

Interview Questions

Thank you, Professor Tufeccki, for granting me this interview.

We have seen recently a number of protests in the world for democratization or against corruption or social/economic injustice.

What, in your opinion, has been, a common facilitator in all these movements?

Well, there is not a single movement that determines all the movement. These revolutions in Arab countries are about reaction against oppressive regimes. These countries had same person ruling thirty, forty years. Some countries had same political party ruling for decades. In case of Occupy Wall Street people are unaccountable for their actions. During housing crisis although common people were affected money managers who were mostly responsible for it were unaffected.

What, in your opinion, have been the major differences in revolutions of the past versus the present-day revolutions? The common driver in all revolutions, right or wrong, has been a fight against injustice.

I don't think that there are not that many differences. The major difference is that first time in history people elsewhere in the world had direct connection with people in Tahrir Square. You can tweet videos from Syria showing horrible things happening to people. In history we never had this much active participation of people. I feel that instead of mainstream media with a particular view here we have people actively involved in making news and disseminating it.

My readings clearly show that technology has played an important role in recent revolutions such as the Arab Spring. Often times, because of the Internet and the Social Media technology, people had the confidence and courage to organize mass protests which would have otherwise been subdued.

How would you respond to the critics who are marginalizing the importance of technology citing that revolutions happened also in the past when modern technology was not available?

Technology will not change much the way how wars are conducted. Technology has effect on how this plays out. That does not mean it changes people's motivation. It changes how ordinary people communicate with each other, the speed of communication as well as infrastructure. I am not saying that technology is a magic wand that can change anything you want. It changes how things work. Social media changes the process for ordinary people.

In a vibrant democracy, the media and the press should be independent in meaningfully monitoring the government, its actions and policies, sometimes applauding them and at others criticizing them. Fairness in reporting and journalism is essential to creating well informed citizens who can then better participate in the democratic process. However, we have seen that in a developed democracy such as the US, mainstream media outlets have become propaganda machines for special interests instead of engaging in fair, truthful coverage and reporting.

Do you feel that fairness in reporting and journalism can be restored through independent, technologically empowered eyewitness reporters using social media as well as independent bloggers? Or do you fear that such technology in the hands of average citizens will only create chaos in the crowded news and opinion spectrum?

I think citizen journalists will help solve problems to a certain extent, but will not completely eradicate it. There will be rumors, misinformation as well as coverage that you might not have in normal media. In Occupy Wall Street movement, social media and citizen journalism is a very important change.

How, in your view, has money affected our democratic institutions and how do you see it continuing to impact it in the future?

I feel it has a major effect on our democratic institutions. The effect is mostly negative. It can affect our financial markets, can finance wars. There are many ways it can affect politics . The effect is certainly not a good one.

Recently, NY Times reported that Saudi Prince invested \$300 million into Twitter. With a representative of a monarchy or a dictatorial regime investing into a company such as Twitter has the danger that such investors can exert undue pressure on the management of these companies to block out social media coverage in those countries or in incriminating the citizens of these countries.

Are such actions by investors from monarchies or dictatorial regimes a major threat, in your opinion, to the role of social media in democratizing movements?

It certainly is a concern that these platforms will be centrally organized because of this. These kingdoms themselves have become part of political and social commons because of this.

Thank you, Professor Tufekci for taking your time for this interview.

Thank you.

Bye.

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