Future of Online Social Networking Sites as a Public Sphere Within the Egyptian Context

Submitted By

Hend Abd AlRhman Muhammad Abd AlMotagally
Assistant Lecturer, Dept. Journalism,
Faculty of Mass Communication, Cairo University

Supervised by

Prof. Mahmoud Soulayman Alam El-Deen
Professor emeritus, Dept. Journalism,
Faculty of Mass Communication, Cairo University

Co-Supervised by

Prof. Samah Al-Mouhammady
Professor, Dept. Journalism,
Faculty of Mass Communication, Cairo University

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In the name of Allāh,
Most Gracious Most Merciful.
All praise be to Allāh, Lord of the Worlds,
and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger
Muḥammad, Mercy to the Worlds.

lā ḥawla wa-lā quwwata ʾillā bi-llāhi

There is no might and no power except by Allah.

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'He who does not thank people does not thank Allah.'
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ABSTRACT

The study examines the factors affecting online social networking sites (SNSs) as a public sphere within the Egyptian context and critically analyzes the gradual, but radical, shift that has been taking place since 2011 in relation to the environment affecting access to and usage of them. The Causal Layered Analysis theory and method (Sohail Inayatullah, 1998) is applied including four main levels of analysis ensuring an inclusive view of both internal and external factors in regard to the past, present. The analysis is conducted within the prerequisites for an effective public sphere as originally determined by German philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1962). Accordingly, the analysis describes the potential future of SNSs as a *'mediate between state and society'* providing access to all citizens to 'virtually' assemble and unite freely to express their opinions, as well as, being constituted in every conversation in which individuals come together to form a public. Four scenarios were developed for each layer representing the overall result of the layer; Litany: the '*Frenemy,'* the Systemic Causes: '*Occupy the Cyberspace'*, Worldview: '*Centralization of Truth*,' and Myth/Metaphor layer: 'the *story of a nation versus the story of a generation*.' For a continued growth, the main driving force would be 'technology advancement.' The future of SNSs as a public sphere in Egypt is rich with varied potentials and alternatives that are depending on complex set of several socio-political, technological, and cultural variables and factors that interact and influence each other, including mainly: the politics and policies of the Egyptian government, the rise of new social media platforms and technologies, user behavior and digital rights awareness, international strategies, and the future of communication and technological developments.

Keywords, Public Sphere, Egypt, CLA, Critical Futures, Social Networking Sites,

CHAPTER I

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

'Uncertainty' is not human beings best friend, if not an enemy. We always prefer knowing, controlling, willingly choosing, or, at least expecting things before they occur. However, the world doesn't work this way, especially throughout the recent years of rapid but deeply-rooted division witnessed globally.

The world is at a critical crossroad; either to follow the scientific thinking regarding the future, or it would betray the coming generations taking actions without a rigorous plan ahead. The world discourse is that 'it's [all] out of control'. However, still, each side doesn't know what the 'other' is thinking or able to provide, the weights of each force; the views of the unheard and voiceless, and the power of the neglected variables that might shift the official equation that we assume we are stuck in.

Abstract ideas, though, have never been a substitute to action. Academic research is a means not a goal in itself. The current study tests the numerous interpretations of reality aiming at facilitating the task of developing applicable solutions, policies, and suggesting alternatives for such a complex phenomenon.

These uncertain spaces in this uncertain era is somehow turning into a golden opportunity to believe one more time that we, individuals, specifically scholars, are empowered to think, analyze, plan, and to *research*; as a building block in *policy-making*.

Critical futures studies are providing the ability to; metaphorically, *construct* the future, instead of freezing in helplessness. To become a futurist, though, is a challenging mission; *'It is to be a generalist [it requires understanding] systems thinking including causation in social sciences, science, philosophy; cross-cultural psychology, philosophy plus religion; and mythology.'* (Sohail Inayatullah, 2017)

The current study aims at answering an urgent question related to what to expect from online Social Networking Sites (SNSs) as a Public Sphere within the Egyptian context in 2030. Applying a four layers analysis (Causal Layered Analysis), the central focus is the internal barriers to freedom of expression; in contrast to always starting from the top-down domination. This is an effort that is referring to a '*self-made misunderstanding*' which resulted from the conflicting meanings, purposes, and divided efforts of the different stakeholders, while enhancing the quality of civil society and vulnerable/marginalized groups online presence.

It is a philosophical approach deepening the explanation for the recent crisis of the Internet, in general, and the SNSs, in particular, in our region, represented in the Egyptian context, following the stumbling footsteps of the Arab Spring paradigm.

The emergence and popularity of SNSs have significantly transformed communication and information-gathering practices across the globe. Egypt is amongst the countries that have experienced tremendous growth and intense use of SNSs since the 2011 Revolution.

The Internet and Social Networking Sites are proved to be powerful tools in today's varied aspects of everyday life. Politics are not an exception; they are included and come at the top of the list. Democracy is facing a challenging time to survive. Egypt is not an exception, it is included, and it is seen, along with Tunisia, as examples to have a deeper understanding regarding what it called 'internet-politics.'

Despite their widespread adoption, there has been an ongoing debate about the capacity of SNSs to function as a public sphere within the Egyptian context, which is characterized by socio-economic, cultural, and political complexities.

The current study seeks to explore this debate and provide an understanding of the future of SNSs as a public sphere within the Egyptian context. Through a mixed-method

approach, the study will examine the nature of online interactions on SNSs, their role in shaping public opinion, and the implications for political mobilization and activism. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the broader discussions on the democratizing potential of SNSs and their impacts on the public sphere in Egypt.

The current study is relevant because of the ongoing importance of SNSs as communication channels, the persistence of authoritarianism and censorship in Egypt, and the dynamic context of social and political changes in the region. The research questions and objectives are based on a critical approach that draws from theoretical frameworks of the public sphere, political communication, social network analysis, and qualitative research methods.

The study is expected to generate new insights into the uses, effects, and limitations of SNSs as public spheres, and to inform policy and practice in digital media governance, civil society engagement, and democratic development.

Additionally, the study aims to contribute to the academic discourse on digital media, public spheres, and political communication in the Middle East and North Africa region. The findings may also have wider implications for understanding the role of SNSs in democratic processes, particularly in countries with restrictive media environments.

"The important point to realize is that our future is not predetermined, preordained, or carved out in stone [...]; like clay it can be molded and shaped to our needs and cherished values." Ziauddin Sardar (2013)

The human capacity to imagine potential futures has been always a valuable asset throughout history. It is *'framing the future as a human project'* representing a theme throughout modernity. The renewed question regarding the future is lately critically asked aiming at arguing against the neoliberal mantra *'there is no alternative'* (infamously sloganized by Margaret Thatcher).

The recent civil global, national, and local social, economic, and political actions, movements, and events have been a loud call for rethinking the future describing it as radically uncertain. From the Arab Spring to Occupy to Black Lives Matter, the rise of new forms of political grass-root actions, have all been sudden but interconnected signals reflecting a common dissatisfaction with the institutional status quo in many parts of the world.

Over a decade, the day to day conversations have been related to three major terms: power, politics, and future. It is a loop. It is non-ending circle of reinventing our old solutions to face new problems. It has been an "either or," "us or them," "black vs. white" way of thinking. Countries are delving into an out-dated speech of nationalism and going back to closing borders, both literally and metaphorically, and it is now a zero-battle between "right" and "left" while the "middle" at all levels is forgotten. It is such an enormous effort for controlling under the umbrella of conspiracy theories and fear of chaos.

There is no going back, though. The big picture reflects aware citizens who have taken back their power and now they have their own visions and aspirations. Democracy as a process might be witnessing a major drawback; however, it is still superior as a concept among people who are eager to 'participate' in making decisions regarding their own fate.

Communication is unavoidable for humans to live together. Communication in its simplest definitions; '*transferring meaning*,' is fading. Ironically, this is in parallel to the rise of highly-advanced means of 'communication.' Now, we have communication without communicators. We are focusing too much on the technological inventions pros and cons that we forgot about the human aspect, the cultural context, or the meaning being delivered. This is what this study is concerned about; the lost voice in a very angry and defensive crowded room. This has to change for us to hope for any different future.

1.2 PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The **objectives** of the study are mainly:

1- **Mapping** the Egyptian landscape of communication; addressing, describing, analyzing, and comparing the macro- and micro- history of cyber public sphere in Egypt represented in the continuity/change of online Social Networking sites varied aspects, including, usage, trust, roles, form and content, regulation,…ect.

2- **Assessing** the different perspectives in the Egyptian society, at large, in regard to the past, present, and the future of online Social Networking sites platforms as a public sphere.

3- **Addressing** the factors affecting the future and their implications.

4- **Analyzing** the emerging political, technological, and economic issues; (horizon scanning).

5- **Deepening** the understanding of the issue, and **developing** the alternative futures at each of the main four levels of the Causal Layered Analysis.

6- **Identifying** the required transformations so as to achieve the preferred future.

The **significance** of the current study is mainly based on the critical future studies framework within which it is conducted. The Causal Layered Analysis (CLA in short) as discussed in details later, is considered both a method and a theoretical framework that "*offers a way of understanding better how the levels of empirical reality and cultural reality work together to produce our world-views.*" (Mohaghar and Saghafi, 2018)

The **importance** of the current study can be seen in light of what online social networking sites represent; as the usage of these platforms is becoming an indicator for

development, freedom of expression, public participation, political stability, and democratic values. Considering these platforms as a major tool of communication and interaction, in a time when the top priority is narrowing the gap of fragmentation at all levels, monitoring a peaceful and inclusive dialogue, and building bridges among and within nations, it is vital for researchers to bring academic, scientific, reasonable insights to the equation. The current study is adding one more study to the shelves of the literature that is coming from, and conducted on, the youthful region that has not reached its potential yet, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

1.3 RESEARCH SCOPE

The online Social Networking Sites, notably, has been the most commonly used tool for facilitating such steps at the level of mobilization, organization, deliberation, and backing a public support for legitimacy. Following the momentum of these events, their usage, credibility, and scope of effect have all been dramatically changing globally as well as nationally. In Egypt, the online social networking sites solid development as a public sphere is witnessed and documented in many studies throughout the last decade reaching its peak with the eruption of the 25th of January revolution.

Closely observing of the Egyptian scene of online communication it is easily to spot the continues efforts exerted by all actors to effectively understand and benefit from the major social networking platforms in favor of their cause; users aiming at expanding their freedom of expression, on the one hand, and the state targeting the minimization of the usage/effect of these platforms, on the other.

Therefore, while these platforms are proven as an effective *'communication infrastructure*' through which Egyptian citizens actively discussed the public affairs through sending and receiving information and opinions bridging the online-offline contexts, the policies

of the sequential regimes, since the transitional period, reflect an official attitude towards the Internet, in general, and social networking sites, in particular, as a threat. An official immense attention, at all levels, is directed toward the input and the output (both online within the virtual public sphere and offline represented in actual actions on the ground within the main public sphere in society) of these networks ranging from direct and indirect attempts to building counter speeches to criminalizing the usage itself under certain circumstances.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE CONTRIBUTION

The current study is an effort to critically contribute to the discussion arguing that the future should be open– or at least negotiable against the dominating powers of agenda- setting, horizon-setting and problem-defining in terms of the way society thinks and talks about the future. It is not only a predicting of the future but a critically questioning the past and the present otherwise the recommended solutions are could be part of the problem without a thorough examination of social, political, and cultural bias directing the discourse and the policies.

The study examines the factors affecting the current situation of these sites (technological, social, political, economic, and legal), and critically analyzes the gradual, but radical, shift that has been taking place since 2011 in relation to the environment affecting access to and usage of them.

The Causal Layered Analysis theory and method (Sohail Inayatullah, 1998) is applied including four main levels of analysis ensuring an inclusive view of both internal and external factors deeply-rooted in the discourse and directing the policies in regard to the past, present, and the future of Social Networking Sites within the Egyptian context in relation to the national and

international efforts toward regulating the Internet, in general and the Social Networking Sites, in particular.

The analysis is conducted within the prerequisites for an effective public sphere as originally determined by German philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1962): free [two-way] flows of information, free expression, free debate, and access for minority voices and political outsiders. It is a cyclical analysis that continually starts from the end point.

Accordingly, scenarios to be developed for each level of analysis describing the potential future of Social Networking Sites as a *'mediate between state and society'* providing access to all citizens to 'virtually' assemble and unite freely to express their opinions, as well as, being constituted in every conversation in which individuals come together to form a public.

1.5 DISSERTATION OUTLINE

The current study consists of 6 chapters. The first chapter that you have just reached its end is the INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND. The second chapter is (II) LITERATURE REVIEW; in which the researcher is providing an overview of the literature under four categories: THE INTERNET AS A PUBLIC SPHERE, ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AS A PUBLIC SPHERE, A CRITICAL LOOK: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATION, THE ONLINE PUBLIC SPHERE AND DEMOCRACY.

The third chapter is (III) THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK. Due to the multi-disciplinary nature of the topic discussed, the researcher depends on more than one theoretical framework so as to represent the cultural aspects of the context and the issue studied. There are six sub-categories in this chapter; CRITICAL FUTURE STUDIES, THE HABERMASIAN PUBLIC SPHERE, THE STRUCTURE OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE, THE INTERNET/ SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AS A PUBLIC SPHERE, POST-PUBLIC SPHERE, and EGYPTIAN ONLINE PUBLIC SPHERE.

The following chapter is (IV) METHODOLOGY explained in details across six subcategories as following; first the STUDY DESIGN, then CAUSAL LAYERED ANALYSIS (CLA), THE CLA FOUR LAYERS OF ANALYSIS, CLA EVALUATION, STEPS OF ANALYSIS, and finally VALIDITY AND LIMITATIONS.

The analysis and the results are divided into two separate chapters; the fifth chapter (V) titled: ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AS A PUBLIC SPHERE describe APPLYING CLA TO THE EGYTIAN CONTEXT, MOVING BEYOND THE UDES FUTURE, the analysis of each layer in the CLA four layers; LITANY, SYSTEMIC CAUSES, WORDLVIEW, and MYTH/METAPHOR, then two other sub-categories: DECONSTRUCTION: THE PAST AND THE PRESENT, and RECONSTRUCTION: EGYPTIAN PUBLIC SPHERE 2030. Then, the last chapter is (VI) discussing the results providing the ALTERNATIVE FUTURES (SCENARIOS) along with the PREFERRED FUTURE. At the end of the study, the CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION followed by the study's APPENDICES AND REFERENCES.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous studies to be, critically, analyzed in light of four main points: the context of the study, the focal points of analysis, and the theory and method applied. The literature on these online platforms (described as online Social Networks and Social Media, interchangeably) has emphasized the necessity of analyzing the change in trust, credibility, dependency, and usage in order to understand the effectiveness of Social Networking sites as a public sphere and its future. Despite the rich literature on Social Networking sites, few studies have addressed its future as a public sphere and the majority is not within the Egyptian context.

This study is questioning online Social Networking sites which previously have been tackled as a contested issue. The analysis is looking into the corpus of the academic literature carried out in the last decade regarding the two main key words: online Social Networks and the Cyber-Space, including all their synonyms as clarified in details below.

The purpose of this section is to review recent studies into online social networks platforms as a public sphere. The primary goal is to address the shift in the definitions, evaluations, type of questions and hypotheses of the topic over time, especially with the evolvement of the political regime, the societal and cultural changed circumstances, as well as laws and regulations.

It is an overview of the literature conducting in the last decade and a description for the different understandings and perspectives addressing the public sphere and online social networks within the Egyptian context, so as to observe research progress as well as research gap.

As a starting point, it is obvious that online social networking sites have received relatively more attention and accordingly there has been a continuous increase in the number of

studies related to the online public sphere that reached its peak in the years following the Arab Spring, and has, since, slightly grown.

When it comes to reviewing the Arab literature on social media, in general; focused on 'Youth' as a sample [16-25 years old], and both surveys and content analysis were conducted within the theoretical framework of 'uses and gratifications, media dependency, public sphere,' with the aim to address: the various effects of using news pages, usage of personal accounts, type of content published and shared, the relationship between technology of interactive communication and the level of political awareness, role played in forming the attitudes of the users toward public affairs, among other related research questions related to two major categories: seeking news and information, and social relationships.

For social media, specifically, as a public sphere, the lion share is reserved for the political participation, with the bulk of these studies was tackling the period between 2011 and 2013 [even if published later on].

The major research objectives includes: democratic transition, values and principles of democracy, forming a local and international public opinion, calling for change, organization and mobilization among social and political movements, the independence of these platforms, challenges and opportunities as a public sphere, freedom of expression, laws and regulations.

Analyzing media use during the period of the 2011 uprisings indicate that social media is not the only reason, and not the primary determinant, for the widespread Arab streets pressure on political authorities. Economic, linguistic, and infrastructural barriers weakened social media influence. It did played a role, but it was not a driving factor; it was only a means that facilitated the offline cumulative efforts exerted over decades; as it provided protection through live coverage and counter-messages to mainstream media outlets, as well as, the feasible and easy

usage to reach like-minded supporters. One proof is the Internet shutdown decision on the 28th of January; as it highlights other factors; social capital, interaction norms, and the public sphere. (Al-Kidwani, 2015; Belaid, 2016; Al-Dagher, 2016; Moustafa, 2016; Al-Farouk, 2017; Aly, 2020)

Laila Shereen Sakr (2021) points to the lack of critical methodological analyses that take into account the historical and cultural basis of social media that can reveal 'richer insights' describing the wider content of this phenomena. The growth of data, particularly collections of trends, has enabled more in-depth examination of the role of digital networks and has allowed scientific and policy communities to direct their attention to aggregated imprints of online activities, however, as stated by Sakr, this 'fetishization of data over meaning' has produced studies that don't introduce a meaningful critique; rather, only focus on the scale, speed, and directional influences in digital networks and social media.

Applying this point on studying digital media and political change, the Egyptian revolution as a case, it is indicated that 'before and even after the uprisings of 2011, there was a clear divide between the qualitative, humanistic research Middle East media scholars produced and the quantitative approach of traditional communications scholars.' she asserts that scholars faced a challenge in how to analyze information quantitatively about groups of people in a region where, historically, '*the science of documenting every political act reflected a tendency of disciplinary and surveillance mechanisms*.'

2016 described as a 'crisis moment' in social media impact on politics worldwide; the US election, Brexit and other political 'shocking' events, fake news, disinformation campaigns, Russian bots, micro-targeting, voter suppression, the amplification of 'crazy' conspiracies theories, Cambridge Analytica, and the failure of platforms in knowing what was going on.

There was 'techno-dystopian' defeatism about 'what is meant for democracy in the digital age alongside 'nostalgia' for the old gatekeepers; and post-truth was the word of the year.' But, in parallel, there were numerous institutions, think tanks, NGOs and academic research focusing on the new digital landscape across disciplines. (Simone Chambers and Jeffrey Kopstein, 2022)

The literature review is divided into four major categories as follows: (2.1) THE INTERNET AS A PUBLIC SPHERE' in which studies and research related to five issues are addressed: *The Public Sphere and the Counter-Public Sphere*, *Fragmentation in the Digital Public Sphere*, *The Networked/Multiple Public Sphere*, *Online-Offline Bridging*, and the online public sphere as *Real not Virtual.* (2.2) ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AS A PUBLIC SPHERE discussing *The Impact of Social Media on the Public Sphere*, *Social Capital: A Factor or an Outcome?*, *Misinformation and Fake News*, *The Online Echo Chamber and Filter Bubbles*, and *Extremism and Hate Speech.* Then, (2.3) A CRITICAL LOOK: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATION; *Factors affecting the future* and *The Future of the Internet*. Finally, (2.4) THE ONLINE PUBLIC SPHERE AND DEMOCRACY clarifying the relationship between *Democracy, Populism* and *Political Participation*, The specificity of the *Arab Public Opinion*, in addition to describing *Freedom of Expression and Censorship* as well as *Privacy and Surveillance within the online context.*

2.1 THE INTERNET AS A PUBLIC SPHERE

> *"The answer to whether or not the Internet constitutes a public sphere depends on how the researcher stands in the question of what a public sphere is."*
> *(Johannessen, 2012)*

The Internet in its simplest form, since its early beginning, was celebrated as a neutral, open, and inclusive space riving the hopes in having an alternative public sphere as a '*forum for*

critical debates', 'circulation of information', and 'formation of political will' represented in a public opinion.

This has mainly due to its 'potential' in providing a suitable virtual space for ordinary citizens' discussions regarding the political issues among many other topics and ideas; pointing out mainly to those '*banned from the traditional public sphere.*' Social networking sites, in particular, are considered for an ideal public sphere because of its features; '*interactivity,*' '*fast diffusion of information,*' and '*facilitating a real time discussion'* overcoming the geographical differences.

In general, social networking sites, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, have been the main context in numerous studies focusing on '*non-state actors'* in '*international politics'* in the last decade. In addition, these platforms challenged the traditional elite; as the most influential and engaged users today are representing the '*top of an iceberg'* of those '*socially and politically informed.*' (Rabah, 2013; Yang, Quan-Haase & Rannenberg, 2017; Spry, 2019)

"Both 'the Internet' and Habermas' work have become significant areas of intense study over the past thirty years. Where the Internet has become a pervasive part of everyday life in the West, Habermas work (1989) has become a pervasive part of the academy, reaching into politics, law, media studies, linguistics, social work, nursing, education, finance and accounting and much more.

"It has been more than a half century since Habermas coined the term 'Public Sphere' which described a place where individuals could discuss and debate on the issues of the time, not only politics and commerce but also philosophy and the arts." Habermas "was one of the first to define space as not only physical but as an abstract concept in where meanings and ideas can be articulated, distributed and negotiated."

Even with the critiques of the theory of the public sphere, there is still '*value in the concept'*, as it '*succeeds in bringing together media structures, political participation and normative theory.*' (Hirsch, 2016; Salter, 2007; Telleria, 2021; Siapera and Abdel Mohty, 2020)

The 'public' in the public sphere refers to both the 'public' space that is open to the 'publics' as well as to the neutrality in that there is no state intervention. In such spaces, citizens have informal conversation about common interests and the current affairs. It is inclusive in that it welcomes 'anyone' and 'everyone' and provides equal freedom to varied opinions and points of view as long as it is 'rational.'

The beginning of the internet was using the network to mainly view, read, or to buy products/services. The most significant change occurred when users generated, shared, modified, and discussed their own content as the Internet represented a 'platform for sharing, blogging, socially networking' which greatly impacted the way digital communication functioned. (Yolmo, 2014)

Internet nowadays is becoming everything for almost everyone, regardless of their uses, needs, demographic characteristics, specializations, and language. '*The Internet is a crucial resource in our interconnected world today. It is a space for network-building, a pool of opportunities for job-seekers, and an indispensable source of knowledge.*' (Al-Shafei, 2021)

Then, the phase of social networking sites that goes back to 'sending an e-mail' and continues till today's Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Social networking sites and social media, however, are not the same; social networking sites are only part of social media. The main motive for social networking sites is 'building relationships;' it is the interaction, with the preferred level of privacy, between individual or groups and other like-minded individuals.

Social networking sites where the main motive or goal is individual or group engagement within like-minded individuals.

