Protest Movements, Social Media, and the Role of Law Enforcement

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ABSTRACT

From the Iranian green movement (2009) through the London riots (2011) and the recent anti-hijab protests in Iran, protest movements have been accompanied by considerable social media activity globally. Social media users have been involved in the quick production and distribution of audio-visuals online with protest hashtags, rumors, and sometimes fabricated information. The impact of these movements demonstrates that social media can potentially play an important role in organizing large-scale socio-political events, posing a challenge for law enforcement agencies. This research aims to evaluate and analyze the use of social media for mass mobilization throughout significant protest movements from 2010 to 2022, as well as to investigate the use of social media as a tool by LEAs. This exploratory research examines the theoretical and empirical research on the use of social media for mass mobilization, social protests, and the involvement of law enforcement authorities. The discussion has shown that social media does not drive protest movements but offers momentum to them.

KEYWORDS

Internal Security, Movements, Protests, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

The act of safeguarding, maintaining peace, law and order, and defending citizens from security threats within borders can be termed internal security. Besides the traditional internal security threats, the cyber security challenges and challenges posed by social media are some of the new-fangled threats emerging out of the techno-knowledge revolution all over the world. Social media (SM) posits an emerging challenge when it is used to spread fake news, videos, and false information, creating flash mobs and communal disharmony.

Online Social Media: Based on its evolution, media can be classified as traditional media and new media. *Traditional Media* is a term often used to refer to communication channels such as books, newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. *New Media* includes media that rely on computers for redistribution such as online media, emails, digital games, websites, blogs, virtual reality, social media, online newspapers, newsgroups, etc. It offers two-way communication permitting users to get more involved and share comments and content.

Social media or specifically online social media are interactive technologies that assist and augment various forms of expressions by sharing info, thoughts, ideas, and other articulations virtually. It is a set of information technology that enables interaction and networking through virtual online communities (Kapoor et al., 2017).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) categorized SM into categories like blogs, social networking websites, collaboration projects, content communities, virtual social worlds, and virtual game worlds. Web usage

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to encourage social communication and exchange of ideas through Internet 2.0 has evolved into a revolutionary step in the early 21st century. IT revolution provided users with user-friendly spaces where they could create and transmit user-generated content on virtual social networks (Obar & Wildman, 2015).

Web 2.0 and resultant SM have evolved as depicted in figure 1.

Social media, with its reach, impact, and potential, is a potent tool to permit its users an unrestricted stream of information, entertainment, and knowledge. It not only impacts different cultures and societies but also plays an essential role in political transformations. The use of SM has changed the face of protests and movements globally by providing cheaper, faster, and more widespread access to users, irrespective of race, region, gender, and nationality.

Figure 1. Evolution of Social Media
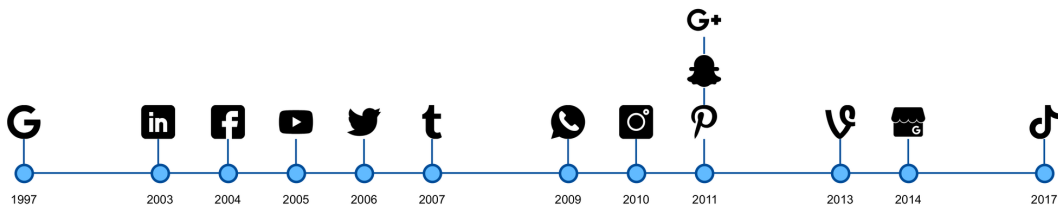
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of this research is to evaluate and analyse the use of SM for mass mobilization throughout significant protest movements from 2010 to 2022, as well as to investigate the use of SM as a tool by LEAs.

This article is the result of a long-term research effort on SM movements and demonstrations in various countries affected by recent civil disobedience and social media activism. The current exploratory study identifies and analyses the significance of SM on the development, survival, and spread of social protests and the challenges faced by LEAs in countering them. Based on nine social and political movements that span close to 15 years, this article identifies the role of SM in protest movements and the challenges faced by LEAs in countering them. A comparison of studies on social media demonstrations and movements is shown in Table 1. It outlines the research's goal, the movements covered, and the SM tools employed.

