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**Social Unrest in Internet: Great Britain and Middle
East Experience
(Paper in progress)**

Through the IT revolution, information has become the main resource of the XXI century and its role in modern society has greatly increased.

The number of Internet users is growing every day. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) this number has exceeded the line in the 3.2 billion people worldwide (International Telecommunication Union, 2015, 1)

Fast developing information technologies play an important role in our everyday life. They penetrate into all spheres of public life, including economy, culture, social life, politics, etc. (Tkacheva, 2013)

Today, the Internet technologies are providing enormous opportunities, but also huge risks. Quickly intruding into the realm of politics, new ICT are not only qualitatively changing the old concepts, attitudes and stereotypes, but also destroying the usual behavioral models between individuals and political institutions.

All of us used to think that the Internet is a free territory. It seems that it includes everything - current and quickly available information, free exchange of opinions, discussion of topical issues, and a free communication among people. But it brings both pluses and minuses. Such speed and accessibility makes coordination activities among the discontented much easier, and helps to spread the information which they need.

The way of supplying information plays an important role in the formation of a certain opinions of the population. So only a small percentage of people compares the information taken from one source of information with information from another source. If we compare what the news tells about the same event, we are able to see the great difference:

- what information is supplied;
- how it is presented;
- the attitude to it;
- the amount given for each question;
- the speed of its dissemination in different countries.

Internet as a convenient and fast way to spread information but cause of it is also often criticized. If we recall the mass unrest of 2011, the experts views the Internet and social networks as an important element in the beginning of social unrest. (Pollock, 2011) Others on the contrary consider such accusations unfounded. Blaming Twitter and Facebook, BlackBerry and other social networks with their instant messaging means the same as blaming individual trees in forest fires. These are just inevitable aspects of our increasingly global and technologically developed society, and they can be incredibly powerful triggers for both good and bad.

It should be noted that social networks really become an effective mechanism of social life. (Morozov, 2014) With its help a lot of people got a chance to be heard, to have the opportunity to evaluate current events and share their opinions with others.

The main task of social networks during the unrests in the Middle East (Duthel, 2015) and in the UK it is the maximum available coverage of the situation and the timely submission of the required information. As a bright example we can lead the well-known participants of the "Arab Spring" – bloggers Wael Ghonim (Gonim, 2012) and Lina Ben Manny. They strongly attracted the attention not only of the ordinary citizens, but also the world's media. They are even considered as possible candidates for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011 and American «Time» Magazine named Ghonim the most influential person in 2011.

If we compare the riots in London and the uprisings in Tahrir Square (Egypt), despite the very obvious differences, we can find some interesting similarities between them. For example, in both cases, the beginning of the demonstrations has been associated with human death, that was the authorities arbitrariness.

In the United Kingdom (4 August 2011) it was Mark Duggan 29-year-old father of four children suspected of selling drugs. He was shot during the arrest. The protest moved out Duggan friends and relatives. On the third day the peaceful protest turned into riots and unrests that had no direct ties with Mark Duggan murder apparently.

During the fourth day the unrest spread in several areas of London, and then in other UK cities: Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, Salford, Liverpool, Bournemouth, Nottingham, Milton Keynes. (England riots: Maps and timeline, 2011; The Guardian, 2011) First there were just looting, robbery and disorderly conduct. Ultimately violators looted and destroyed a large number of stores (from supermarket to electronics shops).

Despite the fact that the additional security forces (police number was increased from 6 to 16 thousand) and empowerment were withdrawn on the streets and they were allowed to use water cannons to disperse the crowd, such measures didn't bring any results. Not everyone thought that the police actions and the authorities were effective and in time – so it became one of the most debated and hot topics in the Internet and media.

In social networks people again and again post such comments: "Total police inaction is simply surprising. The police do not do anything. They just stand still, or go in the line to the crowd. No arrests, no one intercepts the looting, nobody even beats with a baton the thieves. The police just standing there."

In Egypt (6 June 2010 in Alexandria) it was Khaled Said, a 27-year-old blogger who was tortured to death by the two police officers. After this incident, Khaled Said has become a symbol in the struggle against the authorities arbitrariness and violence. On Facebook and Twitter people express their dissatisfaction with the government that eventually used as the trigger for the protests.