The Internet, in contrast to Mass Media, brought back the 'openness,' 'accessibility,' and ended the era of 'passive audience' and the 'one-way transmission of information;' reviving the hopes in transferring Habermas ideal public sphere to reality through focusing on 'communication' as an interactive process and practice. The door has been opened for diversity in views and perspectives allowing the ordinary active user to voice their opinion and determine the priorities of issues and topics of a many-to-many discussion. (Yolmo, 2014; Yolmo, 2018)

The historical trajectory highlights the relevance of the public sphere for promoting democracy and political accountability. As stated in the literature, one of the main goals of social movements is forming a public opinion influencing leaders and policy makers' decisions and actions. Lately, many national and international institutions are considering "*a functioning and democratic*" public sphere as a central aspect of good governance in any country where government officials are held accountable for their actions and citizens are effectively influencing the political decisions.

The idea Habermasian public sphere, however, is not 'completely' represented via the Internet. The core characteristics of communication within Habermas Public Sphere are described as *"autonomous, critical, reflexive, sincere and inclusive."* Scholars would argue that 'the Internet is not free from rules.'

It is worth noting, though, that the online public sphere is forming as a 'global' space in which 'communities meet and discuss' wide range of topics, and the aim is not for consensus as much as it is for concluding more than one 'public' opinion. (Johannessen, 2012)

By counter-publics, scholars refer to 'groups that distinguish themselves from the rational-critical debate of dominant publics through different dispositions, styles, and strategies for steering public attention.' (Pfister, 2018) For users, the focus is on the 'opportunities' available for 'speaking out' and expressing one's thoughts. The Internet is considered as a 'modern' version of the public sphere, accordingly. (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002)

The definition of social networking sites (the term is used interchangeably with social media) is social gathering formed via the Internet for persons sharing the same interests having discussions through the virtual space, and that these platforms 'primarily depend on its users to operate it and feed it with content.

However, when it comes to the online public sphere, researchers expressed the need of 'market intervention' and not merely users' changing behavior. Fuchs (2014) is recommending James Bennett's idea on 'public service algorithms' as he considers that the reason behind the fragmentation in online communities forming the digital public sphere is the 'commercial interests' which is leading to a situation in which it is hard to engage with one another. Fuchs is thus calling for a non-commercial counter public sphere.

Palau-Sampio and López-Garcí (2022) state that a digital public sphere is the 'evolution' of the twentieth century 'unidirectional' public space that is defined with a 'political and media intermediation. However, they add that the current multiple actors and multi-directional messages– '*has not resolved the problems that existed beforehand, and has also generated others.*'

The researchers refer mainly to 'fragmentation of audiences' as well as, 'the dispersion of voices' as major factors aggravating the crisis of the public space, with no alternatives, in terms

of having 'distinct dialogue' and they are considering 'disinformation' to be one of the challenges in front of the essential step required; 'to prioritize quality of information.'

Rohde Johannessen and Følstad (2014) refer to the 'culture' as a core element to mentally adapt with as a user for the online mediums of communication. The 'networked' nature of the Internet, accordingly, required a parallel 'networked' public sphere with numerous discussions and varied spaces. The researchers shed the light on one of the advantages for political communication; for political parties to invite the 'opposing voices' to the discussion.

The ability to 'tailor' the social networking sites to one's own interests and objectives was the main research argument in Wang (2011) and Alhabash (2011). They described it as the ability to build a network, creating and maintaining relationships that were not possible without the Internet.

There is little attention attached to network size, though. Quan and Yound (2010) argue that the concept of network size is related to extra information disclosed on social networking sites representing the significance of the size and the degree of the network as users are more likely to be active users, if they join a 'heavy-going' network.

Salehan and Negahban (2013) add that a network size on social networking sites embodies a concept associated with each platform. For example, the network size on Facebook is viewed as the number of friends a user has on their profile, and on LinkedIn it is known as the number of connections on your business profile.

'Who Cares about the Public Sphere?" Agustin Goenaga (2022) clarifies that the public sphere is an indicator on the status of democracy; and its deterioration is a proof of compromising the democratization process.

Goenaga addressed three normative functions that public spheres are expected to perform in representative democracies: they provide voice to alternative perspectives, they empower citizens to criticize political authorities and they disseminate information on matters of public interest.

Citizens develop differentiated views about the importance of these democratic functions, depending on (1) their ability to influence political decisions through public debate, and (2) the extent to which voice, critique and information address democratic problems they particularly care about. More educated citizens are more likely to assign greater importance to all three functions.

Members of cultural and sexual minorities are more likely to emphasize the importance of giving voice to alternative perspectives, while citizens dissatisfied with the government are more likely to prioritize public criticism and access to reliable information.

Chambers and Kopstein (2022) addressed three important functions performed by the public sphere in democracy; opinion formation, to facilitate the circulation of information and for users to form political opinions and take positions on public matters, the second is the accountability function; as the public sphere host pluralistic debate, criticism, and challenge that ideally holds power to public account, then the third is the responsiveness function; as the public sphere hosts spaces, platforms, and venues in which the public can articulate and communicate claims, demands, and interests, to which democratic states and representatives ought to respond. If citizens have no information to form judgments, then this in turn undermines accountability and responsiveness.

The authors clarified two interconnected problems associated with the new digital landscape that are considered as a threat to the democratic role of the public sphere; the

migration of bad civil society; so online communication will become ever more uncivil, polarized, and draw more people into antidemocratic groups, by sending them down extremist and conspiracy rabbit holes, and the second problem is the circulation of disinformation and sinking levels of trust in sources of information.

More importantly, they claim that 'information disorder' is being escalated by digital communication represented in problems of disinformation and misinformation, bad information, malinformation, no information, and sometimes too much information. In addition, they consider it a 'political' problem not a technological one; as they are spread among citizen regardless of their use to social media. They refer to 'old authoritarian' tactic of '*seeking to weaken the power of information*.' Accordingly, the solution shall involve more than technical regulation; '*these are not algorithms controlling our lives, these are political agents with agendas. It is the man and not the machine that we need to worry about.*'

The uprisings which swept across the Arab world beginning in December 2010 pose a serious challenge to many of the core findings of the political science literature focused on the durability of the authoritarian Middle Eastern state. The impact of social media on contentious politics represents one of the many areas which will require significant new thinking.

Lynch and Marc (2011) refer to the dramatic change in the information environment over the last decade which affected the ability of individuals to organize for collective action, as well as, the change in the transmission of information from the local to the international level. However, they argue that an equal opportunity has been offered to authoritarian states. Accordingly, the long term evolution of a new kind of public sphere may matter more than immediate political outcomes.

Based on the widely cited aphorism, '*Twitter doesn't cause revolutions, but revolutions are tweeted,*' Lynch & Marc argue that '*political opportunity structures matter more than technology alone*." They explain that the important role played by social media in the Arab Spring has been strengthened by public frustration over 'manipulated elections' and 'deteriorating economy' as well as the traditional mass media coverage, referring specifically to the Qatari New TV Network, Al-Jazeera. ON the other hand, the analysis addressed the state reaction represented in: *control*, *surveillance*, and *repression*. Therefore, they argue that '*political opportunity structures matter more than technology alone.*'

Social media, as becoming an integral part of everyday activities, not only transforms forms of communication; through challenging traditional and democratizing access to information, but also has the ability to redistribute power. The relationship between governments and citizens are transformed; citizens are provided the opportunity to be aware and engaged politically and to monitor their government unjust decisions and policies. (Yan, 2021)

It is argued that these fundamental shift of power will be mediated trough the state's experience in control, surveillance, and repression. In addition to what is described as 'the dark side of the over powered social media.' (Lynch and Marc, 2011; Yan, 2021)

Sitaram and Bernardo (2010) demonstrate how social media content can be used to predict real-world outcomes. In particular, the researchers use the chatter from Twitter.com to forecast box-office revenues for movies. The results show that a simple model built from the rate at which tweets are created about particular topics can outperform market-based predictors. The analysis further demonstrates how sentiments extracted from Twitter can be further utilized to improve the forecasting power of social media.

The political and social development and change achieved on the ground/offline to which these platforms would react and interact; not as an independent momentum change but as a change in the context within which it operates and are used. So, it is related to the actual status not the tool itself; as an example: Before June 30 events: a battle ground; doctrinal and intellectual conflict, and polarization. After June 30 events: The online political upheaval ended in parallel to the radical change in the regime, the legal restrictions.

The result should be considered in light of the sample of the cultural analysis; the researcher analyzed three Facebook pages representing varied central points: *Kolena Khaled Said* (the page called for the 25th of January revolution), *6th of April, and Tamarrud* (the campaign calling for the June 30 uprisings). In reality, is more related to individuals, specific persons, than to pages/groups/coalitions.

Moustafa (2016) summarized the factors affecting the role of electronic communication in political reform and social change as follows: (1) The function and the form of these tools within the society, (2) the level of freedom, (3) the diversity of opinions and attitudes allowed, (4) the nature of the political/cultural/social/political aspects deeply-rooted in the society, (5) the philosophy of the political regime and the extent to which it frees the usage of these tools within the social form.

In his dispatch titled "Democracy Fades in the Arab Spring's Success Story," (Auguest 4, 2022), Simon Speakman Cordall, a freelance journalist based in Tunisia, explained the quick transformation in the political scene in Tunisia, the country that triggered the Arab Spring, quoting Hamza Meddeb of the Carnegie Middle East Center noting that Tunisia had become a fundamentally divided country: "we have around a quarter of the population that supported the

president and his constitution […] according to polling institutions, a quarter of the electorate have been actively boycotting the referendum."

Meddeb, however, is referring to the data; calling the silent majority; the 50% who have not yet to decide, and asserting the fact that they are not passive, and they are to take to the streets if their main concern; which is the economic issue, went too far through the continues increase in prices and the subsidies that are cut off.

An important shift is that contemporary mediation blurred the online–offline and digital– paper separation. Merged, they may represent a convergence culture (Jenkins 2008), produsage (Bruns 2007), or media synchronization. (Sakr, 2021)

Social Networking Sites are proved to harness the power to both change human communication and interaction patterns, and build intense interaction which influence user's lives, despite the fact that these powerful interactions are only experienced through online context. Virtual is still real. (Humphreys, 2007; Clemons, 2009; Cheung and Lee, 2010; Kim, 2011; Alhabash et al., 2013)

2.2 ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AS A PUBLIC SPHERE

Ganaele Langlois (2014) in a study titled 'Meaning in the Age of Social Media,' Langlois is theorizing the central process of human 'everyday activity;' 'finding meaning;' '*making sense of what is going on […] in order to figure out what they stand for and where we stand in relation to [things, people, and events].*'

Langlois explains how '*such a process never takes place in isolation; it requires acts of communication.*' And, by finding meaning, as a continuous quest, depends on a wide range of aspects; mind mapping, speeches, agreement and validation, and opening up to others. As

Langlois reached, his understanding is close to '*John Durham Peter's definition of communication as a process of authentic encounter*.'

In addition, it is supposed to be a two-way reciprocal process raising an ethical question of; '*how can we be recognized, heard, accepted, and how can we recognize, accept, and hear the Other's meanings?*' However, it is asserted that since '*meanings*' are questioning '*power*', meanings are used in social and political control; Mass Media, for instance, are tools for providing meaning.

Reversely, though, this never-ending process is 'creative' and practiced both individually and collectively; it allows for the formulation of alternatives and breaking down long-standing power. '*It is a process of empowerment and emancipation.*'

Rabah (2013) starting point was stating that both the academic and public interest in exploring the '*democratization features*' of the online social networking sites goes back to 1990s. And, the Arab Spring uprisings were the real embodiment of these debates. The core question of Rabah (2013) is '*to what extent and how can social networking sites platforms contribute significantly to the emergence of a virtual public sphere in the Arab world?*' The premise of the study is that '*in a virtual public sphere context, social networking platforms could offer an alternative space to the traditional hegemonic Arab elitist sphere*.'

The answer to this question depends on the one's normative orientations; however the short answer provided by the researcher is that '*social networking platforms in the Arab world seem to be far from being a virtual public sphere dedicated to social and political change.*'

The analysis addresses the 'superficial' content shared and posted on these platforms most of the time, in addition to effect of the context within which Arab citizens use these platforms. The researcher interpreted the role played by these platforms in Egypt leading to a

significant accomplishments as '*special cases; moments of transition*,' arguing that only during these events, social networking platforms can contribute to real actions on the ground, however, the researcher adds '*without lasting impact*.'

The long answer, on the other hand, include 'good news;' as the researcher described few Arab states to have '*a very active and dynamic'* virtual public sphere, particularly Facebook, and to a lesser extent Twitter, noting that the size of these virtual public sphere are not a valid factor; referring to the Habermasian 18th century limited to elites public sphere with a substantial impact; '*Can they revolutionize the political practices or would they accommodate the current status quo at a time of increased cynicism towards politics? Can they extend the political capabilities of the Arab world citizens and promote rational discourses? Will the "revolutionary" potential of these networks be constrained by the authoritarian regimes of the region and the apathy and cynicism of the citizens*?'

In a two-year project '*Creating Facebook*' studying 'User Agency' through questionnaire responses of over a hundred Facebook users, as well as in-depth interviews with a sub-sample, Seargeant (2019) is reflecting on the communication on the site in regard to 'what is considered a suitable behavior,' 'how interactions are regulated.'

The results clarify that Facebook users "*learn through experience*," Regarding the factors affecting and determining the online behavior of the users, it is indicated that '*social sharing*,' not only technology, is the core dynamic at the heart of Facebook, referring to the '*beliefs that users have about what the technology is best suited for, how they use it for this purpose, and the norms they develop in doing this*.'

In addition, the users have to understand their audience characteristics and the different relationships within their online network, which is called "*intradiversity*." The study asserted that

users, also, '*must take into account the fact that their posts will be shared, reproduced, and interpreted in unlimited number of new contexts [transforming] the meaning and the value attached to a post*.'

A secondary analysis for 25 Arabic studies and 23 Foreign studies that applied Habermas communicative Action to address the actual role of traditional and digital media in "*circulating and securing the intellectual dominance of the hegemonic forces in society or enable the free discussion*," between the years 2011-2021.

The results revealed a continuing controversy among the Arab and Foreign researchers about the role of social networks and digital media in creating a free public sphere, based on rational debate and rational communicative dialogue compared to traditional media, especially after the political transformations that many Arab countries have witnessed in the past decade. Except, the findings warned from absolute assurance for the role of these networks in creating the public sphere, with the necessity of considering the ethics of the discourse presented through the virtual public sphere which may go beyond moderate opinions and threaten the desired democracy.

As well as the need to study this area within the framework of its relationship with the historical, political and social context of society, while emphasizing the difficulty of applying the public sphere in the Habermasian sense to Arab societies. (Bekheit, 2022)

Differentiating between 'ordinary' users and 'experts,' Yang, Quan-Haase, & Rannenberg (2017) studied Twitter as a virtual public space stating that: (1) ordinary citizens are '*lurkers*' or '*passive information consumers;*' their participation is mainly '*following*', '*retweeting*' and '*observing*,' rather than tweeting their own opinions.

The study refers to Greenhow & Gleason (2012) description of '*Twitteracy*' (a combination of Twitter and literacy) as an acquired skill for online participation in debates. The study frame Twitter platform as '*a space dominated by experts*' which accordingly sounds '*intimidating' to ordinary citizens.*'

In addition, it refers to Colleoni et al (2014) results indicating that '*Twitter's features – in particular, hashtags, allow users to follow a debate anonymously*,' and unfortunately, this could have an '*opposite effect'* in regard to forming a functioning virtual public sphere. The uniqueness of the topic studied, 'The Right to Be Forgotten' has been also taken into consideration in interpreting such results; the researchers explain that the '*ordinary users sense of ignorance or inexperience*' would prevent them from adding to a conversation involving legal institutions and officials, and accordingly, they believe that '*they are being helpful by not interrupting the discussions moderated by the experts.*'

In terms of how influence occurs on Social Media, the key findings of the study are summarized as follows: "the observed public sphere resembles the traditional one: with elite players such as news portals, experts and corporations participating, but it also differs significantly in terms of: the underlying mechanisms and means of information diffusion.

As stated by the researchers, experts are critical to comment, relay and make sense of information. Influencers can be defined in terms of: their centrality in a network – major influencers are referred to as stars or opinion leaders – their ability to move information between otherwise disconnected networks; major players in this category are referred to as gatekeepers, cosmopolitans or bridging actors.

In an article that appeared in The Atlantic, Megan Garber warned, '*a year after the Egyptian revolution, 10 per cent of its social media is already gone*' mentioned Sakr (2021), one

of the scholars criticized the '*exaggeration*' of the role of the Internet and social media in the Arab uprisings; '*too much focus on Facebook or Twitter rather than the underlying political struggles.*'

After the gradual fading of the Arab Spring momentum in 2011, more attention has been directed toward framing social networking sites platforms as serving '*terrorist groups.*' Consequently, both '*official state actors and civil society*' became involved and '*digital diplomacy*' as a new method has developed. In Egypt, for example, these platforms have been witnessing increasing turnout in the number of users since 2011 in Egypt. But, '*it is not merely an increase in the number, as much as it is a transformation in the users and their usage*.'

It's obvious that the answer will always depend on 'where you stand.' Operationally defining online social networking platforms as '*digital infrastructures*' that '*build their success on the extraction and refinement of data*' directs the attention to the owners of these platforms 'business model' as described by Zuboff calls '*radical indifference; it doesn't matter what is in the pipelines as long as they are full and flowing.*'

That analysis would propose a solution of issuing legislations forcing the platforms to moderate and monitor its user-generated content. Framing the post-truth associated symptoms and implications as 'threats' and the users as passive polarized consumers scrolling through misinformation leads at the end to limiting the discussions to privacy concerns and surveillance options.

But, '*over-emphasizing the role of the consumer over that of the citizen*' hinders the effectiveness of any legislative interference. What is needed is '*a regulative framework that supports the diversity and plurality of online spaces and guarantees access to common sources of factual information.*'

The analysis extends to an environment of 'superabundance of information;' as the Internet is directing our ways of knowing, accordingly, the question should no longer be one of what information is available – it is a matter of how we acquire information.' (Hyvonen, 2022)

The literature on the future of Social Media is mainly focusing on its functions in digital Marketing rather than in political communication. (Vu, 2020) As Fuchs (2014) puts it "Social media has since the mid-2000s become a buzzword and marketing ideology aimed at attracting users and investors to platforms." His critical analysis is in favor of Habermas public sphere; Fuchs is calling for asking the questions related to 'ownership' of these online platforms and not only to discuss its manifest effect on political and cultural communication transformation.

Lievrouw and Livingstone (2002) divide the future perspectives into two categories: on the one hand, there are those who lean toward a positive interpretation of the new media. They argue that new technologies can be used to promote citizen participation in debates offering them a substitution for the lacked space I traditional media and opening the door in front of inventing new forms of communities. On the other hand, those inclined toward a negative interpretation identify a risk of creating a form of technological domination over individuals, capable of controlling and manipulating opinions, decisions and behaviors to an extent never before possible.

Haoran, Qi, Jindou, and Xuanjin (2017) are predicting that advanced future technology analysis software are allowing more research to be conducted on the future of the agenda of the discussed topics based on the history of the user's posts.

Chambers and Kopstein (2022) consider the central role of social media in the public sphere is '*not as a venue for debate and deliberative exchange where civility and respect are essential but rather as a source of information.*' They clarify that the vast majority of the billion of Facebook

users '*are consumers rather than producers of information,*' and the lack of civil deliberation is '*not as serious as if the platforms made it impossible to access reliable information and basic facts.*' Consequently, they address two ways in which social media is 'disrupting *the healthy circulation of information in the public sphere;*' (1) the problem of technologically induced echo chambers and filter bubbles, and a more pressing problem is (2) spreading unreliable and false information.

Social Capital theory conceptualizes the strength of interactions within a networked society with bridging versus bonding and measuring reciprocity as a factor and an outcome for trust. It provides us with a good explanation of the reasons why so many people take part in online communities, seemingly without getting any rewards for their contributions. Because of the interconnected values of social capital, communities, networks and the public sphere, social capital could act in two ways, both as a determinant of participation, and as an outcome of participation.

Social Capital can be used to explain the ties between social media users, and can also function as a tool for explaining why social media applications have become so popular in such a short amount of time. Social capital and social media are both concerned with networks, communities and with helping the people around you.

Johannessen (2012) explains that social capital and functioning public spheres are interlinked. It addresses that 'trust in reciprocity' is a major factor affecting the online civic engagement in any community [and at the same time] a successful two-way discussion can contribute to increased social capital and increased political debate.

Yolmo (2018) identified seven functional building blocks of social media platforms: (1) Identity; (2) Conversations; (3) Sharing; (4) Presence; (5) Relationship; (6) Reputation; and (7)

Groups. The 'identity' is referring to 'privacy' as it represents to what extent users are comfortable revealing personal details online. It is expected, then, that in case a user is not sure about the consequences of it, they choose to provide 'false' profile information.

Conversation is the block related to interaction with other users. Sharing is more about 'exchanging' and 'distributing' content, while presence is the block describing awareness of other users' accessibility which in return affect the conversation. Relationship is determining to what extent the user 'relate' to other users and reputation is the extent to which a user would recognize their own status in the network. Finally, the block 'groups' functionality is the user's ability to create and join groups and sub-groups.

Abd-Alghaffar (2022) conducted an analytical and survey study to explore the mechanisms of forming social capital in the Egyptian society, and applied it to the most recent and fast-growing social networking audio-application Clubhouse. The study aims at discovering the patterns and motives of usage among Egyptian Youth, in addition to addressing the most prominent topics/issues discussed. The results show the impact of the application on the social relationship; referring to the personal characteristics of the participants (speakers, moderators, and the general audience of listeners) and their well-mannered conversations. The researcher described the direct/instant conversation through voice to be the closest to real life face-to-face communication, stating that the majority communicated with their real identity information. The analysis indicated the significance of the interaction through Clubhouse as follows: solidarity and empathy in different situations; a feeling of closeness and harmony that allow for developing the social relationships both online and offline. Confidence and trust in social interactions reflected in finding that 70.7% of the sample uses Clubhouse, and 51.1% use their real names. Finally, the researcher is recommending focusing on studying the relationship between teenagers and

children's usage of Clubhouse application and their values, as well as the process of building and forming the social capital.

Global Disinformation Index (GDI) views disinformation through the lens of 'adversarial narrative' conflict stating that 'disinformation occurs when someone pushes an intentionally misleading narrative which is adversarial against democratic institutions, scientific consensus or an at risk group — and which carries a risk of harm' resulting in undermining trust in the social, political, economic, and scientific institutions and sowing division within societies, often leading to real world harms, including violence, illness and death. The harms from adversarial narratives are increasingly evident across the world; from hate speech and harassment to conspiracy theories and extremism, individuals are harmed emotionally, financially and physically as a result of toxic online content. At a societal level, increasing division and distrust of each other and of the institutions that make up our societies is eroding democratic progress, giving populists and authoritarians increasing visibility and power at the expense of competent and independent voices. No less than civilization's progress since the Enlightenment is at stake.

In their study titled 'Public Sphere Distortion in the Age of Internet Giants: Regulatory Pathways toward the Implications of Automated Online Content Filtering,' Ibrahim Sabra and Mostafa Elkadi (2022) discuss 'automated filters' and their increasing effect on the flow of content on online public sphere. In a socio-legal approach, they analyze the present and the future of regulatory procedures, calling for 'international action' to empower the users and weaken the control of both the states and the platforms.