The current study has employed a keyword search approach to retrieve papers from Google Scholar, Medline, PubMed, Web of Science, and PsycINFO since 2010. The search returned over 1500 studies; however, only research reporting on social media, protest movements, online activism, and LEA challenges were included in the final evaluation. These computerized searches were complemented by screening, including publications reference lists, citation tracking, and expert suggestions. The following criteria for inclusion were used: (1) The material is published in the English language. (2) The reference involved substantial use of social media during protests, (3) The reference work was socio-political and had significant involvement of LEAs. Only peer-reviewed research based on a meta-analysis, cross-sectional survey, exploratory, theoretical, or empirical inquiry was considered. It is worth mentioning that only a few studies discussed the social media protests and the challenges posed by the LEAs in encountering them. This highlights the importance of the present study, which can prove to be beneficial to the academy. Figure 2 illustrates the rise in publications on the keywords SM protests, SM movements, online protests and online activism.

The discussion in the present article begins with an outline of the major movements in which SM has played a significant role. The timeline of the movements has been presented in the paper as seen in Figure 3. It begins with a discourse on the geo-political location, causes of the movements, techniques of the SM usage, Background and the role of the SM in the evolution and spread of the movement, and finally, the role of LEAs in countering the challenges of the movement is discussed.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of studies on social media movements and protests

Paper	Objective	Movement(s) studied	SM concerned	Conclusion
Sorour, M. K., & Lal Dey, B., 2014	Dialectics and paradoxes of social media on the political front	Civil Movements in Egypt and Bangladesh	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube	SM can be abused by political campaigners, and used as a tool to incite violence.
Sandoval-Almazanet al., 2014	Framework to study evolution of cyber activism	Protests in Mexico: the Zapatista movement of 1994; the InternetNecesario case of 2009; and political movement "I'm 132" of 2012	YouTube, Twitter, Facebook,	Social protest through online tools has evolved over time
La Rosa, A., 2014	Developing theoretical models of Social network participation and social media	Ukraine protest 2004, Columbia protest 2008, Moldova Protests 2009, Jasmine Revolution Tunisia, 2010, Tahrir Square protests (Egypt) etc.	YouTube, Twitter, Emails, Blogs, Facebook	Social media can activate social movements, but do not always have the same impact in all.
Cammaerts, B., 2015	Conceptual framework of social media roles in protests	Arab Spring, Anti-Scientology Protest, Anti-Cuts movement UK	YouTube, Twitter, Blogs, Skype, Tor-network	Social media is extensively used as a tool for collective identities, solutions and actions. Also a tool for state surveillance and repression.
Kidd, D., and McIntosh, K., 2016	Can social media create the tipping point that leads to a movement's success?	Tunisia, Egypt, Iceland, Spain, and the global Occupy movement	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, blogs and Google	Social media is used by activists for protest propagation, also used by governments as a monitoring tool.
Hill et al., 2016	To discuss sustained interconnectedness with traditional social movements, political parties, the media and the corporate targets of protests.	Internet-mediated protest movement, Stand Against Modern Football.	Blogs, Twitter, Facebook	Movements establish stable forms of organisation and leadership at the networked intersections in order to advance instrumental programmes of change.
Gerbaudo, P., 2017	Explores the internal functioning, leadership roles and strengths of social media teams	Occupy Wall Street, Indignados and UK Uncut	Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, and Livestream	Leadership is being recast using social media
Poell, Thomas and van Dijck, José, 2018	Transformation of protests using social media	Arab Spring, Occupy movement, Egyptian uprising, Tunisian uprising	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and blogs	Leadership and collective identities plays pivotal role.
Mundt et al., 2018	Discuss challenges and risks associated with using social media as a platform for scaling up	Black Lives Matter	Facebook and Twitter	Careful management of online media platforms is necessary to mitigate concrete, physical risks that social media can create for activists.

