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Did Twitter and Facebook really build a global revolution ?

By Jina Moore

In “Did Twitter and Facebook really build a global revolution ?”, Jina Moore highlights the multiple roles of social medias in global revolution and how its impact varies geographically. Moore also emphasizes on many occasions by citing communication experts how interaction between off-line and online activism propel momentum of protests. Besides writing about the effectiveness of modern social medias as organizing tool and broadcasting platforms in many Middle East countries, Moore also illustrates how technologies predating Facebook and Twitter was used as a mean of protest. Most importantly, Moore shows us some of the challenges faced by social activists from the governments and private companies. Consequently, she provides the readers with a holistic view of social medias with its limitations and contributions to global revolution.

Moore with her experience as human rights and post-conflict reporter enabled her to support her arguments with real life testimonies of social activists from around the world. This certainly helps to boost her credibility while drawing the connection between modern technologies and social activism. Moore's writing style that paves paragraphs with contrasting accounts is effective in keeping the readers engaged. In addition, I appreciate the effort to educate the readers with how predecessors of social medias were used by social activists in past revolutions. Therefore, the readers are able to compare and contrast with the roles played by Facebook and Twitter. She also deploy some scare tactics towards the end of the article by introducing the willingness of some social media companies to share your personal data with the authority. In my opinion, it is vital to bring online privacy into the picture, so that readers could empathize and relate with risks faced by social activists who protests online through these social platforms. Moore's writing is not without its flaw as including too many examples in the article may bury away the big picture. She also writes under the pretense that her readers have some basic understanding of modern technologies; she did not explain the differences between Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other technologies.

Moore repeatedly mentions the how the symbiosis between off-line and online activism drives the protests forward by quoting the failure of protesters in Uganda to gain traction on the streets despite massive response on Twitter. This reminded of the viral circulation of “ALS Ice Bucket Challenge” on Facebook that prompts the public to raise awareness of the disease. Though many people responded to the challenge, the actual number of peoples who seek to understand ALS and donate to the fund is pale in comparison to its popularity on Facebook. Furthermore, she adds that social medias may not be able to transcend the deep social division and reach out to those who are disconnected, hinting that social media alone is not sufficient to build a revolution. However, this is not always true as the United States quest to establish the Stop Online Privacy Act(SOPA) was thwarted by Aaron Swartz who encouraged implicated websites to alter their web pages. Besides that, Aaron also started Demand Progress that organizes people online to contact Congress and other leaders to talk about civil liberties and government reform. From the story of Swartz, we learn that the importance of an off-line component to the success of a revolution depends on the scale of revolution and also country.

In her article, Moore argues that social media such as Facebook and Twitter does not play a role to organize uprising, instead, she notes that cultures of online activism plays a more pivotal role. She further substantiates her claim by citing the success of protest against President Bashar al-Assad led by a blogger who has 50,000 readers a month. Although I concur with Moore that the

newest platform is not of utmost importance, but features such as anonymity, fail-tolerant and ease of use is crucial to build a global revolution that overcomes borders and continents. Moore warns us about rapid progress of countries such as China and Thailand in censorship and blocking social media websites; therefore, a newer platform with more features such as Tor Network that provides some degree of anonymity is increasingly more important than cultures of online activism. We learn from this article that off-line activism is fundamental and culture of online activism had been the driving force behind countless revolution. However, achieving global revolution would require more sophisticated social media platform than Facebook and Twitter that could protect social activists from the authorities. It is time to look ahead of time and think about global revolution in a larger context such as tackling global warming, health education and energy crisis which may require a different toolsets.