The study shows that lately, more and more countries and regimes are developing policies and procedures for regulating the adoption of 'automated actions' on the Internet. However, in democracies, the majority of these measures are to preserve a free sphere for information and

opinions, alike. And, accordingly, the criteria upon which the measures were chosen are '*legality*' and '*necessity*' requiring any action to be '*justified*' and within the national and international convention for Human Rights.

These are examples for the regulation and/or restriction at the level of the states not a corporate obligation. Years later, civil society organizations among other watchdog institutions are documenting what is described as the 'enormous power' of the social media platforms in gate keeping the flow of content. In general, the '*human-in-command approach*' is required and preferred over 'automated' control, when it comes to the choice of 'self-regulation.'

The literature asserts the importance of 'The Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights' as a 'soft law' that is 'upheld' by 'internet giants' to prevent any 'abuse' and 'sets clear and adequate standards' for a responsible corporate.

Even in the U.S, there is a long-standing effort in drawing effective 'self-regulation' that guarantees a healthy sphere minimizing the harmful speech. Those who are opposing it, however, put it in the same category with government interferences; both are considered 'prior censorship' as long as the end-user has no control over it.

In the EU, the E-Commerce Directive has removed any responsibilities upon the platforms to regulate or monitor the user generated content, not even under the claim of 'fact checking' or 'indicating any illegal activity.' The UK, on the other hand, adopted the model of an 'independent regulator' to 'push' the tech companies to be more responsible regarding the disseminated content on their platforms; 'duty of care.'

The authority this independent regulator has ranges from 'fines', 'setting codes,' receiving 'annual transparency reports' and "encouraging' academic researchers access to data, to the companies' adoption of 'user-friendly complaints system' and 'investing in the development of

safety technology.' The unique point in this step is the parallel long-term strategy for 'online media literacy' which is the responsibility of the government to raise the people's awareness.

Egypt is not included in the category of the countries that decided to establish 'units' for monitoring online content and 'detecting disinformation,' 'labeling fake news,' and 'preventing' foreign misleading campaigns, particularly during 'elections.'

However, Egypt already activated such a step in each ministry and one major unit affiliated with them. While, it is included directly with the category of countries that decided to combat 'harmful' content through the authority of laws issuing 'Anti Fake News and Cybercrime Laws,' along with Germany, China, Malaysia, and Kenya. These laws are consequently 'heavily criticized' for being 'abusively' restricting online freedom of expression.

The study refers to the literature conducted on the 'imbalance' between the 'limitless media' and the 'limited attention' of the users that fail to evaluate check, and refine the content they get online, and to prioritize the relevant information and eventually get confused. This facilitated and encouraged 'content personalization.'

In conclusion, the authors states that the Internet is considered across cultural contexts and other variables as a main information provider and the 'preferable' public space for debates. The key factors behind that is its ability to overcome barriers of time, distance, and even language, with the approximate easy and cheap accessibility to varied sources and content; mainly the user-generated content and citizen journalism, through social media platforms, that have been valued alternatives to mainstream media for decades.

Regarding the future, the study addressed key recommendations for regulatory measures; first, involvement of the civil society in designing the policies, and supporting researchers for building a 'solid academic basis' for these policies.

Second, the varied stakeholders 'familiarization' with how 'automated filters' work so as to make 'informed' decisions., and for these 'automated' rules to allow users to 'suspend any personalization activity either temporarily or permanently,' and 'promoting encouraging steps towards more exposure to opposing and diversified content.'

Thirdly, it demands regulation of 'political advertising' to guarantee 'transparency' and 'neutrality' In addition to 'inclusive' legal frameworks applied to a 'fluid media environment.' Fourthly, it suggests establishing an 'independent committee' of an 'international character' to report on the measure of the platforms 'self-regulatory' efforts, and to respond to users' complaints.

However, the study criticizes Facebook (now Meta) initiated self-regulatory 'Oversight Board,' and clarifying that the recommended one 'should function in a way similar to the Human Rights Committee.'

It is argued that '*self-regulation is not the answer*.' At 4:00 p.m. on January 6, 2021, Twitter decision to deplatform Trump yields too much power to corporations. This confirmed that it is '*more efficient to track down one* [extremist and hate speech-er] *who can reach millions rather than to chase down millions of messages as they speed through the internet, and fact check and correct as they spread*.'

> *"We find ourselves in a filter bubble any time we're only surrounded by views and opinions we agree with, while being sheltered from opposing perspectives. Filter bubbles distort our understanding of the world and hamper our ability to make balanced decisions."*

In their study, Sabra and Elkadi (2022) differentiate between "Echo Chambers" and "Filter Bubbles;" stating that the first is created upon the users own decision to 'personalize' the content they get; mainly they would choose the content that 'align' with their beliefs and views, while,

the latter is based on the 'algorithmic customization' which is based on the users' 'personal data' and online behaviors and habits.

The study, also, discusses what Cass R. Sunstein (2007) calls 'the self-reinforcing spiral of polarization.' Sunstein is referring to the users 'self-customization' of what to see and what not to see in their timelines.

In his book, The Filter Bubble: What the internet is hiding from you, Eli Pariser (2011) portrays today's online environment as a place where technology corporations and the advertisers they serve use algorithms to define the news you see based on your salary, education and – crucially – your social milieu.

The internet has ushered in an age of "me media" which consists of echo chambers. And the problem with these echo chambers is that when they come into contact with one another, conflict ensues. This is not good news for the public sphere.

The studies considering the Internet/social media as 'the best place' where 'hate and extremism' can be widely spreading, are building this premise on 'filtering mechanisms' that fuel like-minded debates among those who then become more likely to adopt extreme positions compared to those who participate in diverse conversations, claiming that for this sole reason, 'social stability' in societies is 'put in risk.'

During a press conference held in September 2021, Twitter had mentioned that it was testing a feature called Heads Up which was in early testing. The feature now seems to be working for some Android and iOS users. Twitter noted that it is testing prompts that will alert users before they get into a heated or intense or heated conversation. Twitter noted that the prompts are aimed at supporting healthy conversation. Twitter will notify users about conversations that can be intense before they tweet in a conversation.

When users reply to tweets, Twitter will show prompts that read, "Let's look out for each other." under the 'Let's look out for each other' will be three bullet points including remember the human, facts matter, and diverse perspectives have value. Twitter will also give users a heads up before they post something likely to be offensive. Twitter will also prompt users before they share an article they have not read. (Ahmed, 2021)

Hostile public opinion can be a threat to democracies as well as autocratic regimes. Yang and Rannenberg (2017) present the term 'Flare Topics;' they appear in a 'sudden and intense' manner, followed by a quick fading from the discourse. These flare topics were often linked to news originating in the mainstream media and would spark heated, topic-specific debates. They would quickly reach a peak and then slowly flatten and completely vanish; this is when the latent topic would return into focus and sustain the debate. We also observed that these flare topics could completely shift the focus of the discussion.

Extremist propaganda found the internet and social media platforms as suitable spaces for spreading their ideas and plans recruiting fans and supporters. Network analysis blames it on the 'filtering mechanisms' describing the long-term consequences as putting the 'stability of societies 'at risk.' For example, the algorithm is showed responsible for "Facebook's Recommended Friends function" helped in connecting ISIL members, while "Twitter's 'who to Follow' algorithm suggested connecting to Islamist extremist's accounts in case the user followed al-Qaeda account. Also, 'YouTube's recommender system' prioritized far-right content when the user interacted with similar material. (Sabra & Elkadi, 2022)

Sara Ahmed Abu El Saud (2020) analyzes the 'Hatred Speech through Social Media and its Role in Gathering and Filling Politically the Public Opinion in the Light of the Conflict Theory.' The study analyzes online content/opinions published on public pages and accounts

(anonymous administration) representing different political views; those pro-state, opponents, and those described themselves as 'independent/outsider' that doesn't belong to any category.

The results included variety of discussions on approximately "every" topic of the public interest; the prices, police (enforced disappearance, political prisoners,…), education, healthcare system, poverty, unemployment,… among others. The period of analysis is justified referring to national major controversial issues/crises that triggered the public to take part in online intense debates; for example: the Tiran and Sanafir lands, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Damn, the economic conditions, and the first callings for public demonstrations (Known as the contractor Muhammad Ali Videos) since June 30, 2013.

The study indicates that there were 'hatred' tone dominating the language expressing the views and opinions; the 'hatred' is directed toward official authorities and institutions as well as ordinary fellow citizens. 'Hatred' as a concept is defined as an 'illogical' discourse, the study, however, does not provide a solid explanation to the reason behind this dominance of 'hatred' as an attitude and a way of thinking and expressing views, except as a lack of 'critical thinking.'

Accordingly, the researcher concludes that the solution would rely heavily on educating' the users referring to 'Media Literacy' as providing a vital helpful guidance to those keen on enhancing the online public discussions.

2.3 A CRITICAL LOOK: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATION

A book excerpt shared under the title "The New Alchemies of the Net," in which the authors elaborate on the definition of communication: "*Communication thus is far more than simply sending or receiving information through politically neutral channels; ass the issue is not only who sends and receives but the social, gender and civilizational context embedded in this process.*" (Inayatullah and Leggett, 2002)

The authors explain that for transforming communication for future generations, an inclusive approach that involve alternative ways of knowing and critical technocracy, instead of the dominant approach of exclusive, ego-driven communication. Answering the question "Who speaks" in the future, Inayatullah and Leggett referred to the effort done by Grace and Lennie, Jarva and Milojevic, on the gendered dimensions of the new technologies; claiming that billions of voices are systematically silenced due to lack of understanding to core worldviews behind the day to day culture.

However, the authors asserting that critical evaluation for the present could support a future that brings the poor and the rich, women and men, the 'West' and the rest of the world closer. But, without this critical shift and exerted effort to voice the marginalized voices of inclusion and alternative way of thinking, the future would be 'technocracy winning; represented in state powers and global media groups.

That was written back in 2002, and the experience proved this to be right; it is a battle of 'meaning' and voicing the unvoiced ideas, and challenging the taken-for-granted rules and traditions. This is how the public sphere is both transforming itself and becoming a transformative tool in the hands of the 'public.'

Analysis has been heavily building on thoughts that discuss technology in a wider context of other factors, mainly power, social, class, gender, and political decisions, rather focusing only on the technical aspects. As Bobsin (2018) put it: "The very same technology might have different potentialities when considering different situations."

In their book titled "Transforming Communication: Technology, Sustainability, and Future Generations," Anthony Judge, Richard Neville, Darren Schmidt, Jérôme Bindé, et al. (2002) explore the futures of communication, particularly 'transformative scenarios', and aiming

at answering three key questions: what it means to communicate? (What?), who should be included in the communicative community? (How?), and what is to be the purpose of communication? (Why?)

The analysis indicates that "The coming of the information era, ostensibly providing untold riches in bits of freedom for all, in fact limits the futures of others […] it robs them of their future alternatives – it does not create a communicative vision of the future, a Gaia of Civilizations."

The book explains the term 'authentic global communication' referring to targeting inclusive processes that help in 'knowing the other' in society, especially vulnerable categories. Also, regarding the future, the authors believe that our future is in the making/destroying in the present moment, and they present the issue of 'inclusivity' in a critical approach; 'the issue of inclusion is not just one of representation in terms of the number and class of users of new information and communication technologies, although access is crucial, but a question of whether 'other' ways of knowing can be represented on the Net […] So what is being communicated and to whom? Communication, we argue, is not just the sharing of stories, but communicating to each other the possibilities of creating sustainable futures for future generations."

It is not surprising that the literature is addressing 'the political system' on the top of the factors causing the '*highly uncertain*' future of the social networking sites. (Stronmen, 2012) On the other hand, there are factors 'pushing' for a desired future represented mainly in 'civil society' and the 'online communities' using the Internet as a public sphere.

The path begins with 'educating and informing' the public, till the 'careful' online interaction. This adds 'power' as one of the factors affecting the future. It is witnessed how quickly the

political and security institutions 'wag the wagon' and the terms 'freedom,' 'open', 'access,' and 'participation,' are replaced with 'control,' propaganda,' and 'surveillance.'

Yolmo (2014) shows that 'social responsibility' is the number one aspect to be taken into consideration when it comes to social media platforms' self-regulatory and censorship authority. The study recommends that the users themselves would have 'a sense of responsibility' or they would be risking the 'undermine' of the public sphere.

According to surveys, citizens all over the world across different ideologies are concerned with truth and trust in information. In general, it is documented that between 2016 and 2020, self-regulation has been proved efficient in changing the levels and types of online disinformation.

The big social networking sites; Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube have launched several initiatives related to fact checking, authentication, oversight ethics committees, privacy safeguards, reviewing and enforcing community standards, content moderation, and discussing transparency regarding their algorithms. And, even if the motive is not civic but merely profit-oriented; it is suggested that it *is making a difference.*

This effort is argued to be in response to four types of pressures. The first is avoiding official regulation; they want to show that they do acknowledge that disinformation 'is' a problem and that they can handle it and they do not need the state to step in. The second pressure on platforms comes from unhappy users and public shaming campaigns addressing misinformation and privacy issues. The third is the internal pressure from employees to step up and become better corporate citizens; from lowly design engineers to the top executives, have been exposing questionable decisions and unethical design choices in the way the platforms

curate information or fail to enforce their own standards. Finally advertising dollars and corporate support are not immune to bad citizenship and failures to self-regulate.

At stake is nothing short of a radical and more equal politics of 'speaking and listening; as the problem with the spread of 'rumors' returns to the authority that "is targeting the monopolization of information." The user is the one responsible for directing social media, along with social and cultural identity. (Faris, 2008; Dhawan 2013; Meringolo, 2015)

In his book "The Future of the Internet—And How to Stop It?" Jonathan L. Zittrain explains how the Internet's generative characteristics are double-edged sword; it is the key factors behind its extraordinary success—and they are becoming what 'position it for failure.' The book states what it called 'the pattern;' describing the nature of technology as 'incomplete' and always open for enhancements which help technology to be ubiquitous, then more developments are made adding to a wider space of usage. This is the circular pattern of "generativity' that supports positioning technology into the mainstream. The side-effects that push toward the opposite direction of success occurs when this mainstream effectiveness attract people who lack talent and tolerance, as well as, has no connections with the possibilities of developments and sharing, and it attracts also those who 'gain by abusing.'

The pattern continues till the point in which users search for 'alternatives.' While the obvious reaction to 'abuse' as stated by the author is to close the open system altogether, this is not possible with the Internet as it is one of the core characteristics and the uniqueness of it as a means of communication; [and] regulators would find difficulty returning technologies to the backwaters from which they came.

The authors ask, then: "so, what to do to stop this future?" referring to ways to stop 'moving toward a non-generative world.' The answer is recommending a 'strategy' that would

avoid 'killing' today's Internet but also would guarantee getting rid of the worst of it; keeping it open for 'innovation' at the content layer and the technical layer, and providing its users with motives to stay loyal.

In a book chapter exploring the 'digital practices of political participation among 30 young people (from 18 to 24 years old) in Argentina based on in-depth interviews,' Tarullo (2022) tries to address the various issues of debate on social media focusing on the 'formats of practices' and the 'significances' of the output of the online public conversations.

The findings 'note that these segments of the population join the discussion of issues on the public agenda using emojis and hashtags and prefer reduced digital spaces to talk with their close contacts about polarized issues in order to avoid the aggression and violence that they say they observe in the digital space.'

Today's Internet is significantly influenced by Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (1996), but the current debates over proposals to mend Section 230 'have the potential to upend freedom of speech principles and subordinate private content moderation to public law in a novel expansion of government power.' Section 230 protects internet platforms from liability for the content published on their platforms by users, but also it push for voluntarily moderation. It achieves the balance instead of either the platforms be responsible for everything, such as a newspaper is responsible for what the journalists write and publish, or to be totally irresponsible, even for the harmful content.

There is a need for rethinking the political narrative that heavily accuses Internet platforms with turning 'a blind eye' to three major challenges representing the dark side of the Internet, as described: health disinformation, hate speech, and child sexual abuse material (CSAM). However, this is not true; public data and reports of content moderation reflect the

effort exerted in implementing the policies; as announced by the European Commission (2018), over 70 percent of illegal hate speech was removed and almost 90 percent of content flagged as hate speech was reviewed within 24 hours.

The big tech companies proved to be taking serious steps to address these issues; internal regulatory infrastructure are created to review and remove content via algorithms and moderators, as well as, offering users developed mechanisms to flag violations. There are obvious increase in the number reported by mainstream platforms; in the period between July and December 2021: YouTube removed more than 200,000 videos with hate speech content. Meta reviewed and took varied actions regarding approximately 50 million pieces of hate speech content (40 million on Facebook and 10 million on Instagram). Earlier on the same year (January-July) Twitter reviewed more than 6 million reported accounts for hateful content, and took action on more than 1.1 million accounts (130,000 accounts were suspended and more than 1.6 million pieces were removed).

Accordingly, it is recommended that security institutions look for solutions beyond amendments to Section 230 that proved effective in encouraging platforms to moderate the content, and to better understand the challenges and limitations of content moderation. In addition from a technological perspective, now is the time the Internet is pushed toward decentralization as many technologists expressed being deeply dissatisfied with the poor levels of user data sovereignty and open communication in the current system. Section 230, accordingly, is seen as fostering the centralization of Internet platforms that make decisions regarding the content.

The solution goes beyond Section 230 debates and it will limit the possibilities of policy interference; it is in creating alternative open sources and providing users with more control over

their online experience. Two working projects are referred to: the Matrix protocol and the Urbit ecosystem. The design doesn't have one centralized entity that could be responsible; rather, it is the user who has control over the controversial content they post. Government agents must find and identify individuals involved with each incident. There are no single clearinghouses that can be captured and controlled. (O'Sullivan, 2022; Bagchi, Banker & Ogunleye, 2022)

2.4 THE ONLINE PUBLIC SPHERE AND DEMOCRACY

Salter (2007) refers to the general applications of Habermas early analysis (1989) on technological innovations from digital television to the Internet as improving and facilitating the mediation of public spheres. He explains that these technological mediated sites are of 'critical importance' as they allow 'free communication' which is considered a necessary prerequisite for democracy. The crucial point is to minimize 'integrating these sites into a capitalist mode of production.'

Social media has become a key term in new participatory political discourse. Imran and Fatima (2017) study explored the role which social media plays to instill democratic values in behavior of a sample of (340) students of (5) universities at Lahore through quantitative survey research. The results verified 'Connectivism Theory' suggesting that social media is becoming a new type of public sphere were students discuss and learn democratic values including political freedom of expression, political tolerance, campaigning, voting knowledge and political e-participation.

Wakabi (2019) argues that, although, it is proved in numerous studies that there is a 'correlation' between online social networking sites (such as Facebook) and e-participation, this effect is not equal across the varied types of political engagements and, in addition, it depends on the usage, the political system/atmosphere/circumstances, which, as the study concludes would

make the benefits of online social networking sites in Western context '*upended; Facebook was growing citizens' civic skills but hardly increasing online participation*.'

Muhammad Yehia Mousa (2020) examined the role of 'alternative media' in forming a public sphere for freedom of expression in Yemen. The core objective of the study is to examine the extent to which Internet network is suitable for establishing a public sphere where ideas are deliberated within democratic discussions that are not restricted, rather allowing for free expression regarding common interests among the users.

The study addressed 'Genealogy of the public sphere' describing the roots of the public sphere, its structural formations, and specifically the Arab public sphere and its new public sphere after the Arab Spring. Then, the study discusses the conceptual framework of 'alternative media' through a chronological approach and a socio-historical review for the alternative media in Yemen. And, the third key concept of the study, freedom of expression, is critically analyzed; the definition, the legal framework in Yemen regulating the Internet.

The study's analysis is based on varied variables including: types, rates, and motives of usage, access, interaction, trust, credibility, level of freedom of expression, the relationship with traditional media, and the necessity of legal framework. A survey is applied in order to collect the data from the ordinary Yemeni users; a purposive sample of 400 young people, mainly university students, across different age and educational levels involving both males and females were chosen through a snowball technique.

The study indicates that there are a relationship between these major demographic characteristics and the levels of trust, usage, and participation in discussions.

The study argues against the literature heavy focus on social media as a means of communication while paying less attention to the fact that politics are witnessing a high level of

populism and polarization referring to Freedom House report stating that the Arab world has 'digital authoritarianism.'

The criteria determining what a public sphere is are varied, and the researcher created a list extracted from the literature (Jurgan Habermas; Lincoln Dahlberg, 2001; Nathaniel Poor, 2005): access, freedom with no restrictions, and a logic reasonable discussions. The major results are as following: there is no public sphere within the Yemeni context that would match the Habermasian description in details, but there is a local version that is close to it, and it provides a solid base for forming and structuring a sphere that perform most of the vital functions of the Bourgeoisie public sphere of Habermas.

In addition, the study states that the 'new' Yemeni public sphere is passing through transformations that were declared by Habermas who predicted its occurrence; these are the growth of internet connections in all fields of life and the ordinary citizen and the marginalized are becoming involved and found an audience to their fears so they are asserting their threatened identity and facing discrimination.

The results also show similar conclusions as the literature when it comes to the circles of discussion that do not meet the requirements of 'logical/reasonable thinking' and they are instead superficial and mere arguing that takes the participants nowhere. In contrast to the literature that used the term 'disappointment' to describe the internet as a public sphere, Mousa (2020) concluded that the Internet has succeeded in forming a real public sphere that contributed to developing the characters of its users and it became an ally to the protestors and a symbol for freedom of expression as well as it is an effective tool for criticizing governments and authorities.

To conclude, the literature addressed the following indicators:

- "Movements, activists, and governments alike have radically transformed media platforms."

- The generation, not the tools/platforms; the *netizens*. They developed a collective identity based not on what divided them, but what united them." Youth and specifically women to be the drivers of the regional change. They 'shattered many stereotypes" and temporary liberated the Arab Public Sphere.

- Technology is not able to shake the 'non-participatory' long-standing model of Arab world.

- If citizens have no information to form judgments, then the accountability and responsiveness are undermined as major functions of the public sphere.

- It is a political problem, not a technological one.

- A long term evolution of a new kind of public sphere matters more than immediate political outcomes.

- Social networking sites proved to be able to 'redistribute power' in society.

- Social media users '*Learn through experience*.'

- The answer will always depend on 'where you stand, as a researcher.'

- Over emphasizing the role of the consumer over that of the citizen hinder the effectiveness of any legislative interference.

- The advanced technology analysis software is allowing more research to be conducted on the future of the agenda of the discussed topics based on the history of the user's posts.