Figure 2. Volume of writings since 2010 that included the keywords "SM protests," "SM movements," "online protests," and "online activism."Note that the graph only takes into account articles that contain the requested keyword(s) in their title or abstract
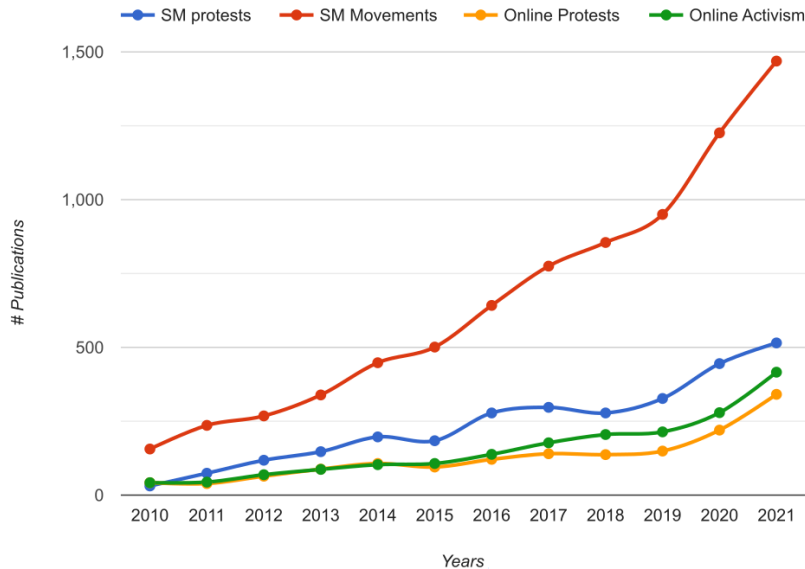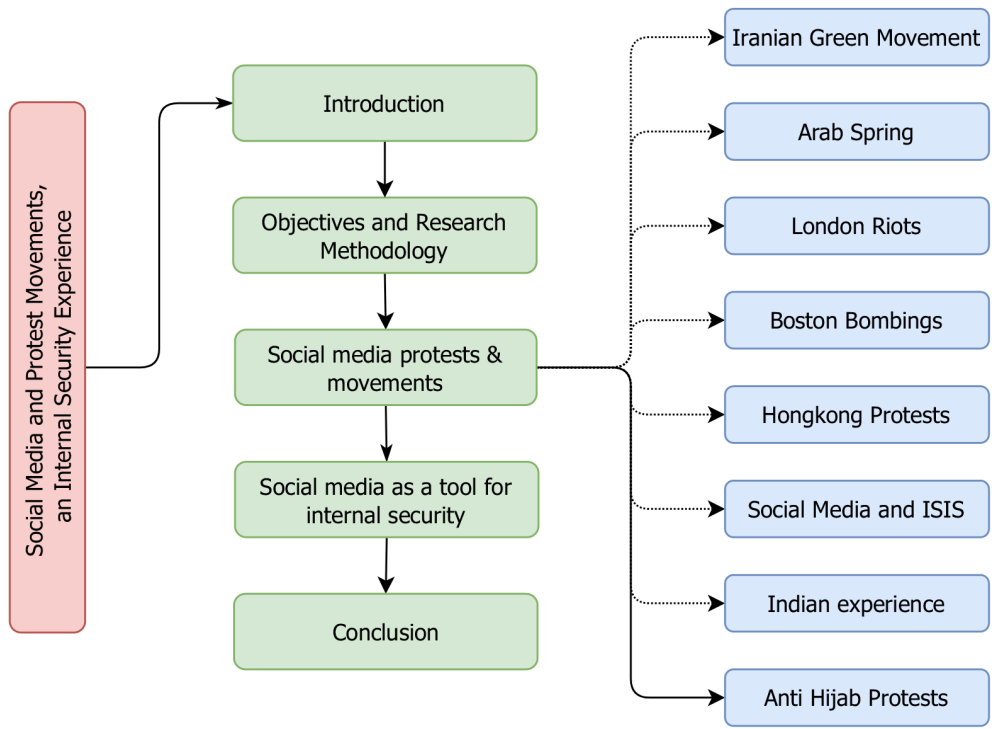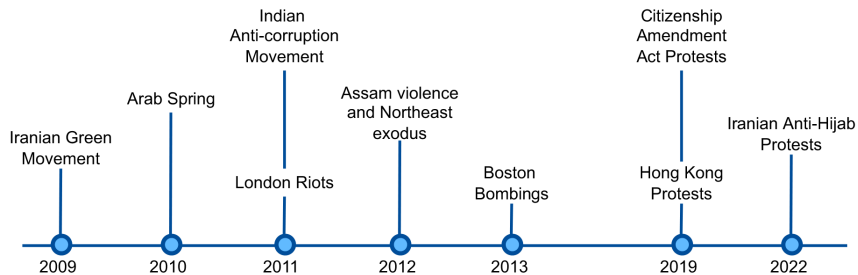

