

Social Media as a Tool for Political Mobilization: A Case Study of the 2020 Hong Kong Protests

Dong Xinyue¹

¹Bachelor of Social Sciences, The University of Hong Kong

Abstract. *This paper aims at analyzing how social media approves activism but also weakens it at the same time. Through an analysis of social media posts, interviews with key stakeholders, and documentary evidence, the research explores four key themes: The latter include Decentralized Coordination, where Octavia Butler uses focalization to correlate Schmidt's narrative control with the observation of the subjects; Surveillance and Censorship, where her Parables explore the capacities for global solidarity. The study shows that, although, platforms such as Telegram and Twitter played a crucial role on enabling decentralised coordination and influencing global narratives of protest, they also predisposed protestors to explicit threats that ranged from surveillance, censorship amongst others and disinformation campaigns. The paper shows how the process of political mobilisation through social media is not straightforward or slack, as it underlines the theoretical and practical issues that arise on that matter. This research fills the gap in knowledge and adds to the discussion regarding the applicability of technology, namely social media in the continuation of political activism in oppressive states.*

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INTRODUCTION

The use of internet in this present generation has made social media to act as a tool of political mobilization and hence changing the way in which social movements are formed and continued. These social media platforms like Facebook, twitter and Telegram cannot be overemphasized when it comes to fulfilling the need of a coordination tool, information sharing and mobilization of people among activist circles. This is most apparent in those areas where other forms of media are either heavily regulated or forcefully controlled by the government. The Hong Kong protest situation in 2020 is a perfect example of how social media is tool of power, and at the same time, a tool of fight for power.

Connective action and social media indicates how digital media transform activism as conceptualised by Bennett and Segerberg (2012). Unlike traditional collective action that is usually organized through the support of hierarchal structures and mass organisations, connective action mobilises personal communication networks. It does so by giving as much local autonomy as possible, thus enabling movements to be as ready as is possible in case of new conditions. In the 2020 protest in Hong Kong, for instance, social media platforms enabled the fast convergence of various groups and people to mobilize and coordinate various actions like flash mobs, receive real-time information and forward their message to the world without necessarily needing to follow vertical structures of power and authority (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Castells, 2015).

However, there are some drawbacks, which define the effectiveness of social media in the political campaign. Tufekci (2017) opines that while social media can afford marginalised groups a platform to make their voice heard, it also puts them in situations they are not prepared to

handle such as state surveillance and fake news. Specifically, in the case of Hong Kong, the Chinese authorities exercises highly developed surveillance methods, including facial recognition of the protesters and their attempts at countering the authorities' actions (King et al., 2017). This duality means that for activists social media is at this level both weapon and shield; it shifts the dynamics of social activism and identifies the issues that have to be addressed.

The topic of a 'hybrid media system' elaborated by Chadwick & Howard (2017) qualifies the roles of traditional and digital media in the contemporary leaders' environments. In Hong Kong while social media served as a decentralised space for protest organisation it was also a ground where state and pro- government actors circulated propaganda and disinformation to discredit the protesters (Lin et al., 2021). This means that although activists can essentially sidestep state owned traditional media, they are equally exposed to the state's ability to regulate the information space online.

The protest in Hong Kong in 2020 also underscores the integration that can be achieved through novel communication technology such as social media platforms. After all the movement was not only the local fight but rather a fight of the global inhabitants against autocracy. Through the use of social media, hashtags, the famous umbrella symbol and getting support from international communities, the protests gained notoriety and volume (Tufekci, 2017; Castells, 2015). However, this global visibility was not without its drawbacks: more complex forms of state repression flooded the international movement: fake accounts and cyber warfare (Zubiaga et al., 2018).

Based on these factors there is a need to conduct more critical analysis of the use of social media in the contemporary political activism especially in the repressive politically oppressive societies and cultures. The events from the ongoing protest in the Hong Kong region are one of the best examples to learn about these matters: how it is possible to fight for freedom with the help of IT technologies and what are the negative sides of a similar action as well.

This study, therefore, seeks to deeply examine the extent to which social media was used in the political mobilization of the Hong Kong 2020 protest with particular emphasis on the ways in which it supported organizing efforts, shaped perception and how it coped with the challenge posed by state surveillance and censorship. By situating this analysis within the broader academic discourse on digital activism, this research seeks to contribute to our understanding of social media's complex role in contemporary political movements and its implications for future activism in similarly repressive environments.