- Clubhouse instant conversation through voice is the closest to real life face-to-face communication. The future is heading toward 'oral' communication that enhances the trust and it aligns with the preferable Arab communication approach.

o Global Disinformation Index (GDI) considers 'disinformation' through the lens of 'adversarial narratives.' "It is the man, not the machine, which we need to worry about."

o Internet regulation within the western context is to preserve a free speech and has to be justified and measures have to be legal and necessary.

o Stakeholders need to be familiarized with how automated filters work so as to make informed decisions.

o Billions of voices are systematically silenced due to lack of understanding to core worldviews behind the day to day culture.

o The transformational future of communication is an inclusive approach involves alternative ways of knowing and critical technology instead of the dominant approach of exclusive, ego-driven communication. A Gaia of civilizations.

o The future of communication aim at answering three key questions: What it means to communicate? (What) Who should be included in the communicative community? (How?), and What is to be the purpose of communication? (Why?)

o Big social networking sites have launched several initiatives related to fact checking, authentication, oversight ethics committees, privacy safeguard, reviewing and enforcing community standards, content moderation, and discussing transparency regarding their algorithms. There are four types of pressure: (1) Avoiding official regulation. (2) Unhappy users and public shaming campaigns. (3) Internal pressure from employees to step up and become better corporate citizens. (4) Advertising dollars and corporate support are not immune to bad citizenship and failure to self-regulate.

o The political system is addressed on top of the factors causing the highly uncertain future of the social networking sites.

- Political and security institutions perspectives replaced the terms freedom, open, access, and participation with control, propaganda, and surveillance.

- Arab youth are developing a hybrid identity that lends itself to both local and global features such as diversity, co-existence women empowerment, innovations, freedom, national pride, and tolerance.

- The spread of rumors return to the authority that is targeting the monopolization of information.

- Section 230 protecting the platforms from being liable for the content published on their platforms, achieved the balance instead of either the platforms be responsible for everything or to be totally irresponsible even for the harmful content.

- Social networking sites within the Arab context is providing a local version that is close to Habermas public sphere and it provide a solid base for forming and structuring a sphere that perform most of the vital functions of the Bourgeoisie public sphere of Habermas.

THE PILOT STUDY

A pilot study was conducted in order to **identify** the key elements that defines and form the current status of Social Networking Sites (SNS) as a public sphere in Egypt and to **determine** the community of the study (the categories of the sample).

A **snow-ball sample** of Social Networking Sites users are tracked from **three different starting points** representing the major categories of the sample: Academics, Media Practitioners, and Social Network Sites Opinion Leaders/Influencers. The researcher would exclude any account that is not heavily using the SNS platforms (more than three hours per day) and who is not posting information relevant to the studied phenomenon.

Then, a content analysis was conducted within the theoretical framework' hypotheses and the indicators of the literature over the period of one month (January 10- March 15, 2019) including few older posts that are reposted during the analysis or has been archived by the researcher.

The pilot study indicated that:

(1) The future of Social Network Sites within the Egyptian context is interchangeably affecting and affected by the future of Social Network Sites globally. Each country has its own legal, political, social, and cultural environment within which Social Networking Sites are used, however, the platforms themselves are universal, and the equation is not merely domestic, but, there is a more complex consequences that are taken into consideration both internal and external factors.

(2) Three more categories of the sample to be added: Human Rights/ Media Watchdog Groups, Regulatory Bodies' Representatives, and technical experts.

(3) The major categories of first level analysis are suggested to be: Mobilization (Offline-Online bridging), Usage (including: Trust, Credibility, Self Censorship), Technological Advancement (Advanced Tools, Premium, Un-plugging (including: Psychological Effects, New platforms, Specific Characters), Networking (Personalized, Grouping, Socializing), Privacy, and Future Vision.

(4) The Online Public Sphere offered, generally, by the Internet, and particularly, the SNS is seen as either a threat or a healthy phenomenon with no middle ground view.

(5) The purpose of each Social Networking Sites is affecting the usage of Social Networking Sites as a public sphere at three main levels: the content, the trust and credibility of the platform, and the future of usage.

CHAPTER III: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The discussion in this section is divided into four categories as follows: (3.1) CRITICAL FUTURE STUDIES in relation to *Mainstream Future Studies*, clarifying the theoretical framework and concepts forming *(3.1.1) Causal Layered Analysis, and addressing the dichotomy of a Dystopian-Utopian Potential of Social Media*, then, addressing *(3.1.2) Foresight Challenges*, and *(3.1.3) CLA and Metaphor.* (3.2) THE HABERMASIAN PUBLIC SPHERE; introducing *Jurgan Habermas* and his concept of the *Öffentlichkeit (the public sphere) alongside the Process and the key Actors*. (3.3) THE INTERNET/ SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AS A PUBLIC SPHERE describing both the *structure of the public sphere* and clarifying *'What's next?; post-public sphere.'* (3.4) THE EGYPTIAN ONLINE PUBLIC SPHERE in which the *Characteristics of Communication; An Arab-Islamic Perspective and the Public Sphere in Egypt are discussed.*

3.1 CRITICAL FUTURE STUDIES

"This loss of conviction about the human capacity to craft and steer its existence or even to secure its future is the most profound and devastating sense in which modernity is 'over'." (Wendy Brown, 2015)

Since the Causal Layered Analysis is mainly a tool for Critical Future Studies, this introduction will seek explaining the different aspects of these two terms: Critical and Future. Starting with the 'future,' it becomes closer than expected. The rapid changes and the uncertainty across most of the disciplines and at all levels made it inevitable to think about what's next? What tomorrow would bring? For 'critical' thinking about the 'future,' the scientists would go back one step, they would begin from the past and questioning how the issue, phenomena, or the problem is described, seen, considered, framed, or explained. The way an issue is perceived is the path to the future; the desired future.

In general, foresight work is partly about predicting, but mostly it's about anticipating how the world is changing, and using those anticipations to create alternative futures. *"What are our assumptions about the future? And based on those assumptions, what do we change?" "Are we asking the right questions?"*

Humanity is witnessing the era of 'Future Literacies.' (Goode and Godhe, 2017) This is whole new level of empowering citizens, ordinary persons, to envision the varied probable and potential futures, and act accordingly.

As expressed by Anita Hazenburg, Director Innovation Directorate at INTERPOL: "we live in a world today where ontological crisis are such that futures thinking - problem solving is not just a nice skill to have but a personal, institutional and planetary imperative." (Sharpe, 2022) 'Futures Literacy is a capability that offers insights into both the reasons and the methods humans deploy when they anticipate. Being 'futures literate' enables people, together, to appreciate the world more fully, to use the future to innovate the present (Miller, 2015)

It is a call for more 'informed decisions' that lead individuals as well as nations toward their preferred future. It is obvious that this goes beyond 'education' and 'access to knowledge,' to the ability to rewrite the stories of the past, present, and the future. To write stories that inspire and 'mobilize' others to take action, change a behavior, cooperate, transform, and 'building creative' scenarios not to 'predict' the future, but to draw the road to reach it as a clearly defined destination.

This year, the UNESCO has chosen the 2nd of December to be 'the Futures Day.' Expressing the importance of 'Futures Literacy,' Audrey Azoulay (UNESCO Director-General) says: "*Futures literacy is entirely in keeping with UNESCO's role as the United Nations' laboratory of ideas. Opening our minds and thinking about tomorrow – and both the risk and the*

promise which come with it – are exactly what the Organization's futures literacy programme is all about." (Azoulay, 2022)

As noticed, the term 'future' is used among the futurists not as a singular choice; but as various probable 'future[s].' The 'critical' in future studies is mainly referring to the intellectual effort exerted so as to spot the power pushing toward a certain future, and then challenge this 'discourse' with bringing more unheard voices into the equation so as to expand the possibilities. By this, the literature of critical future studies is not referring only to the marginalized and vulnerable categories, but also including the 'future generations;' those who might not be even born yet and whose own future is being 'shaped' at the moment by those who might not live it. (Tutton, 2016)

In their thought-provoking article titled 'Beyond Capitalist Realism – Why We Need Critical Future Studies?' Luke Goode and Michael Godhe (2017) addressed clearly four points that differentiate critical future studies from the 'mainstream' future studies, as follows: (1) the cultural analysis, (2) commitment to democracy, (3) questioning the neutrality of the discourse, and (4) that the micro- and macro- history of the studied phenomena is constructed by 'competing' discourses.

Critical Future Studies is a wide spectrum of 'projects that transcend the narrow boundaries of the self" (Ramos, 2003) targeting sustainability in the future generations varied life aspects within a motive of a civilized and peaceful world; knowing as 'Gaia of Civilizations.' And, most importantly, it looks forward to involving 'everyone' to 'create alternative futures,' instead of exclusively listening and following elites/experts, those who are mainly thinking and acting within a limited space of recycled problems and solutions since decades.

The current phase of critical future studies seems revolutionary, but this can be seen within the timeline of the development of future studies. This has been gradually and the current phase is based on accumulative effort that goes back to mid-20th century; critical futures developed as a reaction to the profound consequence of the Western industrial worldview crisis.

The beginning was focusing on the 'technological' features and on 'rationalizing' the way we think about the future and as this reflects a human 'commitment' towards creating 'futures beyond dystopia' and moving past 'limited cultural assumptions of the West.' This was followed by a phase (1970s) in which the theme became more global, and reaching the phase (1990s) that is summarized in the expression 'identity crisis;' as there are 'fragmentation' in the worldviews regarding the future. (Ramos, 2003; Goode and Godhe, 2018)

If this is the chronological tracking of future studies within the academic field of study, it is not by any means a documentation of the 'future' existence in human history. As stated by Godhe and Goode (2018): "the future is ancient." Of course, this is not the scientific approach, but the simple and basic ways of anticipating and predicting the unseen; such as forecasting and foresight. And, mentioning the unseen is directly related to 'religious belief.' Prophecy for non-believers could be considered as a type of it.

In addition, it has been always vital for any policy-maker to council 'experts' regarding their decisions seeking insightful opinions about the requirements of the future on one hand, and the consequences of their decision, on the other.

This is a trial to simplify the complexities to the already multidimensional nature of future studies. It is valuable to refer to the three key research paradigms; the empirical, the interpretive and the critical.

These are practically 'overlapping,' and they somehow complement each other in terms of their different standing-points when it comes to identifying: reality, truth, future, the universe, and the researcher-subject question.

3.1.1 Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)

By 1990 Inayatullah articulated the CLA approach through a paper published in *Futures* called 'Deconstructing and reconstructing the future: Predictive, cultural and critical epistemologies.' Inayatullah found that futures research could be grouped into three categories (Ramos, 2015):

(a) Futures research that focused on prediction worked for the purpose of control and extending power and assumed a deterministic universe, with the future a place to colonize;

(b) Futures research that focused on culture worked towards insight, examining cultural images, myths, and "universal narratives that ensure basic human values", plus the analysis of class, gender, ethnic and other categories;

(c) Critical futures tried to "undefine" the future, to make existing categories and discourses problematic.

Causal Layered Analysis aims at integrating different futures perspectives – the empirical, the interpretive, and the critical – within one approach. It translates these different ways of knowing into four layers. (Curry & Schultz, 2009)

Pedler (2012) described critical scholars as 'the trouble makers.' That is true in a sense of the way they challenge the taken-for-granted and deeply-rooted unquestioned traditions, opinions, rules and regulations, or even cultural, political, social, and economic aspects of an institution, a nation, or a phenomenon. Critical research aims at 'deconstructing' the power relations and the language considering 'alternatives' for the future. (Inayatullah, 1998) And this

has been the topic for intense argumentations among scholars, but the response has been direct and simple, as put by Pedler, "interpretation-free, theory-neutral facts do not, in principle, exist."

Causal Layered Analysis (early 1999) is a method and theory of knowledge that has been in a constant development since its first presentation (1995) in *Futures* by Sohail Inayatullah in an article titled '*The Future of Communication*.' 1995. As a theoretical framework, it is mainly built upon the basic concepts of Post-Structuralism; '*Deconstruction, Genealogy, Distance, Alternative Pasts and Futures, and Reordering Knowledge.*' As a methodology, CLA applies the three major approaches in future studies; the predictable approach introducing data in its actual context, the interpretive approach considering the meanings included in the data, and the critical approach including the varied aspects of the context. (Ivana Milojević , 2015; Ouda, 2019)

"Becoming better at theorizing is much more important than the holding to any one theory."

CLA is one of the most recent developed and widely applied 'future-oriented' analysis. It is considered both as a method and a theoretical framework. As a theory it seeks to integrate empiricist, interpretive, critical, and action learning modes of knowing at inner and outer levels. As a method, its utility is not in predicting the future but in creating transformative spaces for the creation of alternative futures.

The first academic appearance of CLA is documented in the literature to go back to a 1998 article titled *"For Futures that would come to be widely cited*' written by Professor Sohail Inayatullah, the inventor of it. (Inayatullah, 2014; Milojević, 2015; Inayatullah, 2017; Talebian and Talebian, 2018)

However, others relate the CLA to the effort of a huge number of scholars, mainly who belong to the post-structuralism approach, including those who taught Inayatullah during the undergraduate and graduate levels of study.

CLA is based on the assumption that the way in which one frames a problem changes the policy solution and actors responsible for creating transformation; as any studied phenomena is formed across at least four dimensions: "time horizons, analytical realms, causal conjunctions, and practical solutions." (Inayatullah, 2004)

The method is described as an "iceberg." [Figure 1] This 'iceberg' is representing the phenomenon; history, causes, factors affecting its expansion or its narrowness, varied stakeholders, and the cultural heritage supporting/preventing its occurrence.

The *iceberg metaphor* focuses on the degree of *visibility* or *invisibility* of each layer of analysis, how each layer is perceived; the more visible is perceived as more '*real*' whilst the layers under the water are perceived as more '*imagined*,' the *duration* of the discourse; *short-term* versus *long-term,* and the *depth* of the analysis; *shallow* in comparison to *in-depth*. (Milojević, 2015; Mohaghar & Saghafi, 2018)

The top of it; the part above water, is the 'litany;' Most of the future-oriented work, as stated by Inayatullah (2004), has been conducted in the litany level leading to failed policies; as it is limited to addressing the 'problem' and the 'solution,' without going further into questioning the interaction between the problem and proposed solutions.

CLA is based on including all levels of analysis, even the layer described as '*visible*, *superficial*, *shallow*, *unquestioned'* is providing a solid background to build upon for conducting a meaningful analysis of the deeper layers; 'no layer is privileged, and that the perspectives on the future emerge from interaction between the layers.' (Curry & Schultz, 2009) The challenge is to move up and down the layers of analysis, bringing in as many levels as possible." (Inayatullah & Milojević, 2015)

Figure 1. CLA Iceberg: Four Layers of Analysis
Source: (Inayatullah, 2004)
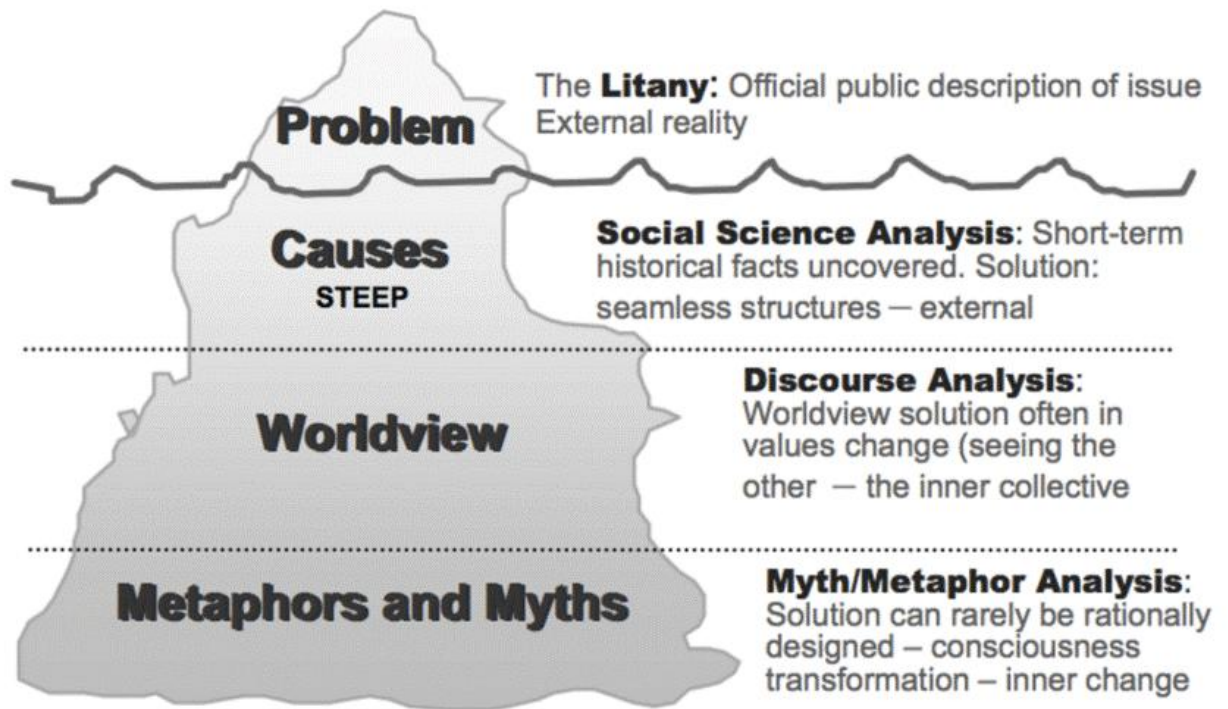
This is an integral part of the critical approach; as Pedler (2012) asserts that humans are the ones giving 'words' its meaning, and humans' internal and external circumstances and conditions are constantly 'changing,' and consequently the meanings would change every time 'we change our minds.' Referring to the Sufi teaching, Pedler says: "knowing is not separable from the knower,' adding that 'everything we do is political,' as ideology and socially determined factors are affecting all human activities and decisions.

3.1.2 Foresight Challenges

"The way in which a problem is framed will have an impact on how a change in the issue will be pursued." Sohail Inayatullah

CLA multilayered approach reveals and is able to overcome the challenge of a one-dimensional avenue in thinking about the future instead of the ability to think "holistically'

involving 'everyone.' "The best time to be critical is usually when it is extremely unfashionable to be critical."

Collecting data from different stakeholders regarding the future of the city of 'Isfahan 2040' Zackery, Demneh, et al (2022) found that the majority of the visions depicted 'a one-dimensional-technology-infested' city and were 'emphatic about the seemingly magical wand of optimization materialized by top-down approaches.'

In addition, the opinions were 'simple, linear, tame, and structured' interpretations, or as described by the researchers 'a techno-utopian masculine discourse.' The absence of the 'softer' layers of worldviews and myth/metaphor with an overwhelming 'litany and system technical considerations' leads to lack of information about the interrelations among different dimensions of the 'city' as 'an eco-system and a living organism' instead, as the researchers state: "Technology was considered a 'genuine driver' and the 'ultimate determiner of the future."

An ethnographer summarized the situation saying: "Algorithm, process, optimal solutions, utility functions, and cost-benefit analyses are the currency of the conversation; as the views were reflecting a mathematician or an engineer and not as a sociologist or an anthropologist."

The researcher concluded that: following the 'mainstream imported urban' future and 'coloring inside the lines' is not enough; 'the picture will never change,' and thus, the researchers recommended the 're-engagement' of social sciences and the 'deconstruction' of the dominant narrative as a starting point to reach alternative futures.

It is clearly obvious that the third and the fourth layers are what allow 'breadth' and guarantee the 'inclusivity' of the analysis through bringing different 'ways of knowing;' represented in the different 'ideologies, epistemes, and stakeholders' perspectives.' The

researchers applying CLA is able to deepen their understanding so as to achieve a robust implementation of the strategies via developing more robust scenarios that are based on a broad map of the current reality from the viewpoint of multiple perspectives; and they would easily overcome this challenge by conducting the analysis 'moving up and down' the four layers presenting a broad insight into the different discourses offering a vertical space for scenarios building of different categories.

It uses various forms of knowledge and it incorporates analysis of not textual and poetic/artistic expression and categories of knowledge from other civilizations in the futures processes. Then these differences are used to 'reconstruct' the more 'visible levels; litany and social policy.' (Inayatullah, 2014; Inayatullah, 2017)

Salter (2007) studied the Internet as a public sphere and indicated that like other technologies, the Internet cannot be considered in abstraction of its use. Therefore, a theory of 'forms of use' is developed, through which the potential of and limits to media can be analyzed. In addition, the researcher presented different case studies to show how these different forms of use of the Internet can be supported.

The study defined 'Forms of use' as 'a concept used to describe how technologies develop in accord with certain uses, while the term 'dominant forms of use' represent those that correspond with the needs of dominant systems and institutions.

The study concluded that there are certain 'systemic' colonizing forms of use of the Internet threatening the functioning of other, radical forms of use, clarifying that these limits to the use of the Internet as a public sphere are not inherent features of the technology itself, but pertain to its use under a system in which certain social practices and institutions have priority over others.

The results state that Internet radical usage in such conditions faces continual struggle against the dominant forms of use as well as the Habermas' set of rules; 'discourse ethics' have to be followed as they provide a basis for legitimate decisions-making.

In sum, the conceptual framework within which CLA is applied is distinguished with many key points as follows:

(1) Instead of focusing on single issues, the researcher draws a broader picture that is historically and theoretically grounded developing wider contextual perspective involving academics, professionals, and also broader public so as to influence the future of the studied issue or phenomenon.

(2) The question about the agency of transformation analyzing the interaction between society and digitization in regard to its implications and projections and predictions of the users.

(3) Wherever there is power there is always counter power; domination, counter domination; the resistance from the people, their values and opinions are excluded; endless interaction to introduce new values to the institutions of society.

(4) The capacity to shape minds, to shape the way people think. This is another type of power. Through communication people are connected. Therefore, communication is controlled by those in power.

3.1.3 CLA and Metaphor

"The logic of the emotional mind is associative; it takes elements that symbolize a reality, it triggers a memory of it, to be the same as that reality. Metaphors speak directly to the emotional mind; a single part evokes a whole." (Goleman, 1996)

The critical approach task is to 'make unit of analysis problematic,' and therefore, metaphors and myths serve in deepening the understanding of the historical causes and

discourse; as they '*create a predisposition for our actions*,' allowing for evoking alternative possibilities.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis aligns with this approach; it states that: *"The language we speak predisposes the way we think and act."* There are difference forces in any society that are different in nature and are all in a way or another affecting the conceptual models in the society; scientific discoveries, demographic changes, cultural clashes, weather changes, and technologies, among many others.

Therefore, it is important thus to explore the extraordinary powerful 'often competing' and 'changing' myths, metaphors, and 'dominant systems of values in societies' that are both shaping and directing the way the world is conceived at the levels of thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. Emerging technologies are considered as a new reality. (Carbonella et al, 2016; Haigh, 2016)

Sharpe (2022) explains that CLA as a Future methodology is considering problems, and not only solutions, as usual; because addressing problems without 'reframing' them would 'magnify' them. Within the CLA theoretical framework, problems have 'ontological depth.'

Accordingly, CLA divides 'problems' into four types; and the 'toughest' problems are including the four types and thus need a comprehension analysis across the four layers of analysis. The first type is litany-based problems refer to 'disconnected events that occur over and over.' The second type is systemic in nature, these are 'difficult to solve' as the effort needed require 'all sectors' of the society to face the dominant, complex, and adaptive system.

Then, there are the worldview problems which require reflection; as in a dialogue of civilizations or the relationship between humans and nature and each other. Finally, the problems that are in their core 'inner stories' and therefore require 'an epistemological shift; a retelling.'