Figure 3. Layout of the paper

Figure 4. Time-line of social movements with prominent use of Social Media technologies

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The evolution of internet 2.0 facilitated social media use which has now reached almost 3.8 billion users (49%) globally, by Jan 2020. There are more than 4.5 billion global internet users with nearly 60% of the world's population online (Navarro et al. 2020). This number of users on social media is a huge mass that can stimulate any social structure and system to cause political upheavals. Figure 4 depicts a timeline of major global protest movements to use social media substantially. These events are significant not only from the perspective of the protestors but also LEAs as they have harnessed the strength of SM not only for suppression but also for community policing.

Social media can help reduce the costs and obstacles to any movement by aiding virtual interaction to generate mass mobilization. The prominent role of social media during social movements is to allow the public to share the widespread discontent in society and connect them with people willing to engage in the political process. Various global movements are a witness to the fact that once social media sets in motion there is no stopping, which not only causes security and privacy concerns but can also overthrow regimes, as discussed in the following case studies. Table 2 gives a summary of popular movements since 2009 and the social media tools used to propagate them.

Iranian Green Movement or the Twitter Revolution 2009

Timeline: Jun 2009 to Feb 2010
Geo-Political Location: Iran
Causes: Voting scam (alleged) and irregularities in democratic process.
*Techniques***:** Demonstrations, riots, civil disobedience, strike actions, Internet and Social Media Activism
Background and Role of Social Media: Twitter was an important tool during the protests, which became the leading source of information. Major news agencies such as CNN and BBC News relied on and acquired much of the facts and news by going through tweets of Twitter users and videos uploaded to YouTube. The protestors carried out DDoS (Distributed Denial of Service) attacks against the newly elected president's website and exchanged attack tools online, which thus resulted in the government curtailing internet access. After the declaration of the results, the government resumed the Internet service with lower bandwidth and blocked websites such as YouTube and news sites such as BBC and Guardian (Keller, 2010). Mobile phone services were also barred (including text messages) or became very challenging to use before Election Day. Most users extensively used and exchanged web proxy servers to get rid of the restrictions, but that too was restrained by authorities (Rahimi, 2011).
Role of LEAs: Iran is famous for its most sophisticated Internet filtering systems that radically intensified during the protests. Yet, the online activists continued their resistance against online suppression by using tactics such as anonymization, network reformation, circumvention, self-censoring, and being inconspicuously active (Honari, 2015).

Table 2. Summary of Protests and social media usage

Name of the Event	Timeline	Location	Cause(s) / Objective(s)	Techniques	Social Media used (major)
Iranian Green Movement	Jun 2009 to Feb 2010	Iran	Election transparency, Recall of elected president	Demonstrations, riots, civil disobedience, strikes, Social Media Activism	Facebook, Twitter, Youtube
Arab Spring	Dec 2010 to Dec 2012	North Africa, Middle East	Democracy, Fair elections, Economic liberty, Human rights, Jobs, Change in regime, Secularism	Civil disobedience, Demonstrations, Internet activism, Riots, Social media activism, Strikes	Facebook, Twitter, Youtube
London Riots	6 to 11 Aug 2011	London	Protest against police shooting of Mark Duggin	Rioting, looting, arson, assault, Social Media Activism	BB messenger, Flickr, Sukey, Twitter
Boston Bombings	15 Apr 2013	Boston, Massachusetts	Retribution for U.S. military action in Afghanistan and Iraq	Use of Social Media to trace perpetrators by Boston Police	Facebook, Twitter
Hong Kong Protests	15 Mar 2019 to 2021	Hong Kong	Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment), Hong Kong–Mainland China conflict, economic and social inequality Bill 2019	Demonstrations, Flash mobs, Strikes, launching petitions, strikes, SM Activism	LIHKG, Airdrop, Reddit, Telegram
India: Assam Violence and North East Exodus	Jul 2012 to Sep 2012	Assam and retaliation all over country	Ethnic-Communal Clashes over illegal immigration	Use of online media and text messages	Facebook, YouTube
India: Citizenship Amendment Act Protests	Dec 2019 to Mar 2020	New Delhi	Introduction of Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, Anticipation of National Register of Citizens	Civil disobedience, Strikes, Stone pelting, Social media activism.	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Youtube
Iranian Anti Hijab protests	Sep 2022	Iran	Against Iranian morality police enforcer of the conservative Islamic dress and behavior rules	Ripping and burning head scarf, cutting of hairs by women, violent demonstrations	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp

The Green movement remains the first major world event broadcast globally using social media. Looking at the repressive regime in Iran, the enormous amount of instantaneous information about this repression which came out in public through social media gave a glimpse into the political instability troubling it. With the help of Twitter and various social media websites, the revolutionaries attracted the gaze of the world to the repressions going on in Iran (Keller, 2010). The virtual world realized the strength of SM for the first time during this protest movement where LEAs resorted to repressive steps to control access to the internet and to control freedom.

Arab Spring

Timeline: Dec 2010 to Dec 2012
Geo-political Location: North Africa and Middle East mainly Bahrain, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Syria and Libya
Causes: Authoritarianism, Monarchy, Political corruption, Infringement of Human-rights, Lack of Employment opportunities, Price rises, Poverty, Religious Sectarianism
Techniques: Civil defiance, Protests, political action through internet, Riots, Strikes
Background and Role of Social media: Thousands of protesters assembled across the Middle East originating from Tunisia in Dec 2010 and mobilized through sites like Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook,

to raise voices against oppression by the existing political regime. The Arab spring arose from the hope of a better world through activism on the internet and SM use. Social media and its users could become a powerful force at the beginning of the revolution as the government agencies (especially law enforcement) could not realize the potential of SM and were ill-equipped to restrict it (Stepanova, 2011).

Various sites like Facebook and Twitter were major platforms that performed significant functions, especially in Egypt, Tunisia, and the rest of the Arab world.

The oppressed citizens of these countries resorted to SM to raise their voices against alleged police brutalities, and human rights violations by creating pages on Facebook for the world to watch. Almost all types of electronic media devices were used during this period to communicate and spread the word. Many countries in Arab such as Yemen and Libya, had poor internet connectivity and penetration rates, so the revolutionaries used text messages, MMS, emails, images, and video clips to through light on the ongoing situation and to make the world aware of the suppression going on (Stepanova, 2011).

Social media played an essential role in enabling communication among political activists by facilitating demonstrations, broadcasting content, and promoting awareness about local and global protests (Salem & Mourtada, 2012). Research supports the evidence that online revolutionary conversations paved the way for a mass demonstration and social media activism shaped political discussions during Arab Spring (Howard et al., 2011).

Role of LEAs: Over time, Government agencies attained expertise in not only using SM but also suppressing activists through various controlling strategies. They resorted to shutting down the Internet and Facebook. They also started to request sites to remove tweets and even arrested the admins of various pages on Facebook for violating the norms (Kirkpatrick & Sangar, 2011). In Egypt, social media was used by Government to encourage citizens' participation in pro-government political processes; at the same time, it also monitored traffic and blocked access to suspicious websites to prevent protestors from organizing (Arthur, 2011). SM played a key role during the Arab Spring in assembling and organizing masses, shaping opinions, and influencing change (ibid).

Around five million Facebook users were encouraged to attend the protests by information broadcast on SM platforms (Fowler, 2011). The use of SM for speed and interactivity was one of the significant developments during this uprising which replaced already existing advertisement tools such as paper leaflets and brochures or telephonic communication (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011). The hitherto untapped potential of the SM was now being utilized for exchanging and disseminating ideas and incidents globally (Gustin, 2017). It will not be correct to say that the uprising was caused by the SM but it surely escalated the process manifold. Through its immense potential, the SM also helped the world peek into the otherwise hidden territories of the movement (Kamel, 2013).