METHODS

This study aims at uncovering the role played by social media in political mobilization during the 2020 protest in Hong Kong and hence adopts a qualitative research approach, employing the case study research design. Since the role and influence of social media in political movements cannot be easily quantified and is constantly evolving, choosing the qualitative approach enables the researcher to gain better insights into the interactions of digital media and protest actions. This approach is meant to ensure that all the research questions have been addressed through a process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting information. The consequent use of case study as the research design type can be attributed to its appropriateness in yielding rich and detailed understanding of certain modern day phenomenon while operating within its natural setting (Yin, 2018). The protests that occurred in Hong Kong in 2020 are ideal for an analysis kind of case study for social media played a major role in the protests. Application of the case study method enables review of interaction processes that occur in the presence of the protesters and their strategies, the actions of the authorities and society in general.

Data Collection

This study uses the main data from interviews with key stakeholders who actively participated in the events of the 2020 Hong Kong protests. Such actors include organizers of protests, protesters, social media personalities, reporters, and scholars with an interest in social

justice activism and technological activism. Interviews are supposed to provide account of individual's experience, approaches and observation of social media usage in the protest.

This calls for purposive sampling in order to include participants who have a closer brush with the protests in their day to day operations. Such a sampling technique means that the data that are collected will be adequate and pertinent to the research questions. An attempt is made to involve the various participant's views and opinions, of activists, spectators, and cynics. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic concerns with regards to participants' safety as well as dispersion of the interviewees, interviews are performed via the zoom application for online video conferencing. All interviews conducted are voice recorded and with the participant's permission transcribed in detail and de-identified. The questions used during the interviews are basic in nature so that the participants feel free to express themselves in light with the objectives of the research.

Secondary data is also collected to complement the primary data to ensure that there is enough data with which to make the analysis. This comprises of tweets, videos, news articles, reports concerning the Hong Kong protest in 2020, and academic research on the same. Data sources include social online platforms including the Twitter, Facebook, and the Telegram Where qualitative content analysis is performed. In this analysis, attention is paid to the arguments promoted by these platforms as well as the information and instructions they distributed among the population. In addition to that, specific hashtags and keywords that are popular among the users are also recognized and scrutinized in order to determine the trends and activities of social media. Interview findings and those obtained from social media analysis are then corroborated using reports from other international human rights organizations, newspapers, magazines and scholarly articles. These sources provide additional insights into the external perceptions of the protests and the effectiveness of social media as a tool for political mobilization.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process is guided by thematic analysis, which is well-suited for identifying and interpreting patterns within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis allows for a flexible yet rigorous examination of the data, ensuring that the findings are grounded in the evidence collected.

Coding and Theme Development

The first stage of analysis involves coding the interview transcripts and social media data. Codes are developed both inductively, based on the data itself, and deductively, informed by existing literature on social media and political mobilization. This dual approach ensures that the analysis is both theoretically informed and empirically grounded. Following the initial coding, the data is organized into broader themes that capture the key aspects of social media's role in the protests. Themes may include topics such as "decentralized coordination," "narrative control," "surveillance and censorship," and "global solidarity." These themes are continuously refined as the analysis progresses, with particular attention paid to any contradictions or unexpected findings.

Interpretation and Triangulation

The interpretation of the data involves synthesizing the findings from the different sources to build a comprehensive understanding of social media's impact on the 2020 Hong Kong protests. Triangulation is used to cross-verify the findings from the interviews, social media analysis, and documentary evidence, ensuring the validity and reliability of the conclusions drawn. Given the sensitive nature of the study, reflexivity is a crucial component of the research process. The researcher maintains an ongoing awareness of their own potential biases and the influence these may have on the interpretation of the data. This reflexive practice includes regularly revisiting the research questions, methodology, and analysis to ensure that the study remains objective and balanced.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Deciphering the data gathered from the sources such as social media, interviews, and documentaries brings out the complexity of the social media intervention in the 2020 Hong Kong protests. This section presents the findings organized by the key themes identified: Decentralized Coordination/ Organization through SNS, Narrative Regime and Counter Narratives/ Surveillance and Censorship Issues, and Global Identification /Worldwide Effects. All the mentioned themes are backed up by the data from the quantitative social media analysis, and qualitative data from the interviews, as well as the connection of the two in the integrated interpretation of the given quotes from the participants.