'*The word metaphor was defined as a novel or poetic linguistic expression where one or more words for a concept are used outside of their normal conventional meaning to express a similar concept*." The shift in perception of metaphor, as Tretjakova (2012) explained in details, occurred with the introduction of G. Lakoff's new concept of metaphor. Lakoff assumes that '*metaphor is not the matter of language, but the matter of thought*' and '*...everyday abstract concepts like time, states, change, causation, and purpose also turn out to be metaphorical.*"

Tretjakova referred, as well, to the 'Figurative Speech and Linguistics' by Jerrold M. Sadock in which he ascribes psychological nature to metaphor saying: '*I take it for granted that the underlying principles governing metaphor are of a general psychological sort and are thus not specifically linguistic.*'

Carbonella et al. (2016) addressed the relationship between Lakoff and Johnson's metaphor classification, on one hand, and CLA, on the other; Litany layer is 'Facts, filtered by metaphors from underlying layers,' Systemic Causes layer is 'based on ontological metaphors that allow us to consider different elements and abstract concepts as resources and substances and operate with them, Discourse/worldview include the 'orientational metaphors' indicating our values and our worldview, and Myth/Metaphor is the 'structural' metaphors; such as 'war, economy, national' identified as a body.

Accordingly, Carbonella et al. (2016) concluded that 'cultural differences have an important influence on the grade of adoption or how technology evolves.'

3.2 THE HABERMASIAN PUBLIC SPHERE

Jürgen Habermas, (born June 18, 1929, Düsseldorf, Germany), is considered '*the most important German philosopher of the second half of the 20th century*.' Habermas belonged to the second generation of the Frankfurt School. Although, his thoughts have been discussed across

multidisciplinary spectrum of fields; moral theory, cultural studies, linguistics, law, philosophy, and political communication, he is mainly identified by the 'Critical Social Theory' and his writings and prominent contributions to '*social criticism*' and '*public debate*' and providing a '*comprehensive vision of modern society*' and the '*possibility of freedom*' in it.

The public sphere comes from the original term in German Öffentlichkeit which could be translated to: publicness, general public, openness. Huspek (2007) identified three characteristics: (1) uniformity regardless of the varied strengths and social disparities sharing goals similar to interest group, (2) the continuous motivation for each other to participate via reasonable way not through means of force or coercion, (3) motivating each other to direct the discussion toward commitment, freedom, and transparency.

The public sphere is based on values of togetherness, transparency, and reason. In addition, it requires a collective identity has the quality of homogeneity so as to rally around common goals and problems. Habermas indicated that the public sphere is the space separating the state from society; it emerges from the private space (family, individuals, and the civil society in its narrow definition).

In addition, the public sphere links the three major sub-systems of any social order: the state, the functional systems; health, education, and services, and the civil society. And, the formed opinions have communication power representing the public interaction of the public opinion regarding the public affairs, and it is the source of legitimacy for the political system.

An independent rescannable individual is the core of the public sphere, however, the individual is not separated from the overall collective identity, and the discussions on the public sphere are fragmented and it could be represented in arguments that don't relate directly to one another, this is the post-modernism world in which the individual verses the institutions.

Researchers modified the original theory adding multiple public spheres and counter-public spheres.

The description of what is considered a 'public sphere' is a model formed within Western context back in the 18th century. However, it is still relevant in addressing the democratic experience within any country.

The basic characteristics identifying the public sphere in society are: direct accessibility, including any citizen, and discussing varied topics of public interest. With the introduction of the many-to-many mediums of communication, the concept is applied with a central difference that '*we are no longer confined by the opinions of certain experts in particular geographical locations, associated with the right institutes*.' The online public sphere enabled ordinary individual, regardless of space and time, to involve into discussions about the public good at all levels. '*We now have the ability to tap the aggregated opinion of the crowd*' in a discussion without borders among multicultural cohort of participants expanding and adding to each other's frame of reference resulting into a global good; '*it is a vision, but not yet a reality.*' (Rabah, 2013; Matustik, 2022)

During the period he lived in Germany, Habermas was affected by the violence he witnessed as a consequence of the '*Nazism and the World War II*.' This would become a primary reference for all his writings aiming at '*social integration*' instead of '*conflict*.'

He believed that a society taking part in 'critical debates' about the current affairs, and its citizens making decision in public, is a liberating mental activity to the human mind. He, then, observed the '*social space*' in the 18th century before the distinction between 'public' and 'private' spaces, and asserted, later, that the 'free flow of information' within a public political

communication sphere is essentially '*free from state censorship*' *independent from the economic system.*

Consequently, a 'communicative democracy' became both a conceptual and practical way out; 'building a public sphere' for collective thinking and understanding. He defined a 'public sphere' as '*a neutral space where a public opinion can be formed*.' For Habermas, the 'public' in 'public space' means 'it is open to all.' In addition, it requires in its core 'free flow of information.'

In addition, Habermas differentiated between the period of 'mobilization' and the periods of 'rest.' The later is dominated by commercial and political interests, while in 'mobilization' period; the 'critically engaged' voices are dominating. Habermas doesn't clarify the connection between the two periods, on one hand, and the starting point and end point of each period and the process of the transition. (Fuchs, 2014; Yolom, 2014; Al-Musawi, 2017; Salter, 2017; Siapera and Abdel Mohty, 2020)

The shortcomings of the theoretical concept and its application have been critically analyzed in the literature on political communication. The latest discussions focus on what's called '*epistemic crisis/failures*' in public spheres. Epistemic failure is defined as '*the presence of widely held false beliefs related to public affairs*.'

The tremendous advancements in digital communication, facilitating one-to-one, many-to-many, and also one-to-many communication, encouraged positive and enthusiastic views regarding the internet and its possibilities as being the solution to the problem of 'mass society' as these new digital means of communication empowered the users and 'weakened' the traditional 'gate-keepers.'

On the other hand, there were the skeptical and pessimistic voices, they stated that the new 'scenario' was not going to work, and it would 'generate more problems than those resolved.' This '*crisis of intermediation*' within the digital public sphere has been the reason behind the calls for bringing back the old scenario of the 'mass society' to enhance the public sphere inputs and outputs.

However, some argue that '*democracy is not a truth machine*.' In his essay by that title, Wells (2013) states that '*no marketplace of ideas operating at the scale of a public can exert the same force on differentiating between truth and falsehood as it can exert on the expression and refinement of opinion*.'

On the other hand, Hyvönen (2022) describes the views considering the development of the Web 2.0 user-generated content a 'second Gutenberg event' assuming a radical democratic change in politics as 'bathing in the naiveté of liberal democracy's triumphs after the fall of the Berlin Wall.'

This 'paradox' is a result of the approaches understanding the digital public sphere as a complex, hybrid, quasi-formal structure on the one hand, and as a set of diverse processes, including creative, radical acts, rational critical debate, and everyday commentary and affective expressions on the other. (Bimber & Gil de Zúñiga, 2020; Siapera and Abdel Mohty, 2020; Hyvönen, 2022; Palau-Sampio and López-Garcí, 2022)

The digital possibilities for a virtual public sphere have been observed in motion during the radical political changes in the MENA region. Guidry and Sawyer (2003) state that social networking platforms in the Arab world are offering '*people – particularly the young generation, disillusioned with the status quo – an outlet to voice their concerns in spaces where they will be taken seriously and where results are possible*.'

On the other hand, factors such as 'access, use, polarization, filtering, and online engagement' proved the virtual public sphere, within social networking sites, to be '*insufficient to maintain ideal speech condition*.'

This, as some argue, due to the technological inability to shack the 'non-participatory' long-standing model of the Arab world; as being linked through the internet doesn't change the fact that the users are not '*pluralistic*' rather fragmented leading to '*a cacophony of detached dialogues, if not monologues*' that are not sufficient for reaching consensus on values.

In addition, comparing the modern virtual public sphere with its original functioning version (200 years ago) shows that social networking sites are insufficient in achieving both '*social homogeneity and inclusiveness*.'

This can be discussed in light of the structure of social networking sites generating '*a communication environment, which replicates more or less on a much larger scale than Habermas' Bourgeois public sphere*.' Therefore, it is argued that '*social networking platforms still might form a virtual public sphere; an environment favorable to new ideas and new identities which evolves alongside and slowly reshapes the mainstream public from below*.' (Rabah, 2013; Sakr, 2021)

3.2.1 The Internet/ Social Networking Sites as a Public Sphere

It is argued that now the era of '*the Civic Culture; the Dissolution of the Public Sphere*.' The current communicative crisis is far from being a model for a democratic co-existence. And although communication is simply one ingredient in a complex and multi-factorial issue, the repercussions of its misuse are widely felt when dealing with a growing and destabilizing political and social phenomena, such as polarization, disinformation or populism.

Schlesinger (2020) prefers to speak directly of a post-public sphere. This space generates doubts and uncertainty, since the media intermediation crisis is not replaced by a comparable intermediation model, nor can we consider the public debate that currently exists being characterized by the search for a Habermasian, rational consensus.

Certain analysis has led some researchers to argue that simply defining the notion of the public sphere is insufficient for this situation; Dahlgren (2005) suggests it be replaced by the concept of civic culture, Bennett and Pfetsch (2018) believe that its framework should be reformulated, so that it is no longer characterized by a coherent and self-sufficient public sphere and media system, Bimber and Gil de Zúñiga (2020) define a public sphere by the lack of attention and capacity of the public to unravel the terms of public debate around a varied series of issues, focusing on the communication model advocated by the new media, and particularly social networking sites. (Palau-Sampio and López-Garcí, 2022)

3.3 EGYPTIAN ONLINE PUBLIC SPHERE

Sakr (2021) is looking at the big picture of the social media platforms and political and social change worldwide. She stated that '*movements, activists, and governments alike have radically transformed social media platforms*'; Arab activists in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region tailored these platforms to spread their actions and mobilize for the support; then, the uprising were widely known as 'Facebook and Twitter revolution;' following that success, these platforms became the core of the analysis and study by '*scholars, interest groups, and multiple publics.*'

The Arab uprisings '*online and on-the-ground tactics'*, shortly, became '*a model for* varied national and international social movements including: Occupy Wall Street, From Ferguson to Palestine, the Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong, and 12M and 15M in Spain.

Consequently, government took part in the activities through monitoring, surveillance, and other procedures of control.

One of the descriptive analyses of the online Egyptian Public Sphere was conducted by Sherein Al-Kidwani. Al-Kidwani (2015) chose the example of "We are all Khaled Said/*Kolena Khaled Said*" Facebook Page, and applied document analysis and direct observation addressing the 'Ethics of Political discussion via Social Networking Sites within Public Sphere Theory' analyzing (6846) comments on the post calling for the peaceful public protest on the 25th of January, 2011.

Al-Kidwani results stated that the admin of the Facebook page, had determined rules and controls over the published comments, and that these rules were similar to what Habermas had identified in his definition and description of the Public Sphere; which included: freedom of expressing opinions, inclusivity and equal participation in discussions, logical arguments-supported points of view, and respect the different opinion.

The results, as well, declared that the page's admin successes in forming a public sphere. On the other side, the results reflected dereliction in controlling hate-speech and other vulgar comments. In addition, the users of the page were not, by any means, representative to the whole Egyptian population who has a low percentage of tech-literacy and Internet access. (Al-Kidwani, 2015)

Stebbins (2011) is crediting the transformation in the MENA region to the Arab Spring Generation, not the tools/platforms. He describes them, not as mere activists, but as '*a generation that had a very sophisticated grasp of new technologies, and that had come up with ingenious ways of using them to organize and mobilize. A generation that was also clearly capable of critical thought and effective communication.*' And, he is questioning the source of

learning these skills, calling for universities to add these 'necessary skills' to its curriculum, and referring to '*peer-to-peer networks, civil society organizations*' as probable alternatives for providing this type of education and practical guidance.

The Arab Spring generation, in Stebbins words, was able to develop '*a collective identity based not on what divided them but what united them.*' Similarly, in their article titled 'The Role of Social Media in Arab Women's Empowerment,' Rasha Mourtada and Fadi Salem (2011) consider the youth and specifically women to be the 'drivers' of the regional change. The '*netizens'* who 'shattered many stereotypes' and temporary liberated the Arab public sphere.

In his study titled A Youth-Driven Virtual Civic Public Sphere for the Arab World (2018), Mohammad Ayish explained that the failure of the digital public sphere, however, to deliver on democratization promises during the so-called Arab Spring suggested a broader failure of the region's traditional elites to properly address emerging challenges. He argues that the MENA's youth, with their progressive civic outlook and extensive digital social engagement, hold a good promise for better governance in the region.

The study shows Arab youth to be developing a hybrid identity that lends itself to both local and global features such as diversity, co-existence, women empowerment, innovation, freedom, national pride and tolerance. The study reviewed an online sample of young Arab bloggers and influencers suggesting that a convergence of young demographics, cyber engagements and progressive orientations is likely to give rise to a sound civic culture with significant implications for good governance.

As future leaders in media, education, culture, business and politics, Arab youth will most likely bring their progressive civic views to positively bear on the realities of their communities.

Exploring the post-revolutionary Egyptian digital public sphere, Siapera & Mohy (2020) interviews revolved around these key themes: access to the Internet and (social) media use, and trust. When it comes to general usage and in particular news and information, the results rank Facebook as the respondents' 'main entry point' to the Internet. But, Facebook primarily is considered a medium for 'personal connection.' Also, the respondents pointed out the powerful status of Television among Egyptians who doesn't have access to the Internet.

The results, however, show clearly that most of the respondents are 'disinterested' and 'fatigued' when it comes to political news; and consequently, they are avoiding what they described as '*unpleasant and polarizing context*.' One respondent said: "*I know that most of the stuff going around Facebook in general for politics in Egypt is mainly people raging at each other, so I started ignoring them.*" Another said: "*I ignore it completely because it depresses me and it is usually all negative stuff*"; and yet another: "*I don't keep myself updated. I hate news, I hate politics, and I began getting depressed from all the news.*" For others, as stated by the researcher, they feel helpless and '*nothing to be done to change anything.*' For some, according to the answers, this is a 'recent development,' as described by one of the respondents: "*During the revolution I used to always follow the news websites. I even used to access Twitter, but now I lost interest in current events.*"

The researcher commented on these results by stating that respondents' *skepticism* is pushing them to '*return to more personalized forms of trust.*'

The general results show that respondents don't trust news and information published on Facebook for two main reasons, reliability is the first reason, as expressed by one of the respondents: '*Facebook is the source of rumors and exaggeration.*' And the second, because the information is often *contradictory* or *biased*; "*I stopped viewing news posts on Facebook*

because people tend to post news articles that align with their own thoughts." Other respondent said that it is a general attitude: "*I guess people are less tending to believe in news [via] social media as time goes by since 2011.*"

One of the in-depth insight provided in the results is what the researcher referred to as '*a methodology for approaching the news*' that the users developed to fact-check; in which a user would consider checking a certain news or information if shared by numerous sources in the content they are exposed to on their timeline, in addition, the respondents pointed to depending on '*national and oppositional*' news sites, in addition to '*international*' media for this process of *verification*.

The respondents, on the other hand, consider that their '*personal, face-to-face networks*' as '*a trustworthy source of news.*' These results, as interpreted by the researcher, are pointing to '*a further shift toward the private sphere.*'

The researcher puts these results in context taking into consideration the 'media system' in Egypt; '*there is an increasing control extending to the online space.*' The results reflect the *domination of both* '*religious and entertaining*' content on the social networking platforms. And, '*most comments mobilized anger and insults or were ironic and sarcastic.*'

The study concluded that there is 'disillusionment' towards the political public sphere; 'conditions since the 25th of January revolution have changed to the extent that we can describe the current situation as a full regression and reversal. Despite the hopes generated by the revolution for a more democratic media system, reality turned out differently; the recent Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes legislation allows the government not only to block any site they consider as spreading fake news but also to detain its editors and to fine or even jail its users. This is the context that citizens participate in the digital public sphere.

The complexity in investigating communication process both from a function and a ritualistic approach within a society can be considered in light of the widely researched aspect of the relationship between communication and culture. To consider the human experience as a communication experience that needs to be contextualized instead of the Western worldview dominating the theoretical framework within which most of the research is conducted. Especially when questioning the role of social scientists in the age of globalization in the evolving development of coexistence and harmony in international relations.

In his paper titled 'Beyond Western-Oriented Communication Theories: A Normative Arab-Islamic Perspective," Muhammed Ayish (2003) is drawing on a secular-Islamic Arab worldview, that seem to have guided Arab intellectual, social, and cultural development for over 14 centuries. And, by worldview, the author is referring to the concept that concerns the fundamental assumption of a people about the nature of the world, as systematically expressed in their philosophy, ethics, ritual, and scientific belief. And, a normative framework defines the living human, and hence, communication experience. "It has been argued that as much as communication is a reflector of cultural values and norms, it is also an embodiment of culture."

The "basic premise" of the author's paper is that "the living human experience may be more or less reduced to a communication experience." He argued that "the human experience is shaped and driven by numerous factors, the most outstanding of which is the worldview." This perspective plays an important role in 'narrowing the gaps of misunderstanding and misperception' in the age of globalization, in one hand, and a 'Western-Arab Islamic disharmony' in the Arab world, on the other. In addition, it provides a space for 'theory building' based on cultural norms as driving forces within a context that has witnessed a major transformation in the socio-political, economic, and technological aspect. Accordingly, the paper

presented a four dialectical constructs regarding the Arab-Islamic communication. His conceptual model, although, addresses traditional media in the Arab world, it is still applicable to social networking sites to explain 'communication patterns.'

Ayish states that the Arab-Islamic worldview drives from two central sources: a) *secular socio-cultural traditions and values*, that either predated Islam and/or were acquired as a result of interactions with foreign cultures by Arab Muslims, and b) *religious Islamic values and attitudes* as embodied in scriptures (the *Holy Qur'an* which is the word of God and the *Sunnah* or Prophet Muhammad's sayings and practices), and the works of jurisprudence, philosophy, and literature. The secular is represented in dignity-based dimensions like honor, genealogy, eloquence, and paternalism, and the religious is represented in *iman*, *tawhid*, *ibada*, and *ilm*. The secular-Islamic components are marked by four dichotomous sets of values: *individualism-conformity, transcendentalism-existentialism, intuition-rationality, and egalitarian-hierarchy.*

This, as the author described, could reflect a paradoxical experience in which the individual is torn between 'liberation and integration,' 'reason and intuition,' 'idealism and realism,' and 'egalitarianism and authoritarianism.' This could also lead to a conclusion that communication in the 'Arab-Islamic' societies is 'orally based, asymmetrical (especially in male-dominated, nomadic and rural communities, oral interpersonal communication has been found to be far more superior to mass communication), monologist, metaphysically colored, and impulse-oriented.'

CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY

4.1 CAUSAL LAYERED ANALYSIS

As previously clarified, CLA originally developed in the 1990s by a futures researcher, Sohail Inayatullah, representing a modern approach to examine the in-depth aspects of social and strategic change.

4.1.1 CLA and Qualitative Data Analysis Methods

Inayatullah has clearly differentiated between the critical approach guiding the CLA and the interpretive paradigm, for instance, asserting that the purpose is to 'question' the unit of analysis itself. (Talebian, 2018) As an emerging qualitative methodology, it allows the deconstruction and analysis of complex social issues. (Breen, Lauren et al., 2016) "The fourth level of analysis, the layer of myth and metaphor, "which distinguishes CLA most starkly from other analytical methods." (Miljović, 2015)

CLA has many common points with qualitative analysis, Minkkinen and Tapio (2015) mapped the commonalities to make CLA more approachable and to find out how methods can complement each other. Depending on Madill and Gough (2008), an overview of the qualitative data analysis methods is represented in a Venn diagram; five interconnected overlapping circles; Discursive (discourse analysis, semiotic analysis,..), Thematic (grounded theory, thematic analysis,…), Structured (content analysis,..), and Instrumental (action research,..).

The question is: What is the position of CLA? And it is located through drawing an oval that includes the complete circles of both Structured and Thematic analysis along with the intersections between them and the other two; Discursive and Instrumental.

CLA applies the processes of qualitative analysis as stated by Braun and Clarke (2006). (Minkkinen and Tapio, 2015) The researcher's familiarization with the material or making sense

of the data (unit of analysis selection), generating initial codes, searching for and reviewing themes or grouping, and defining/naming/categorization of themes. However, CLA has its own counterparts to these concepts.

Table 1: CLA and other Qualitative methods
Source: (Inayatullah & Milojević, 2015)

Qualitative methods	CLA
The meaning/condensed meaning unit. (The words, sentences, and paragraphs related to each other through content and context).	The litany.
Describing/interpreting on a higher logical level.	The vertical movement downwards.
The 'Category' as a group of manifest content that shares commonality.	The horizontal dimension/alternative futures.
The thread of underlying meaning 'Themes.'	The content on the three layers: Systemic, Worldview, and Myth.

As for the manifest and latent content which refers to 'what the text says/talks about,' the CLA 'layers,' and mainly the litany, are tackling this concern. And, as for the meaning unit and condensed meaning unit, the litany layer is its counterpart in CLA; which is the words, sentences and paragraphs related to each other through content and context along with its shortened meaning. And 'Abstracting' as describing and interpreting on a higher logical level is done through 'the vertical movement downwards' in the CLA, and for the 'Category,' as a group of manifest content that shares commonality, it is represented in the 'horizontal dimension: the alternative futures' in the CLA.

And as for the thread of underlying meaning 'Theme,' it is the content on the three layers: Systemic, Worldview, and Myth. And the conceptual model in the qualitative methods represented in a condensed description of phenomenon is the CLA table.

Accordingly, in the CLA, the steps for conducting a qualitative analysis are: the researchers familiarize themselves with material, condensed material (litany), generating initial codes,

interpreting codes and finding themes (layers), categorizing (finding horizontal alternatives), and finally: images of the future.

[CLA is about] rethinking the nature of inquiry, from either/or to both/and, and ensuring that the inquiry does not lose a vertical gaze, the notion of ethics. Move people to understand that long lasting change means being focused on myth and metaphor as well as worldview and policy. In that sense, CLA is about CLA, it is about the method. This is the litany level. At the policy level, CLA is about changing how government policy is done. At the worldview, it is about an integrated planetary civilization, post west and post east. At the myth, it is the mode from which a new story can arrive." (Inayatullah & Milojević, 2015)

The core of 'alternative futures' is to argue against the belief of the inability to determine the future depending only on 'natural and social forces and scientific laws.' (Son, 2013)

As mentioned earlier, the uncertainty and the rapid changes at all levels, in addition to the interconnection between what is social, political, economic, and cultural, as well as, what is local and what is global, all of that requires dealing with 'unpredictable' events all the time. This in itself is a major factor behind having more than one future to expect.

CLA utilizes a range of textual, visual, and experiential data sources, such as text, photos, videos, and field notes. The analysis itself is much like a thematic analysis. However, it is structured according to four conceptual layers—from a topical interpretation of the issue to underlying mythologies and metaphors that underpin the issue. (Breen, Lauren et al., 2016)

4.1.2 Sohail Inayatullah: The Story of CLA

'As the son of a United Nations diplomat, Sohail Inayatullah was born in Lahore, Islamabad, Pakistan, yet was raised in places such as Bloomington, Indiana, Flushing, New York, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and in Geneva, Switzerland.' Inayatullah's mother was and is a

Sufi, and his father a social scientist and human rights activist, and Inayatullah himself has come to follow and champion the work of P. R. Sarkar, the late Indian mystic.' (Ramos, 2015)

Although, Sohail Inayatullah, in his own words, described the CLA as *"it is not based on the idiosyncratic notions of any particular researcher" (Inayatullah, 2017)* he explained throughout his academic prolific scientific output the philosophical concepts forming the intellectual and ethical constructions of the researcher and his tool.