The 2011 London Riots

Timeline: 6th to 11th Aug 2011
Location: Tottenham, London, Several districts of London
Causes: A man of mixed race was shot down by police during protests.
Techniques: Rioting, looting, arson, mugging, assault, murder, SM activism
Background and Role of Social media: The London Riots which took place around 2011, started by widespread mass agitations against the custodial death of a citizen of mixed race that escalated into large-scale violence and looting stretching over several days. The Rioters in the London riots were very techno-savvy as they used various location-specific media technologies to communicate. They posed in front of looted goods and posted these pictures. They also used apps like 'Sukey' to identify the real-time location of police forces and also used highly encrypted techniques like blackberry messenger to coordinate attacks (Gupta & Brooks, 2013).

Role of LEAs: It was tough for the UK Government to restrict these rioters as it felt technologically handicapped in front of attacks by these masses. However, the law enforcement agencies with the help of citizens soon overcome this technological disadvantage and hit back using the same techniques as used by the mob to nab the culprits and ensure the security of citizens. Law enforcement agencies used Twitter to gather information about offenders and to gain the support of citizens. They also used Flickr (A site to share pictures) to upload and identify the images of rioters that they had captured through CCTVs. They publicized their efforts by initiating a campaign, namely 'shop a looter' (Denef, Kaptein, Bayerl, & Ramirez, 2012). Police affixed huge pictures of rioters with their faces and hailed citizens to help them with their identification. They also used the micro-blogging site Twitter to identify the suspects by displaying police helpline numbers to submit desired information. Most of the rioters were nabbed by the Police using the SM sites (Davis, Alves, & Sklansky, 2014).

Boston Bombing, 2013

Timeline: 15th Apr 2013
Location: Boston, Massachusetts, USA
Causes: Bombings during Boston Annual Marathon
Techniques: Use of Social Media to trace perpetrators by Boston Police
Background and Role of Social media: E The explosion of two bombs during the Boston Annual Marathon caused the death of three and injuries to more than 250 led the Boston police department to unleash the power of SM for creating alerts, distributing information about the suspect, and developing community policing to investigate explosions.

Role of LEAs: The potential of Twitter was effectively harnessed by Police for updating the public about the status of the ongoing probe, appeasing them, involving them in locating suspects, checking miscommunication, and controlling public tweets about police locations. The police department maintained an official Twitter account which was managed by senior offices and volunteers from the public to inform the public about the status of the probe. The tweets released from this account and the Facebook page of the police department became the most trustworthy source of information such as images of suspects, media conferences, cordoned-off areas, etc (Pandalai, 2016). SM use by police was able to project itself as the authority for information and coordination during the crisis and restrict damage (Purbrick, 2019). This is one of the instances where police have positively harnessed the strengths of Social Media and involved the public in future investigations. This created a positive and helping image of police in the mind of the masses and a trust relation was built between the police and citizens.

Hong Kong Protests

Timeline: 15th Mar 2019 to Present
Location: Hong Kong
Causes: Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment), Hong Kong and China conflict, economic and social inequality Bill 2019
Techniques: Demonstrations, Flash mobs, Strikes, Launching petitions, Strikes, SM Activism
Background and Role of Social media: T The Fugitive Offenders Amendment Bill-2019 was resisted by a large number of people which resulted in massive leaderless protests mostly by youngsters. They used the power of SM to coordinate, communicate, organize, deliberate upon, and exchange ideas about the ongoing protests. The use of digital platforms especially SM has benefitted SM activists in more than one way. The protestors used a Chinese platform (LIKHG) similar to Reddit

to doxx the law enforcement agencies and their families. For communications relating to protests, such as real-time locations of police vehicles, their movements, etc. they used the Telegram app and Airdrop. The airdrop was considered a safer approach due to its ability to send information over Wi-Fi and Bluetooth without being discovered (Lijiam, 2019). Microblogging site Twitter and SM platform Reddit were used to deliver information about the protests.