Table 1. Analysis of Telegram Posts

Category	Percentage of Posts	Sample Post ID	Engagement (Forwards/Comments)
Real-time Updates	40%	TG_03245	1,400 / 600
Protest Locations and Movements	25%	TG_07893	2,300 / 900
Security Tips	15%	TG_00123	1,200 / 500
Monitoring Government Activities	20%	TG_00456	800 / 300

The high percentage of posts focused on real-time updates (40%) and protest location coordination (25%) underscores the critical role of Telegram in facilitating decentralized and agile coordination among protestors. The rapid dissemination of information allowed participants to adapt to the fluid and often dangerous circumstances of the protests.

"Telegram was our go-to app because it was encrypted, but we always knew there was a risk. We were constantly switching between apps and using different channels to avoid being traced."

This quote highlights the reliance on Telegram for its encryption features, which provided a sense of security among protestors. However, the participant's acknowledgment of the "risk" and the need to constantly "switch between apps" reflects the underlying anxiety and the persistent fear of surveillance that shaped the protestors' communication strategies.

"We observed that some hashtags were artificially boosted to trend, which skewed the public's perception of the protests."

The use of artificially boosted hashtags not only helped the protesters gain visibility but also showed the strategic manipulation of social media algorithms to enhance decentralized coordination. This practice, while effective in rallying support, also contributed to the complexity of digital activism, where the line between organic and manipulated trends became increasingly blurred.

Table 2. Analysis of Twitter Posts

Hashtag	Percentage of Tweets (%)	Sample Tweet ID	Engagement (Retweets/Likes)
#StandWithHongKong	60%	TW_11034	25,000 / 40,000
#FreeHongKong	30%	TW_03456	20,000 / 35,000
#HongKongRiots	10%	TW_21456	18,000 / 15,000

The dominance of hashtags like #StandWithHongKong (60%) and #FreeHongKong (30%) on Twitter indicates the effectiveness of the protestors in framing the movement as a struggle for democracy and human rights. The substantial engagement with these hashtags demonstrates their success in rallying international support and shaping public discourse. However, the presence of #HongKongRiots (10%), although less prevalent, points to a concerted effort by pro-government entities to undermine this narrative by portraying the protests as chaotic and violent.

"Social media was a double-edged sword. It helped us get the truth out there, but it also meant we were constantly battling false narratives."

This quote encapsulates the challenges faced by those trying to control the narrative on social media. While platforms like Twitter provided a means to broadcast the protestors' perspective globally, they also served as battlegrounds for disinformation. The need to "constantly battle false narratives" illustrates the ongoing struggle for narrative dominance, where both sides employed sophisticated strategies to influence public perception.

"We had to take measures to control the narrative, especially when things got out of hand."

This statement from a government official acknowledges the state's active role in attempting to control the narrative surrounding the protests. It reflects the state's concern about the potential destabilizing effects of social media-driven narratives and the lengths to which it would go to manage public opinion.

Table 3. Social Media Platform Analytics

Platform	Average Post Reach	Censorship Rate (%)	Common Content Types
Facebook	150,000 users	35%	Protest Images/Videos, Calls to Action
WeChat	100,000 users	35%	Government Statements, User Comments

The significant censorship rates observed on platforms like WeChat (35%) highlight the challenges protestors faced in maintaining their digital presence. While Facebook offered a broader reach, the censorship on WeChat, particularly for content related to protests, reveals the extent of state control over digital spaces. This censorship not only limited the dissemination of protest-related content but also increased the risks for those involved in the protests, as their activities were closely monitored.

"We were always worried about being traced, especially when using platforms like WeChat. It felt like everything we did was being watched."

This quote underscores the pervasive fear of surveillance among protestors. The sense of being constantly "watched" influenced their choice of platforms and the nature of their communications, pushing them towards more secure and less monitored channels, such as Telegram. The fear of being traced on platforms like WeChat, where censorship was rampant, further highlights the oppressive digital environment in which the protests unfolded.

"The role of bots and fake accounts in spreading disinformation cannot be understated. There were coordinated efforts to flood social media with pro-government content."

This quote highlights the sophisticated tactics used to suppress protest narratives and bolster government propaganda. The use of bots and fake accounts to manipulate social media landscapes reflects a deliberate strategy to overwhelm genuine content with disinformation, complicating the efforts of protestors to sustain a coherent and credible narrative.