The Indian episteme and the teachings of P. R. Sarkar revealed to him the social construction of individual identity, and the pathways to transcending these narrow boundaries. Inayatullah had begun studying at the University of Hawaii at Manoa as an undergraduate in the early '80s, taking a BA in inter-disciplinary studies, and subsequently an MA in Political Science with a specialization in futures studies. He later went on to a PhD focused on comparative philosophy and macro-history. Johan Galtung became a strong influence on Inayatullah's thinking, and a mentor in some respects. Michael Shapiro, also a professor in the political science department at the University of Hawai'i, argued to Inayatullah that, in Inayatullah's words, "for futures studies to move forward it must engage with post-structuralism." (Ramos, 2015)

Inayatullah refuted the claim that 'critical thinking,' is a Western-made skill, clarifying that it is woven within many other old heritages and civilizations as 'consciousness'; or in his own words: 'the arts of seeking the reality that lies beneath surface appearances are much more highly developed within the '*Dharmic traditions*.' And, the 'critical' in CLA refers to 'questioning' the arguments supporting any knowledge; 'it is an informed, skeptical, reasoned, and reflective approach to information and to the observed world.' (Inayatullah, 2002; Ramos, 2015)

CLA focuses less on the *horizontal* spatiality of futures and more on the *vertical* dimension of future studies represented in layers of analysis. (Inayatullah, 2017) The conception of Vertical (the layers) in the approach of Inayatullah's was most influenced by his own practice of meditation and his professor and mentor Oswald Spengler, P. R. Sarkar. The conception of the Horizontal came from Michael Shapiro. (Ramos, 2015)

Jose M, Ramos reflected on this in details in his article "Transcendence of a method: the story of causal layered analysis," went through Inayatullah's academic experience and human journey; 'from an early age, and through adulthood, he has never belonged to one category, be it nation, ethnicity, religion, caste or philosophy.' referring to Inayatullah's piece titled 'Why I hate passports and visas.' Inayatullah was always in the "middle between categories. He never fitted into a pre-existing category, a stereotype or classification people could easily identify." (Ramos, 2015)

4.1.3 CLA, Critical Future Studies, and Post-Structuralism

According to Sohail Inayatullah (1998), the question in Critical Future Studies is less '*what the truth is*' but '*how truth functions in particular policy settings*', '*how truth is evoked*', '*who evokes it*', '*how it circulates*', and '*who gains and who loses by particular nominations of what is true, real and significant*.' (Inayatullah, 1999)

In other words, it is critically concerned with the *'Future Industries*,' that is, institutions that enjoy these greatest powers of agenda- setting, horizon-setting and problem-defining in terms of the way society thinks and talks about the future. (Goode & Godhe, 2017)

It questions the terms used to describe the sample, the factors/criteria for the analysis, the forms of power, and the structure of knowledge within the studied context. Critical future studies

are not only interested in expert domains but also popular discourses that reach the public at large. (Godhe & Goode, 2018)

Inayatullah has divided the Post-Structuralism into five steps:

Table2 : CLA: Post-Structuralism as a method
Source: (Inayatullah, 1999; Ouda, 2019)

Deconstruction	How this problem appeared? Who is behind its appearance? Who is privileged at the level of episteme? Who is superior at the social, economic,… levels? Who is silenced? What the policy of Truth? What is the unique future from the perspective of Future studies? What is the preferable alternative future?
Genealogy	What are the winning discourses across history? How these discourses developed throughout history? When exactly the phenomenon became important and/or controversial? What is the future of the concepts describing the phenomenon?
Distance	Which scenario makes the present exceptional and worth observation? Which scenarios make the present strange and unfamiliar? Which scenario provides the present its natural nature? Are these scenarios in the current, future, or 'what can occur' zone of future?
Alternative Pasts and Futures	Which of the interpretations of what happened in the past was able to sustain till the moment? Which of the Past's interpretations are being held tightly? What historical views make the present a problem? What future vision is being used to preserve the current status quo? What view would deconstruct the current unity?
Reordering Knowledge	How reordering knowledge differs according to the civilizations, gender, power,..? How reordering knowledge differs within the different episteme frameworks? How reordering knowledge would make the current frameworks unfamiliar?

José Maria Ramos (2003) addressed this issue in his article titled "Critique to Cultural Recovery: Critical futures studies and Causal Layered Analysis." Ramos used the expression 're-examining the inner-dimension of the world' calling upon reconsidering the cultural convictions as a way of liberating the researcher's intellectual effort leading to 'a more fruitful answers.'

This can be understood in light of the source of CLA; as referred to earlier, the Dharmic episteme. It is based on a worldview of what's called '*Neohumanism*.' It is a post-structuralist approach developed within Future Studies. (Haigh, 2016) The Dharmic thought, in contrast to the Western view, doesn't identify the elements and components of material life according to economic and elitist standards, rather according to ethical and spiritual values and principles. (Inayatullah, 2002)

Writings on CLA, in its essence, see salvation in 'collective thinking.' They share a view of the world's issues and solutions as interdependent and influenced by one another; "the challenge is to grasp our destiny on this small planet and to work toward consciously chosen futures,' (Ramos, 2003) "the belief that we live in a complex and uncertain world forms the concept of an alternative future," (Son, 2013) "the change in the Worldview [layer in CLA] requires seeking solutions from outside the framework in which the solution has been defined." (Talebian, 2018)

'How one understands and frames the problem limits access to the breadth of solutions and depth of awareness, CLA minimizes such limitations through the inclusion of multiple worldviews and stakeholder perspectives.' (Milojević, 2015)

Based on his academic and life experience, the approach of Inayatullah revealed both "horizontal" and "vertical" elements. Horizontal refers to the plurality of discourse/worldview/episteme that gives rise to the categories we live in day to day (often the expression of power/ideological interests). The vertical refers to depth, the existence of structures and layers that underlie one's social and cultural existence. CLA provides a concrete tool for constructing and reconstructing powerful stories that (a) make us conscious about the deeper layers of reality and (b) make use of them in more explicit ways. Accordingly, the core narrative

can be changed only through adopting new worldviews and values; it highlights the need for constructing narratives that engage people in shared objectives and goals. (Ramos, 2015; Ketonen-Oksi, 2018)

4.2 THE CLA FOUR LAYERS OF ANALYSIS

Most traditional methods forecast a future using the terms of the present instead of reframing it through alternative worldviews and narratives. CLA opens up both past and present value-creating practices emphasizing the importance of understanding reality through different layers of knowing and observing things. The four layers unveil conscious and subconscious preconceptions and perceptions related to the issues being studied. Through CLA any tensions, contradictions and vagueness between the internalized and represented collective discourses are exposed. (Inayatullah, 2017; Ketonen-Oksi, 2018)

In his paper titled 'Causal Layered Analysis: A Four-Level Approach to Alternative Futures,' Inayatullah described CLA as 'an approach and a technique' used when 'debating all types of issues, collectively or individually, by identifying different levels of analysis to create coherent new futures.' It is a '*third way*' between the 'North American and European' approaches because of the '*emphasis placed on narrative/cultural aspects*'. Inayatullah stated that CLA's five most common uses are: (1) 'mapping the present/future' which results in 'preventing worldview blindness and creates whole-of-worldview and narrative solutions.' (2) 'Critically unpacking an issue' which results in 'avoiding the quick-fix reflex and creating longer lasting strategies.' (3) 'Creating a preferred future' which results in 'moving from how things are to the desired future and enhances the visioning process.' (4) 'Reconstruction from an alternative worldview' which results in Challenges assumptions so that other

solutions are developed. (5) 'Mapping of multiple perspectives' which leads to a transformed future integrating difference through including 'multiple positions.' (Inayatullah, 2019)

Using CLA for policy decisions are vital as it provides an in-depth analysis to the issue, its internal and external factors, the context within which is exists and evolve, and the cultural concepts forming it. CLA allows for developing policy interventions for each layer separately, as well as, an overall backcasting according to the preferable future.

CLA does not take a stand on whether the stories are true or false; rather, it challenges underlying assumptions about reality and thus facilitates the creation of desired futures. (Ketonen-Oksi, 2018)

For the 'Litany' type of data, the solutions are short-term. In the 'Systemic Causes' layer, a conversation gathering all the stakeholders of the issue is a must. While the solutions extracted from the 'Worldview' layer are long-term and it is challenging since it requires an open mindset to see outside the comfortable facts and 'truths.' Finally, and the deepest layer is the 'Myth' which provides solutions that require rewriting the story of the issue, the stakeholders, and its macro- and micro- history. (Talebian and Talebian, 2018)

Inayatullah thinking around Litany was influenced by Richard Slaughter, who derived the term from Frank Fisher. Social Causes were influenced by Galtung's analysis of imperialism (centre/periphery theory), other neo-Marxist thought. Inayatullah's ideas concerning Worldview/Episteme have come from Johan Galtung's analysis of cosmology and Michel Foucault's work with historical episteme. Myth/Metaphor was primarily influenced by William Irvin Thompson's concept of mytho-poetics, and also by Galtung's CMT (chosen-ness, myth, trauma) theory. (Ramos, 2015)

4.2.1 Litany

Inayatullah draws the term litany from Frank Fisher via Richard Slaughter. To describe

part of the social order that Frank Fisher uncovered, he coined the term 'litany'. This refers to the

endless stream of clichés, sound bites, media fragments, exaggerations, outlandish statements,

disinformation, and advertisement; obviously, quantitative trends, problems, often exaggerated,

often used for political purposes, and other distortions received day to day. Because of its

ubiquity, the stream overwhelms us with disconnected ideas and images, yet it is the reality that

most live and think in. While litany can lead us to a deeper, more substantial reality through

analysis (as in CLA), it is often useless in and of itself—simply a distraction from deeper

understanding.

The concept was eventually taken up by Slaughter (1999) to describe the focus of '***Pop***

Futurism', and then passed on to Inayatullah where it became the first level in his CLA.

The understanding of litany between Slaughter and Inayatullah differs in that Slaughter

may see litany as the most superficial and trite expression of the field, sometimes involving the

exploitation of futures thinking towards political and commercial ends.

For Slaughter, the move away from litany and toward worldview reflexive "critical"

futures moves us toward a "wisdom culture." While Inayatullah originally saw litany in this way,

considering it to be simply "moronic", expressions of crude and absurd culture, he has come to

see litany rather as the most visible superficial expression of deeper layers of reality, not as

something that can be bypassed.

Thus litany is the surface, the empirical reality. In this view, litany is simply the surface

layer of a deeper, more substantial reality, which cannot be discerned as it stands, operating

mainly as a distraction from deeper understanding. It represents the issues that are often

collectively shared as 'facts' yet rarely questioned or confirmed with real data (Inayatullah, 1998; Ramos, 2003; Ramos, 2015; Ketonen-Oksi, 2018)

The first level, or the litany, presents the official unquestioned futures; it is popular understanding and it interacts with an official, often politically mediated, view of reality; the empirical objective reality – the 'facts' as popularly conceived.

It is constructed from the conventional wisdoms and traditions that generate the representations of an issue in the media; the headlines, facts, statistics, concepts, theories, or a data level of reality; the most superficial expression of a phenomenon, that is, the visible signals, for instance news, routine documents, reports, current rules and legislation. Its timescale is short term, from now to a few months. When this structure is portrayed as an 'iceberg', only the litany appears above the water.

Research Questions to ask in the litany layer are: What is the issue? How is the issue being reported in the media? What are the known facts? What is widely believed and not questioned? How they "feel" about it? (Inayatullah, 2014; Carbonella et al., 2016; Haigh, 2016; Inayatullah, 2017)

4.2.2 Systemic Causes

The second layer is the social causation level, the systemic perspective. In *A Structural Theory of Imperialism*, Galtung reveals how the relationship between centre and periphery, imperial states and dominated states operates. This layer is a technical level of analysis that gives an interpretation to qualitative data, easy to find in journals and/or newspapers. It focuses on the 'system's perspective'; on economic, social, political and cultural factors and thus explains the 'behavioral rules' behind the litany.

The objective reality as revealed by social science and data analysis. The data of the litany is explained, questioned, mapped, and analyzed at the second level. It aims to articulate the social, economic, cultural and environmental drivers of particular situations and their interactions. It is expressed in terms of technical explanation, sociocultural and governmental policy analysis. It links between individual and society, the role of the state and other actors and interests. It may analyze, engage and critique different theories, ideologies, and institutions using the language of trends, forces, flows, and processes. Its time scale is often expressed in terms of years or decades.

Questions to ask in the systemic causes layer are: What's creating the situation? What factors are influencing the issue? Who is involved? What are the underlying causes? (Inayatullah, 1998; Inayatullah, 2014; Ramos, 2015; Haigh, 2016; Inayatullah, 2017; Ketonen-Oksi, 2018)

4.2.3 Worldview

The third level gives the worldview. It is a deeper level connected with debates. This is the big picture, the paradigm that informs what we think is real or not real, the cognitive lenses we use to understand and shape the world. It reveals the impact of the historical, social and spatial settings on the common sense and people's thinking, including how they build structures and discourses around values and worldviews.

"Values lie at the heart of systems. They are the glue that holds the world together. Change the values and you change the systems." (Bussey, 2010)

This layer is also, known as 'discourse'; the narratives analysis that legitimizes and supports the worldview, and underpinning that worldview. Deeper, unconsciously held ideological, discursive assumptions, conscious subjective believes, and subconscious ground of

culturally mediated presumption revealed and are unpacked expressed as commitment to the meaning/reasoning.

For example, a commitment to materialistic world view, individualist, achievement-oriented meritocracy, objective economic criteria…, ect... Plus the ways in which different stakeholders and socio-cultural constructs behind the Litany layer and system are explored at this level. The language and conception play crucial roles in this stage because they don't simply reflect the world, but they constitute it, according to post-structuralist premises of CLA.

At this level one can explore how different discourses do more than cause or mediate the issue but constitute it, how the discourse we use to understand is complicit in our framing of the issue seeking solutions outside the frame.

Questions to ask in the worldview layer are: What are the hidden assumptions? Who are the stakeholders? Who has the majority of control over the issue? What are the dominant views and ideologies of the 'powers' for this issue? What are the perspectives shaping it? (Inayatullah, 1998; Inayatullah, 2014; Haigh, 2016; Inayatullah, 2017; Ketonen-Oksi, 2018)

4.2.4 Myth/Metaphor

Deepest of all is the fourth layer of myths, meta-narratives, myth and metaphor which contains the unconscious emotive dimensions of the issue. It exposes the narratives and false information that human beings use to justify themselves to their inner selves. "M*etaphor is how the whole fabric of mental interactions holds together."*(Bateson & Capra, 1988; Ketonen-Oksi, 2018)

If the litany refers to the 'what', metaphors refer to the why. A myth/metaphor represents subconscious subjective belief revealed by psychological and subtext analysis. These are the

deep stories, the collective archetypes—the unconscious and often emotive dimensions of the problem or the paradox overcome the data and discourses to go deeper in the level of knowledge.

This is the level of ingrained archetypes, 'gut-feelings' and stereotypes, many drawn from pre-rational 'truths' learnt in childhood through fable, schoolyard and cultural or religious teaching. This encompasses learning gained, often literally, at Mother's or Grandmother's knee and sometimes from social manipulation by peers, leaders and the media, not least modern computer games. "*It is easier to slay dragon than to kill a myth and its associated metaphors*."

A myth is challenged with 'telling a new story; rewiring the brain.' Just as language does not only describe reality, it constitutes it, metaphors do not only describe, but they also shape and create strategies. Metaphors act as a framework that eases the interaction in a double way, not only helping to define an emerging technology in terms of a reality but also impacting in the evolution and perception of reality.

Questions to ask in the myth/metaphor layer are: What encapsulates the feelings in which this Worldview is grounded? What myths or folk stories come to mind? What metaphors come to mind? What are the underlying stories feed it? (Inayatullah, 1998; Inayatullah, 2014; Carbonella, 2016; Haigh, 2016; Inayatullah, 2017; Ketonen-Oksi, 2018)

4.3 THE HOW-TO: CLA IN CRITICAL FUTURE STUDIES

Table 3: CLA as a method
Source: (Inayatullah, 2019)

Context	- How one frames the problem, creates the solution. - Language is not neutral but part of the analysis. - Wisest inquiry goes up and down levels of analysis and across constitutive discourses.
Horizontal levels	- Identification of Problem (what is the problem) - Associated Solution (what is the solution) - Associated Problem-Solver (who can solve it) - Source of Information of problem (where is the

	problem/solution textualized).
Vertical Levels	• The 'Litany' official public description of issue. • Problem seems unsolvable or it is up to government or power to solve it. • Little personal responsibility. • Often appearing as News. Mediated by interstate system and conventional accounts of reality. • Short term approaches. • Government solves the problem.
Social Science analysis	• Short term historical factors uncovered. • Attempts to articulate causal variables (correlation, causation, theory and critique of other theories). • Often State or monopolistic interest group has ownership. • Solution often in Civil society in interaction with other institutions (values with structures)—partnerships. • Often appearing as Op-Ed piece or in a conservative journal.
Discourse/Worldview analysis	• Problem constituted by frame of analysis. • Strong focus on the genealogy of a problem. • Many frames: paradigms, mindscapes, discourses. • Solution often in consciousness transformation, in changing worldview, in rethinking politics of reality. • Solution long term action based on the interaction of many variables. • Often appearing in fringe/peripheral journals.
Myth/metaphor analysis	• Problem constituted by core myth (unconscious structures of difference, basic binary patterns). • Solution is to uncover myth and imagine alternative metaphors. • Often appearing in the work of artists and visions of mystics. • Solution can rarely be rationally designed.

4.3.1 CLA in Future Studies

Since the publication of the *CLA Reader* in 2004, CLA practice and application across varied disciplines and contexts has been notable. In 2015, Sohail Inayatullah and Ivana Miljovic

published 'CLA 2.0: Transformative Research in Theory and Practice,' addressing the 'phases' of creating, developing, and applying CLA as a method; 'the 1980s was the pre-formative phase, the mapping of theories—post-structuralism, macro-history, the sociology of change, chaos, complexity and mythology—that would become the structure within which to create CLA.

The 1990s was the invention stage, when the principles of the theory and practice of CLA—the four layers and the post-structural toolbox—were developed. The 2000s have essentially been about practice both in the doing of CLA in anticipatory action learning workshops and in Masters/Doctoral research. As in the development of other research paradigms, the last ten years of methodological innovation have stemmed from critique and inventive practice. (Inayatullah & Miljović, 2015)

There are seven Foundational Questions guiding the application of CLA in Future Studies. These questions are representing a conversation the researchers are having with their own intellectual productions so as to test the validity of the data, in one hand, and to apply the CLA to the frame of reference of the researchers themselves (Inayatullah, 2022). These questions can be summarized as follow: (1) **Where from** - What is the history of the issue? What led to the present? (2) **Where to** - forecasts and fears - What are your forecasts as they relate to the issue, if current trends continue? (3) **Assumptions** - What are the critical assumptions you have made about the issue vis-a-vis your forecasts? (4) **Alternative futures** - scenarios - Based on these assumptions, articulate different futures/scenarios. (5) **Want** - What is your preferred future? (6) **How** - creating the preferred through the backcast - How did you get to the preferred future? (7) **Inner story** - transforming the old story to the new metaphor - What is a supportive metaphor for your preferred future?

CLA is applied in Talebian and Talebian (2018) study aiming at deconstructing the present status of Media and Politics in Iran. First, the researchers addressed the different aspects of the litany level, including '*the role of media in promoting enmity in discourse about Iran's enemies*.' Then the different systemic causes were specified describing and explaining '*the relationship between media and politics, including the continuous attempts of Iran's state regime to control and dominate the entire media sphere*.' In the 'Worldview' layer, the researchers reviewed '*two main discourses involved in the 1978–1979 Revolution in Iran* [..] *constructing alternative responses to the controversy between tradition and modernity in the contemporary history of Iran*.' The deepest myth behind the relationship between media and politics in Iran was identified as the narrative of "*Educating the Populace*."

The results state recommendations for each level of analysis: more free of expression, replacement of the semi-totalitarian regime by the civil society disarmed by ICT technology advancement. For the actor analysis, the researchers state that the key actor which shapes the media sphere in Iran is still the state regime. Accordingly, a 'Media Diversity' scenario is developed anticipating more democratic state, more competitive media market with multi stakeholders (especially on infrastructures) and more powerful civil society.

An example that clearly proves the added-value from CLA deeper levels is found in Syeda Mariya Absar (2013) study titled 'The Future of Water Resource Management in the Muslim World.' The study applies CLA to six regions water management.

The results show Islam as a 'common factor' even with diverse life styles. The author concluded solutions generated from the deeper levels of analysis are more efficient since they are aligning with the culture of the stakeholders.

One of the studies applying CLA presented in 'CLA 2.0: Transformative Research in Theory and Practice' and conducted by Saliv Bin Larif (is a pseudonym for the author, who wishes to remain anonymous) titled 'Metaphor and Causal Layered Analysis.'

The author focuses on the power of metaphor in shaping reality describing it as 'vehicle of transformation.' In addition, the author stated that is a metaphor is kept in the unconscious level, it is be default a means of 'interpreting' and 'conceptualizing' the world (specifically the dominant worldview). CLA, by explicitly discussing metaphors' is enabling generating transparent narrative at the personal and the organizational level.

Another study revealing the crucial role played by myths and metaphors in achieving transformative results is the study conducted by Ian Lowe (2015) questioning the reasons behind the weak receptivity among both the public and politicians regarding varied urgent issues?

The author is addressing the 'unconscious deeply-seated' myths through conducting a 'comprehensive overview' of academic literature on the issue of Climate Change. Lowe concluded that CLA help in understanding the reasons behind the 'resistance to change' calling for what he described as 'long-term environmental-human healing.'

In an analysis of human error in scholars' judgments about global catastrophic risks, Yudkowsky (2008) critiqued some of his previous academic work and stated that 'futures thinking' requires broad knowledge, beyond just a narrow disciplinary domain. (Davidson, 2020)

"Once upon a time I made up overly detailed scenarios, without realizing that every additional detail was an extra burden. Once upon a time I really did think that I could say there was a ninety percent chance of Artificial Intelligence being developed between 2005 and 2025, with the peak in 2018. This statement now seems to me like complete gibberish. Why did I ever think I could generate a tight probability distribution over a problem like that? Where did I even get those numbers in the first place?" (Yudkowsky, 2008)

4.4 CLA EVALUATION

Futures studies aim to transform the future. Futurists seek to use the future to change the present. Futures' thinking has numerous benefits; mainly it creates longer-term possibilities/ alternative futures, instead of a day-to-day operational management of reality/one future, which provides a flexible decision-making process and a transformative leadership that goes beyond narrow problem-solving approach to creative and logic thinking articulating the short- medium- and long-term consequences based on a broader environmental scanning, as well as revealing the inner stories of the organizations, institutions, and nations linking them to systemic strategies facilitating the anticipation of emerging issues, opportunities, and weak signals '*to solve tomorrow's problems today.*'

Critical future methods are built on the fact that 'strategies fail not because an inaccurate assessment of alternative futures but because of a lack of understanding of deep culture' and accordingly there is an intense focus on understanding the worldviews of the different stakeholders which makes the implementation of the desired changes smooth. It is worth clarifying that this doesn't mean '*Do whatever works, just solve the problem*' rather, the foundation of CLA is revealing how the three layers of Myth, Worldview, and Social Context combined create the problems in the Litany layer. (Inayatullah, 2013; Inayatullah, 2017)

One important benefit of applying CLA is that it helps expose key personal ideas, narrative subtexts and cultural beliefs that might otherwise go unquestioned. CLA's causal layers encourage thinking more deeply and critically about both 'media portrayals of events' and the discourse of 'social science commentators in the academic literature.'

