a tools of propaganda, and in some instances as a tool supporting terrorism or other acts of violence. For instance, similar to *Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines* during genocide in Rwanda, several Nigerian micro-journalism blogs, Boko Haram's Twitter channel and other websites were express-

ing direct support to illegal acts by providing names and addresses of foes and their families, coordinating militia actions and posting pictures of murdered enemies and burned villages.

### **3.8. Israel – Palestine**

One of the most interesting case and at the same time a very unique one, is use of the social media in conflict between Israel and Hamas in November 2012. Israel armed forces operation “Pillar of Defence” aiming at the Hamas, had been for the first time announced not during a press conference but on Twitter. A concept behind the operation was based on two pillars – typical military operations coordinated along with full coverage of activities by using social media like Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and other popular social websites. In the first days of the operation – one was high-ranked leaders of Hamas - Ahmed Jabani has been assassinated by an air strike and a movie from that attack had been posted on YouTube within next few hours. Unprecedented use of the social media brought new dynamics to conflict and increased accessibility of information. From now on, every person around the world could sit in front of a computer and follow live streaming and flow of information concerning military activities. Every action taken by Israel military forces had been immediately announced on social media sites gathering huge attention of public opinion. The answer from Hamas was imminent and one could also follow actions and operations conducted by Hamas militias. Besides that, social media popular sites became popular forum for opinion exchange between Israel and Hamas as well. The war was not only taking place on the battlefield but at the same time in digital sphere. There was several issues, mostly of moral and ethical background, brought to public discourse. Those who supported such a use of social media during armed conflicts, were appealing to democracy and a concept of a right to access to information. Moreover, enthusiast claimed that a better coverage of conflict by social media, allows society to maintain better control over military activities. Those who were skeptical, claimed that posting pictures or videos of people being assassinated, mutilated bodies, or even dead children doesn't serve any justified reason and can only contribute to conflict escalation. Regardless of moral and ethical issues, both sides of the conflict were using social media to their own benefit.

### **3.9. Natural disasters**

Social media may also play a significant role in crises caused by natural disasters. Several states as well as international non-governmental organizations are using social media to prevent and manage disasters. For instance, International Red Cross is using social media to increase public opinion of ongoing disasters in order to facilitate funds gathering necessary to provide humanitarian assistance. In the United States, social media were activated by the government in 2005 when hurricane Katrina crossed southern Florida and New Orleans, and again in 2007 during California wildfires. In such situations, social media may be utilized as an early warning system or as an emergency management tool. Through websites and mobiles phones may be issued emergency communications and warnings, send victim's request for assistance or established situational awareness and evaluation (Lindsay 2011).

### **Conclusions**

Wael Ghonim, who was a leader of online revolution in Egypt and was facilitating civil disobedience by using the social media, said “If you want to liberate a society, just give them the Internet” (Hofheinz 2011: 1). To a certain extent those words are definitely accurate. The Internet and the social media brought political and democracy changes to Egypt, Tunisia or even Kuwait but in Iran or Nigeria the Internet didn't help to prevail over powerful and oppressive regimes. There is an ongoing debate between cyber-enthusiasts and cyber-skeptics. Those who are in favor of the Internet believe that the Internet became one of the most powerful social communicators, even more important than a regular media, and therefore can alter a society alone. Those who are skeptical say, that the Internet and the social media are definitely powerful tools to initiate changes. But progression of social changes, even as rapid as during “Arab Spring”, is ultimately complicated process which needs several factors to perform in order to become successful. Nevertheless, both groups agree, that the rules of a game has changed. Taking into account crisis in Arabic and African countries described in the second part of the article, it is reasonable to come to a conclusion presented by cyber-skeptics. In none of those conflicts, the Internet and the social media were the only and decisive factor but instead of that, we may say that they played significant role

by mitigating and coordinating social groups which opposed regimes and demanded changes. F. Shirazi, who evaluated in his research the use of social media during “Arab Spring” came to a conclusion that stages of discourse development consisted of five following elements: 1) captured events, 2) social network discourse, 3) organized protests, 4) response of military forces and 5) radicalization of demands and conflict (Shirazi 2013: 7–8). It is clear, that the social media were used as a substitute for regular media like TV or newspapers, which in those countries were under state control and censorship. Common people took over tasks of journalist and “micro-reported” (Hamdy 2010: 4) about flaws, corruption, ineptness and violence of their governments. The Internet and the social media brought unique opportunity of free exchange of information and opinions. Moreover, they helped people to communicate freely, and who no longer acted in isolation from each other, empowered them in strength as a community. By connecting people, the social media created “critical mass” which was difficult to counter by regimes. Currently, according to S. Aday - The Internet and the social media can transform individuals’ approach and willingness to engage in political activity; can mitigate or aggravate group conflicts; facilitate collective actions; help regimes to surveillance their citizens and finally can help to gain international attention (Hofheinz 2011: 7). A. Adamski in his research has collected popular opinions concerning future of the social media (Adamski 2012: 121–127).

According to the research, in upcoming years, the most popular social media sites will grow even bigger taking control over smaller companies. A new model of the social media inflicts wider use of audio-visual tools (like YouTube). A very interesting and promising issue is a new system of “Web Semantic” which helps to analyze relations between users, identify the most influence one and collect selected important information posted in the social media (Adamski 2012: 124). That might become a powerful tool helping to foreseen prospective outbursts of conflicts and letting prevent them before its breakouts. Nevertheless, the social media already became tools of network-centric warfare and therefore should need more attention especially from military organizations and all who are interesting in conflict management and prevention. Even though, in my opinion, the NATO as well as the US Army, are still operating with the social media on a very general and conceptual level, is not

completely ready to face challenges being brought by the social media usage. Quite recent and interesting example of utilization by the US government the social media to initiate political changes, had been a case of establishment by US Agency for International Development (USAID) a social media web site called ZunZuneo, similar to Twitter, which originally was addressed to Cubans and was supposed to serve as a tool to communicate outside of Cuban regime censorship and control (Butler *et al.* 2014). The project soon after had been shut down due to allegations, that the CIA had been involved in its creation and management. Selected instances of utilization of the social media during “Arab Spring”, development of military doctrines concerning the social media and strategic communication, and more recent activities like an attempt of establishment of ZunZuneo on Cuba by the U.S. government are indicating that in the near future the social media will definitely play even more important role in social and political conflicts. To generalize, secure and sustainable development of countries is directly affected by spread of social media. We need to be aware of threats and be prepared to deal with plausible crises in contemporary complex conditions of global communication.

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