Here are some of the twits:

«@Mohamed_Atwa: # KhaledSaid Thank you that started the revolution. Thank you for that awakened in me a man. Allah yer7amak ya rab [God bless your soul]»

«@ Mariamarafat: For those who have forgotten, #KhaledSaid was the spark that ignited the Egyptian revolution. The least we can do to remember him to this day.»

«@ Maishams: He died that we might live. RIP #KhaledSaid »

Thus in both cases we can see a good and timely work with ICT in the Internet. Required topics and hashtags were on the top search queries.

Another similar feature is that in the both cases the first on the streets were young people. And the reason for this was the high level of unemployment also both in the UK and in Egypt. Undoubtedly, the causes of the unemployment are different. In Egypt, the reason was the so-called "youth hill". (Korotaev, 2011, 45-88) In the United Kingdom of course there was no "youth hill". The average age of the Egyptian population is 23.9, and in the UK - 39.9. (Human Development Report 2010, 193) In Egypt, the demographic situation is completely different than in the UK. Also in the Arab countries, the rebels had a specific political goals and objectives, making demands and political slogans. While in the UK there were nothing except the acts of blind rage and vandalism. But both in these cases were a layer of well-educated, qualified young people who for various reasons could not find a job.

However, these two cases apparently had completely different causes and effects. In Egypt, the protests were the results of decades of corrupt and authoritarian rule of the dictator, as well as lack of food, etc, and they led to the overthrow of the government. In the UK, the events that allegedly provoked the riots were just the main excuse for the young thugs to loot shops and burn things.

In the midst of disorder and destruction during the London riots was a rather comical episode when the Iranian authorities urged British government to exercise restraint against protesters. The appeal was comical, because in 2009 Iran itself used extremely cruel methods to suppress protests. (Carafano, 2009; Bernal, 2009) However, in London police managed to end the unrest using traditional means of controlling the crowd. But later, when the society start being indignant about the unsatisfactory police actions of suppressing the riots, David Cameron, British Prime Minister, made a very controversial proposal. The next time, he said, the government can disable access to the Internet, do the same as Iran in 2009.

Such measures to increase the control over the information sphere, including the Internet can be traced very clearly in Europe, USA and many other countries. (Kukartseva,

2013, 152-157) This caused widespread discontent. It states a question whether it is possible in a democratic society to infringe on people's rights, prohibiting communication in social networks?

Nevertheless, many people have rejected that plan, saying that in this case the UK would be "in the bad company". If England will limit the activities of social networks then "what will distinguish it from the Arab tyrannies or China", which is also banned sites and block social communication asked an American journalist Jeff Jarvis. (Jarvis, 2011)

But in the end the UK government didn't disable the network, but Egypt's did. In January 2011, when anti-government protests were in full swing, the state security service blocked Facebook and Twitter. On the night of January 27 was an attempt to completely turn off the Internet and limit cellular communication. (Williams, 2011) First of all such limitations affected the middle class, and they were deprived with the free access to information and to the Internet sources so they began to go to the streets to find the information out there, often as a result they joined the protesters. Such measures have led to increase of the internal tensions.

In Libya during the revolution of 2011-2012 in mobilizing people and preparation of protests the main attention was given to the international broadcasting. Though only 5% of the population had Internet access, it has also been completely turned off in March.

The organization "Reporters without borders" (Reporters Sans Frontières) added in 2006 Syria to the list of "enemies of the Internet". (List of the 13 Internet Enemies, 2006) Syrian security services are constantly monitoring the Internet, watching the network space and block lots of sites.

It should be noted that in these countries the level of censorship in the media has reached an unprecedented degree. Restricting access to the Internet, which the government

used to quell the riots, has mostly led to a new round of dissatisfaction. All this gave rise a lot of debate in the world community about human rights and free access to the Internet. (Chakrabarti, 2014; Cohen, 2012; Paine, 2015)

The debate about the role of the Internet in politics has been underway for a long time and no consensus reached yet. The main question is how to use the positive aspects of the Internet development and to avoid its negative ones. The question is still open. In spite of all the problems it is simply impossible nowadays to win the struggle for power without using Mass Media or the Internet. Internet technologies, step by step, are becoming an important tool in the political life, creating new forms and mechanisms of political communication and introducing Internet communication in politics.

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