As a critical futures method, CLA works both with and within the issue. It provides an interpretive framework enabling for the deconstruction and reconstruction of different issues in

today's complex world issues (multicultural, multiple diverse stakeholder positions, multi-civilizational, multigenerational, etc.) that need sense making and adapt to emergence through exploring the varied causes (acknowledging and negotiating differences) supporting a shift from 'causal determinism to network-based approach.

It asserts the importance of taking into consideration the 'philosophies and culturally mediated traditions' that stand behind the causes and are represented in each layer and differs between stakeholders; '*resolving conflicts through mutual understanding of each other's perspectives,*' and this requires that the researcher rebuilds the layers from base up so as to reach the alternative futures which helps with scenario development communicating the powerful effect of myth/metaphor in creating intellectually the vision of the future.

There is still a need for more marginalized voices to be present and challenge the dominating worldviews. CLA, as a theoretical framework, provides a theoretical framework and an opportunity to hear what the previously "unheard… voiceless, marginalized and excluded" bring into conversations about the future. Often, it is what is commonly '*not said that is reflective of culture and community.*' And what is not said—an "elephant in the room" or the "unknown known"—may indeed hold crucial information about an issue in question. (Curry & Schultz, 2009; Inayatullah & Miljović, 2015; Miljović, 2015; Haigh, 2016)

In her chapter titled 'Avatar: Higher Education and Sustainability' published in 'CLA 2.0: Transformative Research in Theory and Practice' (2015), Patricia Kelly asserted the need for a 'shift at the myth/worldview levels globally, towards integrating feeling and rationality, nurturing the imagination, otherwise, humanity is facing, collectively, the threat of reaching a 'dead end.'

Most importantly, Inayatullah believes that liberating the method from political views is a never-ending task, and it cannot be achieved through controlling the factors affecting the problem or the phenomenon, but only through the deep analysis to the different layers. (Ouda, 2019)

4.5.1 Description of the Corpus

The research is to shape the CLA layers and results from output of previous phases. Each text's relevance to the focus of each causal layer is identified through reading, interpreting, and annotating the data using a rubric/coding of each of the four main levels of CLA to determine, identify, arrange, and systematizing the ideas, concepts, and categories in the data.

Selection Criteria and Process

Based on the literature review, the pilot study, and the theoretical framework (Sohail Inayatullah CLA and Habermas Public Sphere), the major categories of the analyzed perspectives represent the following stakeholders: Academics' production [in social science, in general, and specifically in the field of Mass Communication], Media Practitioners discussions, opinions, and views, social networking sites' users-generated content, Human Rights/ Media Watchdog Groups reports, Regulatory Bodies' Representatives recommended strategies and policies, Security and Technical Experts statements, actions and reactions, in-depth analysis, feedback, and reviews.

A manual scanning for the editorial articles [both in Arabic and English], laws and regulations related to Internet and Social Media, academic papers, books, official statements and presidential speeches, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube Posts/Tweets/Audiovisual Content, Reports [local and international] on the Egyptian political, social, economic, religious, cultural status, and the future. This is alongside attending an online intensive Future Studies Course;

'*Futures 101: Become a Futurist*' with Professor Sohail Inayatullah; as the researcher was granted a 'full access and a certificate' scholarship from Meta Future School between May and December 2022. This enhanced the researcher's skills and ensured following precise and scientific procedures.

Arabic/English key words and hashtags: Egypt, social networking sites, Jan25 revolution, Arab Spring, virtual public sphere, democracy, public opinion, freedom of expression, Internet laws and regulations, the Future.

The search was conducted via different Internet search engines and databases in addition to Egyptian Knowledge Bank (EKB), and Twitter/Facebook/YouTube search bars.

At this phase of the study, in contrast to the literature review, the results prior to 2010 was included representing a base/background and past insights directing the present. In addition, the duplicate was deleted before choosing the sample of the analysis.

These steps and procedures were applied for each key word. The researcher began with the intent of developing an exhaustive list, but along the way with accumulating huge amount of content, the researcher adopted a purposeful sample technique and decided that the rest would be included when needed for each key word and/or generated theme and stakeholder category.

Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select samples with intention. Such selection method allows the researcher to focus in great detail on a certain issue, subject, or phenomenon (Flick, 2009; Patton, 2002; Silverman and Marvasti, 2008) According to Patton, (2002:230): "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth." Previous studies (e.g., Creswell, 2003; Flick, 2009; Gee, 2005) have proved that the idea of purposeful sampling is appropriate for investigations on online materials.

In order to select the most suitable samples, corpus is collected after scanning each item and deciding, as a starting point, which layer it belongs to. The selected content is placed into categories divided according to a key word/theme and stakeholder category.

The literature recommends that the data set be large enough to allow the identification of patterns but small enough to reveal multiple, rich levels of meaning. Layers 1 and 2 are most visible, layers 3 and 4 are broader and deeper and more difficult to identify. Outsiders are far more effective in discerning these levels of reality." Accordingly, views from non-experts in politics and journalism, as well as, non-Egyptians; Arab and Non-Arab/Foreigners, voices are included. **Appendix I table includes the list of the corpus** collected and analyzed; **total number is 193** texts and transcripts [published in the years from 2008 till 2023].

4.5.2 CLA Scenario: A New Approach

A basic tenet of futures studies is that images of the future inform the decisions people make and how they act. The notion that human purpose can affect the course of events to create futures that are significant transformations of the present underlies all of futures research. Their goal is to "*disturb the present*," in Gaston Berger's words (1967). The scenarios are developed in two stages; an analysis phase works through the layers to worldview and metaphor, then the scenario is developed by reinterpreting the layers. (Curry & Schultz, 2009)

'Scenario building is a methodology, but also a way of thinking; it's always asking: What's the alternative?' Scenarios "*do not predict the future - they are tools to help us explore different ways the future might unfold*," allowing researchers to change the predicted future through deciding what to be done to shape the future. In general, scenarios are created for different purposes: "contingency (*let's be ready*; to assess and prepare for what might go wrong),

opportunity, or conflict resolution. Scenarios, however, are more than options; a scenario represents a '*lived possible world*.' (Milojević, 2015; Inayatullah, 2022)

Scenario allows researchers to create a conceptual distance from the present, so that the present is seen as less real and fixed, and thus changeable; to understand and manage uncertainties - to explore '*what we don't know that we don't know, to gain a better understanding of chaos and complexity; including the potential levers of influence, to understand the views of different stakeholders and perspectives, to find new areas and possibilities of growth, to help clarify hidden assumptions, to think about the unknown, and to open up spaces for new action and reflection*.' (Inayatullah, 2022)

Scenarios created without Causal Layered Analysis will be based on today's drivers, these are very safe scenarios. As described by Wendy L. Schultz, scenario is a '*technical term used to describe a vivid, provocative, and accessible image of the future evaluated in terms of plausibility and probability*.' A scenario has to contain the possible outcomes; opportunities and threats, and describe how changes created a particular future.

For developing scenarios for the Future of social networking sites as a public sphere applying the CLA four levels of analysis provide gathering high-quality, updated, specialized, and inclusive views, opinions, information, and perspectives answering the varied questions of the study regarding the past, present, and the potential of the social networking sites in the future within the Egyptian context.

James Dator developed a widely adopted scenario model that has four parts: (1) Continued growth, (2) Transformation (with two variations, values and organizational focus and a technological focus), (3) Failure or Collapse and (4). Return to the past or Steady state.

There are a number of scenario methods, each with different benefits:

➢ The assumptions approach: is excellent at challenging how we conventionally see the future. However, if the worldview is too dominant - successful - then one cannot see assumptions since we believe how do things is the only way to act.

➢ The double variable scenario method: is excellent in developing short and medium range strategy but weak at identifying outliers or events and trends that can foundationally change the future.

➢ The multivariable method is excellent at identifying futures based on different drivers but not as strategically useful as the double variable.

➢ The organizational method is of less medium range strategic value as the double variable but far more useful in creating direction as it identifies the preferred future and in assessing risk as it identifies the outlier scenario. (This is based on the perspectives of key stakeholders: (1) Business as usual, (2) worst case, (3) outlier, (4) best case).

➢ The integrated method ensures greater plausibility; it seeks to move from the preferred – which can often be overly idealistic – to the disowned – what has been pushed away – to the Integrated. It concludes with the outlier scenario, so as to adjust for the unknown or disruptive.

CLA can be used both before and after the scenario development process. The structure of the scenario as described by Sohail Inayatullah [the integrated method]: (1) Preferred future (articulate five criteria of your preferred future), then the (2) Disowned Future (what has the preferred pushed away, considered not important? Are there aspects of the disowned that are important to keep in the preferred (to move the preferred toward enhanced plausibility or that may be required for resilience and robustness?), then (3) Integrated Future (the preferred and the

disowned are integrated explaining how to work with each other so as the preferred future be achieved in light of the disowned future), and finally the (4) Unknown/Outlier: What are some emerging issues, weak signals or current drivers that portend a dramatically different future? What is a new technology disrupting the earlier scenarios? What if an external shock changes the game? Articulate a future way outside the box – but still potentially useful. Even if this scenario does not come out, what can you learn from aspects of this future? (Milojević, 2015; Inayatullah, 2022)

Scenarios mainly aim to stimulate public discourse; to support decisions on complex issues with long-term implications: Mapping of the phenomenon (literature review and the pilot study). Brainstorming key factors driving change and development (*four layers analysis*). Consolidating the outcomes into a manageable number of generic categories. Discussing relevant trends/patterns within each category. Generating a picture of the status quo and possible directions of change. Analyzing the relationships between different categories and trends. Determining the key factors underlying change. Creating scenarios: *scenario structure* (combines two or more key drivers of change to give a range of possible scenarios), *and actor analysis* (used to supplement the scenario-structure: 'who are the most important actors in the scenarios and how might they be expected to act?')

As recommended by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019), it is necessary in scenario building to ensure the following: to ensure that the futures work is protected from everyday concerns and immediate political, financial or social controversies. To ensure that the initiative is not limited to reflecting on the future, but also includes conceptualizing how to change current systems in specific ways. To build scenarios

on solid analysis to clarify and deepen the understanding of the major forces that underpins the change of the studied phenomena.

To deepen the scenario, ask these questions: "What is the core strategy in this scenario? What are the narratives, stories, metaphors that support it? What are the narratives, stories, metaphors that prevent it? In what way can you re-script the narrative so the scenario has a greater possibility of being realized or avoided?" (Inayatullah, 2022)

To ensure that scenarios development processes take into account trends of both the outer world and the nearby environment, not merely the latter. Not to move too quickly to preferred scenarios and use those scenarios which are less attractive, but just as likely. To allow time to identify and specify the values that support existing practices and structures and which appear in each of the scenarios. To be clear, precise and innovative in the method of presenting findings in order to avoid information overload that would distract attention.

To gain a detailed understanding of the drivers of change, combine two approaches: (1) Grouping and considering scenarios by type so as to help bring specific aspects of an issue into relief, along with (2) considering each scenario in isolation to help highlight different ways to achieve the same outcome.

CLA led to the creation of a new scenario method. In this approach, first the preferred future is developed, and then the contradictions or the disowned aspects are articulated. Lastly, a concluding transformed or integrated scenario is described.

This enhances robustness as the preferred future can often be fanciful. An outlier is articulated to ensure that known and unknown unknowns—emerging issues and weak signals—are identified. This final scenario completes the matrix.

This scenario approach takes away the fancifulness of the preferred scenario, since the preferred scenario often disowns an aspect of reality—a dialectic contradiction if you will. In the CLA scenario method, the disowned is reintegrated, instead of being discarded.

The current study, accordingly, develops the scenarios depending on the data collection and analysis following four major consecutive steps:

(i)   Determining the community of the study and Sample Selection according to certain criteria identified depending on the pilot study's indicators.

(ii)   Data collection: (*content and context*); collecting opinions, information, expectations, views and perspectives from the sample, addressing each factor and aspect related to the past, the present, and the future of the studied phenomenon, and describing the key features of the global, national, and local context.

(iii)   Data analysis (*categorizing, comparing*, and *interpreting*).

(iv)   Developing the Scenarios.

4.6 VALIDITY AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

4.6.1 Applying CLA

The four layers analysis moves horizontally and vertically and critically mapping the context of the issue from the point of multiple stakeholders through conceptual depth and breadth including the 'other' and not merely based on the researcher's own mythology/perspective considering it as an objective reality.

This enriches the understanding of the past and the present of the issue and thus everyone is included which provides more robust scenarios and implementation. It transforms the future and then a new reality is created that requires transformations in the supporting system and the

litanies measuring the change; as CLA begins and ends with questioning the future and the efforts needed for achieving alternative futures.

This challenges current politics, what is considered 'objective' as well as avoids 'worldview blindness' since it reveals different worldviews via using a whole-of-worldview approach. This confronts 'power' addressing the power relationship on one hand and clarifying, in Curry and Schultz words '*who is privileged and who is silenced*, on the other.

Consequently, CLA application assists in revealing 'power struggles' between discourses exposing the varied dynamics; tensions, contradictions and vagueness in the collective interactions with these discourses that the individuals and the society have internalized.

This framework allows for the challenging of '*dominant assumptions'; 'what appears natural and normal'* about how the world is perceived and how it will be perceived and critically present it as '*problematic*.' (Milojević, 2015; Inayatullah, 2017)

4.6.2 Moving beyond the Used Future

"Have you purchased a used future? Is your image of the future, your desired future, yours or is it unconsciously borrowed from someone else?" (Inayatullah, 2008)

Al-Surouri (2016) wrote an article with the title "What is discourse and what are discursive practices?" in which he introduces a philosophical analysis to the meaning of 'Discourse'; claiming that '-dis' in English language is a negative prefix that gives the following word the opposite meaning. And 'course' in English is a direction.

Accordingly, the researcher says that 'discourse' is somehow referring to 'changing the course/direction.' Now, as Al-Surouri states, there are more than one direction; numerous potential 'meanings' flowing through society; it is a linguistic agenda that is no linear and not direct; rather it is a network with no beginning and no end.

On the other hand, its Arabic counterpart is mainly referring to the role of 'language' as socially constructed, collectively not individually, in forming the convections of the members of the society. Consequently, it is impossible to prove that one person or even a group of people are responsible for making the general public trend in a society in specific field within a certain period of time; but rather it is institutional.

Al-Surouri states that it is hard to affiliate the Arab Spring events to one TV channel or even a number of TV channels, referring to the focus on *Al-Jazeera*, because this would represent only one tiny piece of the complicated and diverse Arab view; these would not reflect the bigger picture; but it can definitely have an effect on the discursive practices of the dominating discourse, whether it is positive or negative.

Any discourse, then, is attached with practices and institutions (power). And, the academic, mass media, religious, educational, culture, Art and literature,…discourses are peripheral discourses of one major dominating discourse aims at forming people's thoughts and behaviors. One of the characteristics of the discursive practices is 'selectivity;' as in what to show/say and what to hide.

Al-Surouri asserts that what is hidden is also a discourse that is not less important by any means than what is said/announced/showed. For instance, this can be applied to the literature review step in academic research conducting within a specific dominating discourse. That's why the second layer is not enough because the third layer clarify the reason behind this dominance.

These institutional discourse aims at forming people's view toward the world and themselves and those around them and their countries and their religious and cultural convections. And the beginning of consciousness is being aware of this discourse.

Then, Al-Surouri is questioning the ability of resisting the discourse, and the answer is 'yes' a dominating discourse can be resisted, however, this is not possible through individual efforts; counter discourses, although they are important, but it requires a counter institutional discourse. This equal institutional discourse explains and critic these discursive practices and clarify its effects and frame it so as to understand how the institutional discursive practices work and uncover and challenge it through parallel techniques within society.

This could explain why there is an intense reference to 'foreign' media coverage as a counter discourse in the face of the official discourse of the Egyptian regime when it comes to discussing: human rights, freedom of expression, and other issues that need resisting the dominating discourse and challenging its discursive practices.

The core argument of CLA is asserting the exceptional power of the deepest layers; 'metaphor, language, worldviews, unconsciously-held root cultural myths, and present narratives.'

The critical analysis is not an end in itself but rather it aims to reaching the 'meanings' directing the emergence and the different possible futures; and this is exactly what others are doing 'not-consciously' or subconsciously. This is expressed as 'colonization' of future 'space'; when certain images and ideas become hegemonic or dominant.

This future is seen as an 'open space' a 'not yet' a 'becoming' and 'is to come or be' or a 'series of numerous and diverse spaces' and this flow of the expectations 'in tune with what has happened or is happening' would 'limit the actions taken' in the present and the behaviors in society would reflect such dominant unconscious and out-dated expectations about the future, or even more complex; individuals and societies would behave in accordance with futures they

actually wish to avoid; this too is a result of beliefs about the inevitability of particular futures or of 'auto-pilot' actions based in used futures. (Inayatullah, 2013; Milojević, 2015; Haigh, 2016)

4.6.5 Challenges and opportunities for future application

'What made the Renaissance unique in human history was not the emergent vision of the future, but the opening up of the future, the creation of multiple visions and possibilities."

Milojević (2015) described CLA an *integrative method*, as it provides a structure for the investigation of dualisms; subjective/objective, past/present/future, agency/structure, and dominance/multiplicity. It does so by taking into account a multiplicity of discourses, from empirical to symbolic, from dominant to marginalized. In addition, the core assumption behind CLA is that apparent reality is not discerned from some objective reality "out there", but created, co-created and recreated.

Things do not exist merely in themselves—meaning that even the strongest trends about the future may not eventuate in a particular future— 'the future'. And even the strongest trends will affect different people and places differently—certainly the meanings people give to trends differ based on their own location in particular discourses.

However, Milojevći clarifies that this doesn't mean that 'anything is possible' or that 'anything goes;' but, rather, there are limits to what is possible and doable. Ideation—a "pull" of a desired future—is not enough, the 'weight' of history and social structures as well as "pushes" towards the future also play an important role.

Inayatullah (2022) states that '*often in foresight workshops, the exact people who can provide the new ideas are not there*,' criticizing the limitations of 'experts speak to each other creating 'self-referential conversations' and describing them as 'representing the past, not the future" and 'reinforcing' the dominant worldview

So; a critical futurist has to keep asking: '*Who is not in the room? Who is missing? Who can provide everyone in the room with new ways of knowing and thinking?*' Such inclusion, while messy; it would 'reduce' the future's uncertainty, and enhances the output in developing strategies and scenarios based on deeper understanding for perspectives that challenge the system and see reality differently.

Creating a new story is challenging, though. Narratives are not right or wrong; the question guiding the process of analysis is whether they 'hinder or serve' where the individuals, societies, nations, or organizations wish/plan to go.

Without a supporting metaphor and worldview, it is 'easy to return to what no longer works'; a comfortable pattern of thoughts and habits. Creating a clear vision that is not too near nor too far; a too-near vision leads to being trapped by the present, and a too-far one becomes a science fiction. A clear vision must bring out the best in people and moves the desired future back to the present for implementing the required transformations. (Inayatullah, 2022)

As systematically analyzed by Inayatullah (2004; 2014) and Inayatullah & Milojević (2015) in CLA varied editions of outlining case studies of CLA as an integrative and transformative theory and methodology, it is clearly pointed out that CLA, like any other methodology, has limitations:

> ➢ Challenges present at the worldview layer of analysis indicating that it requires the researchers question the cultural meanings and to have a 'broader' view. In addition, for researcher applying CLA to justify their data selection; as not to exclude the knowledge that would contradict with the mainstream convections and traditions within the cultural context of the issue studied; '*this is not a skill most scientists are taught even now.*'

➢ More time to be specifically given to the third layer, the Worldview,' because it is critical for allowing "deeper understandings to emerge and be discussed—particularly given that a worldview clash is likely to be a primary reason [behind the issue]."

➢ The basic structure of CLA has also been questioned. It is it is reported that sometimes *difficult to differentiate some of the layers*, for example, between worldview and myth/metaphor level analysis or between myth/metaphor and litany level analysis.

➢ "There is an inherent subjectivity associated with the understanding and perception of each CLA layer; "as one person's worldview could be another person's myth or metaphor." The researcher has to "maintain a neutral stance during [analysis].

CHAPTER V

DECONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

"The whole nature of foresight is to challenge pragmatism, it is actually also to be idealistic; because if you are too pragmatic, you are reinforcing the present as it is now, so you get the used future, the disowned future, the default future. And, if you are too idealistic, then it does not touch people's reality, and they give up." (Sohail Inayatullah, 2022)

Here is an attempt for creating a future that is not given by experts or based on public imagination; rather developed through including all stakeholders' perspectives. Critical future studies, in general, and CLA, in particular aim at empowering researchers to think in 'alternatives.'

Table 4: Unpacking Egyptian virtual public sphere

Unpacking Egyptian virtual public sphere futures	
Litany	Mapping the Arabic Blogpshere. Trust. Fragmentation. Non-stop flow of information. Religion, politics, to entertainment and cynicism.
Systemic Causes	Contextualization: context provides specific needs, possibilities, and limitations for the actors involved. Academics to distinguish between what is context-specific and what is general in studying the Internet/social media. Ethics. Legal vacuum. Moral collapse.
Worldview	Evaluating social networking sites in light of the professional standards of traditional mass media. This is the strongest argument repeated to diminish the credibility of social networking sites. "If the modern society has a structural level and an action level, then communication would be in the action level, but the civil sphere is in the structure level. A public sphere is a prerequisite for communication; hindering the establishment of an effective and function civil sphere means the regime is not prioritizing communication."
Myth/Metaphor	All Arab Spring, even the cases that turned into civil wars, countries tried to build a democratic participatory public sphere. "The path to stability is for citizens to feel as partners.'

Throughout the analysis, five major themes were mapped: (1) Social Networking Sites as part of Media Landscape, (2) The Egyptian Dilemma: Social Networking Sites and the Public Sphere, varied Stakeholders and perspectives, (3) Media Coverage: Social Networking Sites and Social and Political Change, (4) Tech Companies, and (5) Future Indications.

Table 5: Online social networking sites as part of media landscape

Online social networking sites as part of media landscape	
Litany	Freedoms. Business model. Access. Reach. Users' digital rights. Regulatory bodies. Hard/expensive to be regulated and controlled. Varied definitions and usages. Surveillance software. Disinformation, fake news, hate speech, and propaganda.
Systemic Causes	Tech-companies are blamed for fake news, disinformation, and hate speech. Competitions. New platforms/ alternative applications. Copying features.
Worldview	'Technological advancement is threat to national security.' 'Cyber / Fourth-generation wars.' "Popularity challenges truthfulness for influence." "People resort to social media platforms after the gats of press, Radio and Television were blocked."
Myth/Metaphor	SNSs are seen as the early days of invention of Printing Press. 'The world is watching.'