Role of LEAs: The Internet technology was not used by protestors alone but the Chinese Government also used it to gain support and quash it. These protests were depicted by the Government as fake protests and riots motivated by western forces. The government posted pictures in which protestors were shown destroying public transport systems and also the Military at standby to take action (ibid). These protests caused internal security and disruption of peace and development in Hong Kong.

Social Media and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)

Timeline: 2013 till present
Location: Global (with focus on Iraq and Syria)
Causes: To promote recruitment and spread goals of ISIS among young population
Techniques: Mass production of videos/ music videos to spread message and for propaganda, use of ChatSecure, TextSecure, and Redphone for private chats
Background and Role of SM: ISIS has made use of the Internet and online social media sites in an unprecedented way. It is targeting youngsters, especially from western countries to join it and engage in violent combats in the same way as other Jihadis. Not only boys but young western women are also being lured into terrorism to play a supporting role in jihadi outfits. They motivate their followers to commit acts of terror in their hometowns whenever it is not possible to travel to the Middle East. ISIS is specifically targeting the millennial generation by producing videos, films, and music videos imitating popular English movie culture to influence youngsters (Blaker, 2015).

The Indian Experience

Indian social milieu has been a witness to the untapped power of Social media since 2011, during India against Corruption protests led by Anna Hazare. Thousands of youth joined this movement with slogans like I am Anna. Though the movement was largely peaceful the sheer number of people involved in it surely tested law and order within the country. Nirbhaya incident in Dec 2013 was almost a shadow of the 2011 movement involving huge crowds, protests marches, and mobilization on social media platforms. It was a case that shook the very foundations of the country and tried the law and order machinery as well.

Assam Violence

Timeline: 20th Jul to 15th Sep 2012
Location: Assam, India
Causes: Ethnic-communal clashes between Bodos and Bengali-speaking Muslims
Techniques: Use of Messaging and social media to spread hatred
Background and Role of Social media: E Ethnic violence broke out between Bodos and Bengali Muslims in Assam in July 2012 over illegal immigration and the consequent rise of the Muslim population in the state. Tensions between Bodos and Bengali-speaking Muslims escalated and resulted in riots in the Kokrajhar district of Assam, resulting in massive losses to both sides. As a reaction to this violence, large-scale violence and rioting erupted in Maharashtra, and people from the Northeast were attacked in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh. This violence took a severe form and threats of more attacks were circulated through hate SMS, MMS, and Social Media. The government barred a large number of text messages from a single number for a fortnight to stop rumors but another wave took over Facebook and

Twitter to intimidate the people from the northeast. These rumors resulted in a mass exodus of people from Northeast from all over the country. According to estimates around 250000 people had to leave their respective states to rush back to North East (Biswas, 2017).

Citizenship Amendment Act Protests

Timeline: 4th Dec to Mar 2020
Location: New Delhi, India
Causes: Introduction of Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, Anticipation of implementation of the National Register of Citizens of India (NRC).
Techniques: Civil disobedience, Sit-ins, Strike, Stone pelting, Hashtag activism, Social media activism.
Background and Role of Social media: The Anti-Citizenship act and National Register of Citizens protests in Delhi (2019-2020) were escalated by users of social media by giving communal color to these protests. Social media has changed 'traditional models' of communal violence. The impact of globalization, digital media, and the Internet can be seen now more clearly than ever today, disrupting the internal security of the Nation.

In the communal riots in Delhi in Feb. 2020, various videos of policemen torturing people were doing rounds, similarly videos of youth waving pistols in their hands were potrayed to be rioters with a particular religious identity. These fake news, hate videos, images and memes quickly spread all over the region, turning the local rife into a national-level communal disturbance.

Iranian Anti Hijab Protests

Timeline: 16th Sep 2022 onwards
Location: Tehran, Iran
Causes: Death of Mahsa Amini, mandatory hijab laws, human rights violation by morality police.
Techniques: Disobeying hijab laws, Setting head scarfs on fire, Social media activism and demonstrations.
Background and Role of social media: Protests against obligatory hijab in Iran began in 2017. Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish Iranian lady, was detained by the Guidance Patrol on September 14, 2022, and died on September 16. Protests were organized in several locations in Iran following her funeral. Countrywide strikes were called later. Access to social media was severely limited. Facebook, Telegram, TikTok, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp were all prohibited across the country. The prohibitions, according to state media, were due to "national security" concerns. Content-based filtering was used to block sending of text messages to intended recipients.