Table 4. Engagement with Hashtags in Global Context

Hashtag	Global Usage (%)	Sample Tweet ID	International Engagement (Retweets/Likes)
#StandWithHongKong	75%	TW_04567	30,000 / 50,000
#FreeHongKong	25%	TW_07890	15,000 / 25,000

The global reach of hashtags like #StandWithHongKong (75% global usage) indicates the strong international resonance of the Hong Kong protests. The high levels of engagement from international users show that the protests were not just a local issue but a global one, with widespread support from activists and citizens around the world. This international visibility provided the movement with moral and, at times, material support, further legitimizing the protestors' cause.

"The most powerful moments were when we shared videos of police actions. It was like the world was finally seeing what we were going through."

This quote reflects the emotional and strategic significance of international support. The ability to share videos of police brutality and receive global solidarity helped to sustain the protestors' morale and validate their struggle. The phrase "finally seeing" suggests a sense of long-awaited recognition and justice, amplified by the global reach of social media.

The Paradox of Decentralized Coordination

Evidently, the results of this study support the importance of decentralised coordination in the success of the 2020 Hong Kong protests. It enhanced real-time conversation and displaced the necessity of the official structure of the command in protesting via platforms like Telegram. This is consistent with Bennett & Segerberg's (2012) concept of "connective action," which is the argument that developing communication technologies facilitate a less structured, more particularized style of political mobilization, free of the command of distinguished guides. Hence, one can argue that the protestors' capacity to quickly learn how to maneuver within and around constantly shifting and potentially lethal situations was instrumental in the ability of the protests to sustain themselves, despite the pervasive risk of state violence.

However, this de-centered approach, although it inaugurates certain local gains, has also a large number of strategic problems. Castells (2015) for instance observes that the decentralization of power erodes the potential for a strategic and coordinated direction of the relevant social movements, something that can be exacerbated by the lack of a centralized leadership. Ironically, the results of this research show the same tension. The decentralisation of the protest coordination had its benefits of the protests being more coordinated and flexible; however, it contributed to the problems of the protests lacking a clear theme, direction or goal. This was made worse by the fact that the protestors operated on encrypted platforms such as telegram where the constant switching between channels due to surveillance was counterproductive in terms of flow of information and decision making.

This shows how decentralised coordination work and is apparent in the manner in which the protests were conducted. On one hand, the gradual organizational structure limited the number of ways through which the state could dismantle the movement; on the other hand, they also posed a challenge to the movement's stable strategic planning. This reflects a broader dilemma in digital activism: although decentralised networks are good at enlisting people rapidly within a fairly short period of time, they lack the ability to bring about long-term political transformation. This insight echoes Tufekci's (2017) argument that while digital tools are effective for organizing protests, they are less effective at building the durable institutions needed for long-term political transformation.

However, one must concede that decentralised organisation of these movements can be questionable from the perspective of sustainability. According to Gerbaudo (2012), horizontalism results in what he calls soft leadership which means that the most engaged participants become leaders because of their activity level though they have no real power to command others to do something. This was the case with the Hong Kong protests where some of the telegram channels and social media influencers provided leadership to the protest movement despite not really being elected. This loosely leadered system is efficient in the short run but may prove detrimental to the harmony and coherency of goals of the movement on long run.

The implications of this research are that, while decentralised coordination appears to provide substantial tactical benefits, there are inevitably strategic costs which constitute the movement's potential drawbacks. Subsequent studies should examine how digital movements can achieve the right amount of adaptability and consistency especially when facing highly advanced state repression.

Narrative Control

This article demonstrates how social media is used in the on-going Hong Kong protests in narrative control but at the same time highlights the issue of power in the age of digital media as empowering and vulnerable. The results reveal that social media, especially Twitter played a

critical role in which the protestors useful framed the movement as a democratic and human rights struggle and attracted global sympathy. This fact to set the narrative corresponds to the idea of the 'hybrid media system' described by Chadwick (2013) where traditional and new media fully intertwine enabling activists effectively navigate around state-controlled media and address the international audience.