Social Media as a Security Tool

Previous sections have presented instances of social media being employed as a tool for expression, cohesion, and also sometimes for division among users. As discussed, SM protest communications not only expose the world to the disturbances caused by socio-political upheavals, often challenging regimes, but also allows demonstrators to organize their operations. Not only were the popular social media sites like Twitter and Facebook used for mass mobilization but the sites such as Indymedia, LIHKG, and Sukey were used as per the specific user practices of the protestors during protests in different geo-political locations. The ubiquitous sharing options on SM platforms encouraged individuals to highlight and share news stories and events. It was challenging for the LEAs when activists increasingly structure their communication and organizing methods around the sharing mechanisms of social platforms, orienting these efforts toward the platforms' distinctive processes of computational screening. The discussions suggest that the revolutionary movements will undoubtedly involve, and may even require, social media, globally. Furthermore, the target of protests – autocratic

regimes, democratic governments, military, and police – are also on social media and are utilizing it successfully as a tool for monitoring.

As observed in the case of the Green revolution (Iran) sophisticated filtering techniques were used by the LEA; during Arab Spring (Egypt) SM was used to encourage the people's participation in pro-government political processes. During the London riots, the LEAs were observed to be using the SM for community support and policing in the same way also, in the case of the Boston bombings the power of SM was harnessed by updating and sharing the status of inquiry and trust-building. In the case of Hong Kong protests, SM was used by LEAs extensively to create anti-protest feelings among citizens, claiming the riots and disturbances to be fake news.

Governments and LEAs were seen to be using SM as a tool for public outreach. It not only assisted in information dissemination and gauging public sentiment towards its policies and practices but is a primary tool for community policing in today's world. Agencies around districts, states, and nations have digital footprints on social media. LEAs also used SM to issue warnings and share real-time information that protects the public in emergencies. They also used SM to solicit public support in reporting crime and to foster community trust through transparency and improved communication. The usage of SM during the protest movements and peace situations by LEAs can be for a) notifying public of public safety concerns, b) community outreach and engagement, c) public relations, d) notifying public of non-crime issues, e) soliciting tips on crime, f) monitoring public sentiment, g) intelligence gathering for investigations and h) communicating with government agencies. Social media has evolved as a helpful tool for LEAs for public outreach and building community relationships. Doing so enhances community engagement toward crime prevention and control.

CONCLUSION

"The revolution will be tweeted" underlines the ubiquity of social media as a tool in a global techno-deterministic society. Social media and information systems are emerging as a powerful medium of social change challenging the internal security of many nation-states. This paper discusses the SM movements and protests since 2010 across the globe and how it plays a role in mass movements and socio-political dynamics. Social media catalyzes protests, movements, and conflicts due to its large-scale communication capability and reach. Social media does not cause protest movements but provides impetus to them. It has emerged as a source of information for cultural, social, political, or economic issues and is relied upon by the masses. Maintaining internal security and peace is a global concern for LEAs as most nations are weighed down by conflicts, protests, terrorism, communalism, fundamentalism, and ethnic disturbances. Ensuring a suitable presence of LEAs on SM platforms will not only help in mobilizing the populations across geopolitical boundaries but also stop the misuse of SM by building an atmosphere of trust with stakeholders during mass movements and mobilizations. Governments and LEAs have also used them as a tool for monitoring, surveillance, and oppression. For instance, the Iranian government has restricted recent Anti-Hijab protests' presence on SM by employing content-based message filtering and social media blackouts.

Social media can positively influence sociopolitical changes while posing a challenge to LEAs, making room for future research. Researchers may also look into cross-cultural concerns related to social media usage, as well as the sociopolitical constraints faced by LEAs due to regional variations and technological challenges.

COMPETING INTERESTS

All authors of this article declare there are no competing interest.

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