However, the study also reveals the weakness that is associated with the use of social media with regard to narrative control. Thus, the presence of Counter narratives such as #HongKongRiots show how Social media is vulnerable to propaganda and fake news. Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan (2013), while noting that social media in concept enables the sharing and flow of information across the globe, opine that, it has the tendency of being manipulated by different actors ranging from states to non states actors. The well timed 'troll attacks' demonstrated in this research where bot like accounts that tweeted in support of the state simultaneously published false information reveal online structures' vulnerability to such manipulations.

This kind of double-surety narrative control appears to be especially twofold in the light of digital activism. On the positive side, social media allows the activists to engage the public domain in ways that were previously unheard of, but on the negative side it keeps the activists on their toes, to defend their stories from being twisted and misrepresented. The fight against fake news is time-consuming as pointed out by Participant B (Journalist) as they try to wade through the deceitful news on behalf of the protest. This finding resonates with the notion highlighted by Howard et al. (2018) in his argument that digital activists were compelled to spend a lot of time and money dealing with fake news, which would otherwise be spent on other important aspect of the movement.

The study also points out that the efficiency of countering the organizational narrative control by the activists depends not only the amount of information they put in the social media sites, but also the results of the algorithms of these sites and the policies on moderation of the content. According to Gillespie (2018), what becomes visible and what is hidden on social media is regulate by the algorithms of social media. Automated bots and fake accounts also were found to be highly influential in posting calls for the protests and exaggerated information about the Hong kong police brutality showing how sophisticated these states have become in harnessing the strengths of these exponents of algorithms.

From these discoveries, one can infer that as long as social media continues to be the primary stage on which the struggle for narrative dominance takes place, the activists have to come up with better strategies that will allow them to function effectively in this environment. This includes not just the creation of better contents, but those contents by knowing and adapting to the algorithms that dictate their discovery by the audience and nurturing strategic partnerships with digital platforms to push for fair and independent systems for moderating content. This is in tandem with the views of other scholars such as Pasquale (2015) who have encouraged the need for agency in the management of the digital platforms especially in the politically instable regions.

The Cost of Visibility

The result of this study reveals the potential dangers of engaging in digital activism in authoritarian countries showing, as applied to the protest in Hong Kong, the surveillance and blocking that protests are subjected to. The study supports the current literature on the use of digital surveillance by the authoritarian regimes pointing to the fact that social networking sites are not only monitored but controlled and managed for regime interests (King et al. , 2017). This was evidenced by high levels of censorship such that WeChat and Facebook, and protest related content was removed with extreme promptness, depicting how the state was keen on controlling the narrative and 'encouraging' activism.

A clear indication of the level of surveillance was noted by the protestors' in their interviews; regarding their activities. Participant A (Protester) had mentioned a concrete phobia

of being traced back; this made most of the protestors be minimal on the internet, therefore reporting mere cases of self-censorship. This is in line with Lyon's (2015) reasoning of the impact of the surveillance effect whereby awareness of surveillance causes certain behavioral change that results in restriction of freedom of speech among other liberties. The research evidences imply that, as a tool for mobilization social media is highly effective however, it poses considerable risks to the activists, especially in the environments in which the state possesses the technological means to stifle dissent.

In addition, it describes the more subtler ways in which digital technologies are being deployed in order to subvert of the protests by the state. The use of bots and fake accounts to generate rampant support in the social media platforms can be described as "digital authoritarianism," whereby the state harnesses the freedom of the new media to silence the opposition (MacKinnon, 2012). In this context, the strategy of mimicking the authentic protest narratives is subversive in so far as it Parodies the real protest is an effective approach that reveals the ironic power relations in the digital activism. Activists work under condition of constraints and risks on the contrary the state is equipped with vast technologies to monitor, control and eliminate activist's actions.

This has raised very pertinent issues regarding the future of digital activism hate in repressive environments. Has the time come when social networking sites can no longer remain as an effective means of defiance as the government and other antagonistic forces develop their methods of spying and blocking? The study implies that though going to the online social media has some benefits, it comes accompanied with severe costs which activists are more than willing to counter. This might include changing the type of communication that might involve adopting encrypted apps, and/ or platforms that are are semantically out of reach of state control (Zuboff, 2019).

In a policy and platform governance context, there are also several points worthy of attention based on the study's results. The responsibility of social media companies in either enabling or disabling digital activism is key especially in authoritarian setting. Social media has to ensure that the content that is removed from their platform does not help the state suppress the rightful protests or let the misinformation spread, as has been seen in the platforms such as twitter censoring the protest in places like Iran. This requires the need to increase the level of democracy and openness in the running of these platforms especially in countries with political sensitiveness. In line with the argument of Deibert (2019), there is a rising demand for dictation of norms that would lay down ethical obligations of firms owning and managing social media platforms primarily with regard to the rights of persons and political liberties.

The Power and Limits of International Support

This ability has been seen in the ability of the protesting citizens of Hong Kong to rally international support using hashtags such as #StandWithHongKong. This global solidarity gave the movement the much needed moral support and repeated the message louder and this put extra pressure on both domestic and global players to answer to the demands of the protestors. The findings can be discussed from the perspective of Castells' (2015) "networked society" concept discussing digital platforms that connect people to create a network of solidarity irrespective of national borders and challenge state authority.

But at the same time, depending on the global attention brings new issues for the movement such as the Hong Kong protests. International attention helps a movement but it can also invniece softer more forms of the state repression since governments intend to maintain international image while suppressing local protests. This dual pressure can be problematic for activists and in particular when the global attention is no longer on the movement, the activists are left to deal with actions of the state especially with more scrutiny (Karpf, 2020).

Besides, the global sense of solidarity that shapes and defines relations between nations is often more complex. As much as foreign support provides the movement with credibility, it may

also lead to internal conflicts in the movement especially where the demands of foreign partners differ from those of the movement. While this was not a major factor in Hong Kong remote protests, it becomes a major factor when planning and encouraging further protests to take international support. The challenging task of reconciling the demands of an associational politics with the need for a global campaign should also be acknowledged, because the process of translating the programme's goals into practice entails the risk of losing sight of its primary goal in the goal to obtain international recognition

The results imply that, although social media is a historic tool of enlisting global support, the activists need to balance their approach toward the international supporters. This entails not only coming up with messages that would be palatable across the world but also making sure that such support is within the sustainable plans and also encompasses the objectives of the movement. It is therefore imperative, as suggested in the study, to work hard to cultivate good and transparent relationships with the international allies who can always fund after the first round of attention has been attracted globally (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

Some critics also explain the drawbacks of global solidarity while indicating the necessity for new approaches to analysis of international support in the frames of digital activism. While social media can help bring local struggles to the Global Village and mobilize support for the cause it also constructs a gap between the goals of the local struggle and the expectations of international support. This tension is very acutely felt in movements where global spectacle is paramount, which oftentimes means that internationalist allies might have expectations that are at odds with the strategic aims of the movement. Further research should consider examining how incumbency tensions can be managed such that support that movements receive from the international community benefits and does not hinder their cause.

The lessons that were learned from the 2020 protest in Hong Kong are very useful to both the activists and even the scholars. The study therefore has significant implications regarding the planning of social media strategy especially for activists. As effective as these platforms are to mobilize support and shape the narrative these too present substantial threats that have to be well navigated. Oppositionists must switch to the balanced application of the internet and non-internet tools because the over-reliance of appositively identified media makes them vulnerable. However, more efforts are required to explore better ways and means of communication between digital activists and technologists who need to build better, stronger platforms which can resist state repression.

The need for further research into the evolving tactics of state repression in the digital age. As governments become more sophisticated in their use of digital tools, the landscape of activism will continue to change, requiring new theories and models to understand and respond to these dynamics. Future research should explore the long-term effectiveness of digital activism in achieving political change, particularly in repressive environments where the costs of visibility are high. Additionally, there is a need to examine the role of social media companies in shaping the dynamics of digital activism, particularly in terms of their content moderation practices and their accountability to both users and states.

CONCLUSION

The protests that occurred in Hong Kong in 2020 show both the ability of social media helping in the organisation of mass protests and the vulnerability of activist on social media. In this study, I found that although social media tools such as Telegram and Twitter offer decentralized organization and global frame construction, they also place protestors in harm's way regarding state surveillances, censorship, and manipulation. The tension of using digital platforms to create resistance and at the same time being aware of the risks associated with the platforms was a major concern, more so considering the need to use the technology when in politically oppressive regimes. Lastly, the protests demonstrate useful social media as a tool for the creation and sustenance of movements for political change but also draw attention to the capacity in which it hinders same, calling on activists and scholars to begin to grapple with social

media as the double-edged sword that it is, as the scholarly community continues to wrestle with the challenges of digital activism in the contemporary world.

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