Table 6: Online social networking sites as a virtual public sphere in Egypt

Online social networking sites as a virtual public sphere in Egypt	
Litany	Self-reported vox pops. Public opinion monitored.
Systemic Causes	Self-censorship. Narrowing the space for civil society (summer 2013). How to balance security with freedom of expression? An inclusive dialogue.
Worldview	Professional journalists and academics focused on the quality of the public sphere input and output, not only on freedom of expression or the technological advancement. 'People were coming out of 2013 tired, exhausted, frustrated, not believing

	in the value of the democratic transition in Egypt.' 'A new social contract.' Nationalistic narrative.
Myth/Metaphor	Death of politics. 'The republic of fear.' 'New authorities should be careful not to repeat past mistakes.' "The new borders; the borders of the cyberspaces." "An upgraded playbook of autocracy."

Table 7: Media Coverage: online social networking sites and political and social change

Media Coverage: online social networking sites and political and social change	
Litany	Western examples. User-generated content is the threat. Biased in favor of strict laws and regulations. Distrust in social media platforms. Safety and privacy. Enhancing social media experience.
Systemic Causes	Advertisement, not content, is the threat. Addiction and other psychological effects. Social networking sites as facing 'Existential Crisis.' Lack of transparency in Tech-companies reports.
Worldview	Tech-companies/social media platforms and Stats struggle over Power. "[Online] debates are not about 'what' happened; rather the debates are about 'what does it mean' and 'what should be done?'" Social media as western tools. Conspiracy theories.
Myth/Metaphor	'Tech-companies are not doing enough.'

Table 8: Tech Companies and Technical Perspectives

Tech Companies and Technical Perspectives	
Litany	"Fake-news rhetoric as a 'smokescreen' to muzzle critical voices." The dual-use nature of social media.
Systemic Causes	Liability. Section 230 Novel features. Self-regulation.
Worldview	Four pressures: o Avoiding official regulation. o Unhappy users and public shaming campaigns. o Internal pressure from employees to step up and become better corporate citizens.

	○ Advertising dollars and corporate support are not immune to bad citizenship and failure to self-regulate.
	There is a problem in addressing social networking sites as a one package; there are core differences among them.
	Disinformation as 'adversarial narratives.'
Myth/Metaphor	'Governments don't understand how algorithms work.'
	"[There are] barriers for organizations and individuals from the Global South to meaningfully participate in the development of Internet norms, policies, and standards."

Table 9: Future Indications

Future Indications	
Litany	Technical.
	Target audience.
	Competition.
	User-generated content.
	Tech-companies Business model.
	Voice applications.
Systemic Causes	Quality of the content.
	Healthy environment for communication.
	Audience.
	Niche platforms.
	Academics to question the relationship between the traditional public sphere and the emerging virtual public sphere in terms of: social, cultural, and political dimensions of technology. The impact of values and objectives of the actors on communication.
	Levels of regulations:
	Platforms administration.
	Users reporting violating content.
	State-owned and independent external regulatory bodies for varied reasons: economic, political, security, and social.
	Key actors:
	Governments: legal intervention.
	Users: raising the awareness (media literacy).
	Programmers, Tech-companies: technical solutions.
Worldview	Electronic immigration.
	Global citizen.
	"Negotiation around meaning."
	Identity question: who are we?
	"Expanding the definition of terrorism to include peaceful protests and online social media posts; treating state critics as enemies."

	Reframing social media. Why users keep coming back?
Myth/Metaphor	"It is the Man, not the machine, which we should worry about." "Wrecking the publics sphere is the new authoritarian strategy."

Then, a scenario was developed for each dimension. Scenarios provide a path to simplify a complex phenomenon. However, it is not the question of 'which one will come true?' as the answer is 'we don't know.' Scenarios instead are based on the ability to have varied possibilities and then ask: which one do you prefer? And, then decide how to involve everyone to create the preferred future.

The developed scenarios, especially in the third and fourth layers, are challenging the mindset of the policy makers, first and foremost, as well as, the rest of the stakeholders. To avoid the used future and have a better future; it requires a political will and inclusive national efforts, as well as a scientific approach for solving problems.

5.1 LITANY

When tackling social networking sites, within the Litany layer of analysis, three major aspects are covered; Concept, Structure, and Function, and the concentration is mainly directed to statistics to understand, assess, and analyze usage of digital devices, internet and specifically social media services. It is stated clearly that the "*latest published figures for internet use invariably under-represent reality, and actual adoption and growth may be higher than the figures suggest.*" (Simon Kemp, 2023)

The sources of most of the reports published online and discussed in mainstream media coverage are global privately-owned companies/websites identified as experts in Web and Programming, Customer experience and Trends within the Internet Research and Digital Communication, in general, and Social Media management and Digital Marketing consulting services, in particular. These are mostly available for free reports monitoring annual, quarterly

and monthly online data. These reports could be providing global overview, local insights, or special reports for trends and data for specific topics, with regional overview and local insights.

Other reports are the official local reports published by the Egyptian Government, the Egyptian Cabinet's Information and Decision Support Centre (IDSC), the Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), and Egyptian Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. In addition, to the reports published by the national and international Human Rights Watchdog groups and institutions, Think Tanks, academic research centers, Civil Society Organizations, and legislation and security analytical reports that critically interpret the numbers and statistics to contextualize issues related to digital policies and regulations, laws and users' rights, surveillance, censorship, websites blocking, Internet shutdowns, and freedom of expression, among others.

The major key factors addressed are: Adoption and Growth, in percentages, both among the eligible audience (as most of the platforms restrict the usage to specific age range) and in comparison to the total number of the population, Mobile Connections, Internet Connection Speeds, Time of Use across platforms, Ad Reach of each platform separately, Connectivity among countries, Ranking the varied social media platforms and applications, and the Gender Gap (masculine versus feminine applications and platforms).

In addition, the limitation of numbers in describing the digital scene is explained in the published reports. As stated by Simon Kemp (DataReportal, 2023): 'the figures for each country are not comparable with equivalent figures from previous years; as there are continuous updates conducted by the sources they depend on to inform and calculate the numbers. So, the reader should not regard any differences in these numbers as an actual change in social media use,

rather, to view any such differences as "corrections" in the data, and not as an indication that social media adoption has declined.'

The platforms and applications included differ between reports. In Egypt, there are major platforms and applications referred to when addressing 'social media' usage and these are: Meta company: Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, and WhatsApp, YouTube, Snapchat, LinkedIn, TikTok and Telegram (the new comers), YouTube, and Twitter.

The interdisciplinary nature of the Internet; comes under and interconnected with varied laws. Hard to be regulated and controlled; different definitions and different usages and stakeholders. The frame of reference for legal analysis for digital rights in Egypt: (Article 19, 2015; Miller, 2018; RSF, 2018; Article 19, 2018; AFTE First Part, 2021; AFTE Second Part, 2021; AFTE Third Part, 2021; Freedom House, 2021; Media Landscapes, 2022): Universal Declaration of Human Rights (December 10, 1948), Article (25) of the Egyptian Constitution (2014), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (December 10, 1966), Anti-Terrorism Law No. 94 of 2015, Regulating Communications Law No. 10 of 2003, Telecommunication Regulation Law No. 10 of 2003, Organization of Press, Media and the Supreme Council of Media (2018), Press and Media Regulation Law No. 180 of 2018, Combating Information Technology Crimes Law No. 175 of 2018No. 175 of 2018, Land Transport Regulation Law No. 73 of 2019, and Personal Data Protection Law No. 151 of 2020.

Social networking sites are referred to as 'Social/New Media' within the context of presenting these platforms as part of the larger media landscape. While, they are described as 'tech companies' when referring to the issues of monitoring and regulations; so as to refer to their profit-driven business model that undermine the quality of the content generated and

published through their platforms. The core aspects mentioned are: freedoms, the business models, the issue of access and reach, in addition to regulation framework.

'Not Free'

According to Freedom House Report (2021), 'Freedom on the Net,' Egypt [ranked as number 161 in Press freedom and 139 in Peace Index Ranking] features a media landscape which has witnessed many changes since the January 25 revolution in 2011. The *report addresses three key factors: obstacles to access, limits on content, and violations of user rights. It is stated that Television is still the main popular medium. However, digital media [29.5% Internet penetration, ranked 26/100 on Freedom of the Internet categorized as '**not free'**] "have witnessed a remarkable growth, and many media entities started to modify their traditional business models to gain higher reach."*

The report, also, mentioned the key developments [June 1, 2020 - May 31, 2021] as follows: In October 2020, authorities blocked Telegram on three networks. Authorities failed to provide an explanation for the blocking. In October 2020, it was revealed that Egyptian authorities used Sandvine devices to block 600 websites and surveil internet users through deep packet inspection (DPI) technology. Pro-government bots attempted to manipulate the online space. Facebook and Twitter removed hundreds of accounts due to "inauthentic coordinated behavior." Since April 2020, the Egyptian authorities have targeted women TikTok influencers; at least three women received prison sentences for "violating family values and principles" on social media. In September 2020, Amnesty International's Security Lab reported new examples of FinSpy being used against Windows and Android devices, along with previously unknown versions targeting Linux and macOS computers. The Egyptian president ratified a data-

protection law in July 2020. While, according to the report, it is 'the first legal safeguard of its kind in Egypt, some clauses may negatively impact individual user privacy.'

Back in December 26, 2016, a new media law was ratified; three new regulatory bodies were created to regulate Egyptian print, broadcast and electronic media. The new law approved by the Egyptian parliament repeals law No 13 of 1979 and its modifications of law No 223 of 1989 of Egyptian Radio and Television Union. The new law introduces three main articles in the Egyptian constitutions; the establishment of the Supreme Council for Media Regulation (SCMR), the National Press Council (NPC), and the National Media Council (NMC).

In May 2017, according to the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE), the Egyptian government blocked access to twenty-one news websites, accusing them of supporting terrorism and spreading false news. Egypt has sought to acquire surveillance technology that allows authorities to block, monitor, and redirect internet traffic, allowing for, what is described as a significant measure of state control over the internet. Since then, Cairo has blocked access to almost five hundred websites, most of them belonging to media organizations, in addition to hundreds of imprisoned journalists, citizen-journalists, and bloggers.

This is facilitated and legalized by the law of Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes Law (August 18) which allows authorities to block websites that are considered "a threat to national security" or to the "national economy,' and require internet service providers to save and release personal information to security services upon their request.

Moreover, Egypt's parliament passed a law that would treat social media accounts and blogs with more than 5,000 followers as media outlets making them vulnerable to prosecution for publishing fake news or "incitement to break the law." (Miller, 2018)

"The World is watching"

Social networking sites described as providing an opportunity to millions of citizens 'who were previously frustrated and didn't care about public affairs.' Since then, these platforms have been 'mirroring' reality. Their role in mobilization and recruitment of individuals, thoughts, and principles, was the reason behind the growing calls for official attention to understand social changes and public opinions as a pre-emptive procedure to track the movement of the Arab street. These platforms have been becoming one of the most important indicators the expected public actions and public demonstrations. They do not work in isolation from reality.

Some are referring to the deterioration in the role and impact of these platforms due to either international pressures or the nature of the organizational structures of the Arab young people and its role in maintaining the action and the movement. Social networking sites reflect the Arab political conflict.

"New technologies are at the heart of struggles for rights in the West Asia-North Africa region (WANA) region, offering unprecedented opportunities for freedom of expression, networking, and mobilization. These technologies also, however, have been assimilated into existing systems of control, leading to a host of threats, from privacy breaches to targeted harassment and suppression of dissent. Authoritarian regimes across the region have invested in new tools that surveil citizens while nurturing business partnerships with big tech companies that place profits over human rights. Over the last two decades, digital platforms have been used to build spaces of liberation and organizing by marginalized communities in the region." (SMEX, 2023)

The relationship between the authorities and social networking platforms is described as complex; the current regime is keen on following the changes in the public opinion on a regular

basis; and shutting these platforms is not by any means serving the interest of the political authority. But, at the same time, these platforms continuing the way it is, is considered a dilemma. These platforms represent a space for monitoring the public opinion; it provides a 'self-reported vox pops' facilitating knowing what's in peoples' minds; what's going on.

Regulation has been the official reaction to any changes in the platforms. In 2018, the legal framework regulating the Internet was met with 'fear' and 'suspicion' as 29 of penalties of imprisonment ranges between 3 months till 5 years. There was a comparison between the Egyptian context and the Emirati context. Public comments mentioned in media coverage included: '*Egypt [is becoming] North Korea*,' '*the definition of what is considered an information crime is explained in 45 paragraphs in the law, [this] indicates unfair restriction on human rights; freedom of expression and access to information*,' '*[the] daily normal use of the Internet now can put you at risk; it can land you in jail*', '*What's new? Did they need a law?*' '*If they would put this law into action they would need billions of dollars.*'

A parliament member commented and described the Internet and social media as 'a lifeline' to young Egyptians and 'even kids are addicted to it.' The laws were justified as restrictions on 'illegal' use of the Internet. This can be understood in relation to the published headlines reflecting 'technology' as a 'threat.' During the World Youth Forum (2019), the Egyptian president warned against using social media to harm countries, describing these platforms as '*becoming tools in the hands of state intelligence*' around the world '*threatening the security of countries that get out the line*', adding that '*his humanity is bigger than his official position; and that no official would make such dangerous statement.*' He referred to his speech in the UN in 2014 for establishing rules and regulation, describing these platforms as '*calling for*

terrorism', and told young people attending the conference to '*pay attention to this accelerating development in technology.*'

The discussion about the 'way out' of this situation refers to opening up the [offline] public sphere. Since summer 2013, as documented in Internet reports, Egypt tightly restricted civil liberties including Press freedom and freedom of assembly. The meaningful political opposition was virtually nonexistent; as expressions of dissent can draw criminal prosecution and imprisonment. In addition, there has been a high level of self-censorship among Egyptian Internet users. (Freedom House, 2021)

In 2022, at the time when Egypt ranks far behind in freedom of press and political freedoms, political opponents accepted the state invitation to participate in a 'National Dialogue' and announced that their priority is 'political reformation' and 'the release of detainees,' in addition to 'presenting their vision regarding economy, external debt and expenditure.' It was proved that the absence of free press was an opportunity for increase in corruption. The focal point is going back to the demands of the people; 'democracy,' 'free press,' and 'elections.'

Media coverage and social public debates addressed that 'negative effect of social media platform outweighed its positive roles' especially during political turmoil and critical periods. The negative effects include: directing individuals' believes, convictions, and behaviors, threatening the 'specificity' of the nation shacking the social and national security, and illegal and uncommon usage spreading lies and rumors.

The reports addressed, also, 'a direct relationship between the increase in communication within a society and the rates of rumors.' The reasons stated are: the advanced tools enabling professional output in fabricating photos and audiovisual content, the uncontrollable fake accounts, and the absence of any rules regarding the published content.

The objectives of spreading rumors, as stated in reports, include: the disintegration of social unity; the destruction of the value system and social peace; weakening the trust between citizens and the leaders and Mainstream Media; spreading the spirit of despair, hopelessness, panic and hysteria; damaging the country's image abroad/internationally, mainly through news about political prisoners and human rights violations; and the difficulty in separating facts from rumors.

Four factors are referred to as affecting the spread of rumors in society; (1) the platforms/application own features, (2) absence of laws, (3) users themselves, and (4) the delay in official response and clarification to any widely shared fake news or misinformation. As documented in the reports, the state reacted and issued laws and established units to respond and correct the rumors: the Council of Ministries, Al-Azhar (for extremist thoughts), and the Ministry of Interior, in addition to social campaigns and initiatives planned and implemented by the Ministry of Local Development and Al-Azhar International Center for Electronic *Fatwa* (edicts).

The Egyptian Council of Ministries (2022) announced that 'economy' came at the top of the sectors targeted by rumors, then Education, Health, Agriculture, Solidarity, and Fuel and Energy. The reason behind this, according to the report, was to interact with the sectors affecting directly the daily life of Egyptians so as to weaken their sense of loyalty to their country, and security regarding the future.

During COP27 held in Egypt (November 2022), there were many shifts in the relationship between social media and traditional mainstream media. Activists and civil society were seeking Media coverage, foreign media specifically, which would bridge the domestic cause with other parts of the world. There were discussions about calling upon the international

community to interfere and pressure for human rights, and whether it is against sovereignty of the country or a human bond that shall move across borders. Many returning voices activated their social media accounts and wrote about the situation in Egypt. A polarized arguments were coming from everywhere with a lot claiming it's merely electronic fake accounts mobilized to corrupt the callings for the release of political prisoners. The majority were writing in English. They were looking for like-minded activists, journalists, or ordinary citizen from wherever to join the cause. It's not like the first days of the 25ᵗʰ of January revolution when the Arabic language was the most used language. It's described as a Morse code (Save Our Ship; S-O-S) to the outside world that, ironically, was a guest within Egyptian borders for few days. '*The world is watching'* was the theme of the COP27; therefore, it was the perfect time to '*speak up.*

"Existential Crisis"

Social media platforms since they are launched at the beginning of the year 2000, they were synonyms to the Internet network 'brining billions of users to fight with strangers and connect with loved ones.' They are with the huge number of users and advertisers are facing an existential crisis: According to report published on Reuters: The unbalanced participation: many tweets but few voices: around 90% of tweets are created by only 10% of the tweeps known as the 'heavy tweeps' who tweet daily and post more than three to four times weekly. The same exact thing occurs on Facebook. But, those heavy users began to abandon the platforms. The "unsuitable" content push them to reconsider using the platform, even if they are directly affected. A more aggressive culture; harassment and bullying are more pervasive.

The same situation is witnessed on Facebook; '[it] lost half a million of its 2 billion users by the end of 2021'; statistics however showed that '*Facebook restored this loss, but still the question about this decrease remains unanswered.*' Arguably, '*there is no more room for*

Facebook on Earth to expand its base,' however the platform is working on '*regaining teenagers who heavily depending on TikTok'*.

The biggest issue is considered 'disinformation' and the two major examples are the American presidential election in 2016 and COVID-19 crisis in 2020. The second largest problem is the platform effect on 'Mental Health,' especially among teenagers. The problem is described as follows: studies showed that deactivating social media accounts had positive consequences on the individual overall sense of satisfaction and good mood and spending longer time with loved ones. These platforms business model depend on advertising, and this depends on the users' interaction on the platform, especially with content related to sports, fashion, and entertainment. There is a decrease in interaction with this content and an increase in interaction with other types of content that represent a controversial context for advertiser and thus they avoid it; the Bitcoin and +18 content.

The discussion of 'rumors' was extended to address social networking sites and their implications on society in general. It's stated that 'social divisions were amplified' by the Internet; spreading falsehoods online, distorting reality, disproportionately harmed vulnerable and marginalized groups, and contributed to an increasingly polarized society.

In general, the key points discussed are: safety and privacy, 'enhancing social media experience,' mental health, lack of trust, users leaving social media, tech companies' liability, electronic thuggery; fake-news and illegal use. The trending statements were: '*the companies are not doing enough*', '*people are in favor of regulations'*, '*mainstream media are more trustworthy'*, and '*the need for new business model*' as the issues of disinformation are argued to be related to advertisement and entertainment. Regarding the sources; in addition to global statistics, the reports referred to indications based on literature review, official statistics from the

Egyptian Council of Ministries and The Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC), as well as Datareportal Website.

It was stated that 'the setbacks were more than the successes,' and that the pressure on Facebook and Twitter was mainly related to users' privacy and safety. On top of it came the hack of the account of the founder and chief executive of Twitter, Jack Dorsey, in addition to the investigation by the European Union because of noncompliance with General D*ata Protection Regulation* (GDPR). On the other hand, the technical successes provided more control to the users in protecting their tweets and personal data. Facebook began the year with the $5 billion fine (Cambridge Analytica scandal), in addition to its conflict with Apple that accused the platform to exploit a loophole in privacy settings to publish an application that provided it with users' data and the access to IPhone camera. This perspective would consider 'ads,' not content, as the threat.

Facebook, for instance, is described as facilitating the process for anyone who has an account and have a credit card to create a general or politically-motivated advertisement directing to specific country or number of countries, and determine the budget, then the advertisement will instantly be available for distribution, and Facebook would guarantee it reaches to the targeted category of users. And, if the advertisement is directed to local audience, this would be much easier for Facebook to deliver it to the exact targeted user with the desired ideology or political attitude; from five categories: liberal, extremely liberal, moderate, conservative, and extremely conservative.

This discussion was based and backed with translated western, mainly European and American, reports, studies, analysis, and incidents reflecting clearly distrust in tech companies and in favor of regulation. For instance, a translated excerpt from a New York Times report

explained the massive increase in advertising via Facebook stating that those advertisers not only have huge audience, but also can categories them according to their goals. 'Dark advertising'; is a type of advertising that doesn't appear except for the targeted audience, and this was claimed to be what the propaganda for Trump depended on to direct different messages to potential voters, especially attracting Black African American quoting Hilary Clinton describing African-American Youth back in 1996 as: superpredators. The report concluded that Facebook and Google are the ones to be blamed for fake news.

Another perspective (2018) was based on translating the key results in a global 'study' conducted in the UK and published on the Times, stating that Facebook and Twitter, specifically, among other social media platforms '*are not doing enough*' to stop and combat fake-news, illegal usage, and what was called electronic thuggery, corrupted thoughts, and the public distrust in information spread on these platforms.

It also stated that 64% of the respondents (without mentioning the total number of the sample and their demographic characteristics) are strongly endorsing laws and legislations regulating these platforms, as well as, for these platforms to be liable regarding the content published on their spaces. The study applied Edelman Trust Barometers showing that the trust in mainstream media has increased with 13% than last year.

Describing the results to be surprising, the report continues to summarize the key results: 10% of young people (without specific age range) left Facebook despite, what is described as, the huge effort exerted by the network to attract more users all over the world. The reason behind this deterioration in trust, according to the Times interpretation, is that users realized that such platforms are spreading fake news and have negative effect on mental health, especially the '*predominantly young users*.' (Delcker, 2023) At the end of the report, the reporter mentioned

the previous announcement from Facebook (and Twitter) that thousands of the accounts were managed by Russian actors to impact the American presidential elections in 2016.

The American presidential election in 2016 is the repeatedly cited incident as a proof that social networking sites have negative effect on 'democracy.' But, a counter-argument stated that people make their decisions before reading the news, and if they had not found fake news on Facebook, they would have exposed to it somewhere else. It is the change in demand on fake and biased news that is required; otherwise, the features of filtering will do little if any change. This argument is recommending that what America needs is 'fixing the Educational system so as to build enlightened voters.'

Recent media coverage (2022), technical sections, continues tackling the issues of features (Twitter list function, for instance, allowing Trolls; targeting users with abuse and harassment via adding them to malicious lists even under innocuous titles/names or outwardly hateful ones) within the social media platforms that allow for abuses, and claiming that, although, the platforms receive complaints from its users, these platforms (Twitter announced its awareness of this issue) haven't done much to stop it, adding that users still find compelling reasons to stay on these platforms. This is affecting their social media experience, however.

'Trolls' are presented as a problem caused by 'technical reason;' specifically, one of Twitter features is used to swarm others with abuse, and again, the platform was described, by Trolls targets, as not doing much to stop it. The actions taken by the harmed users are self-developed strategies that fit the level and intensity of the abuse/harassment: ignoring them, responding with kindness, blocking the accounts (preventing them from reaching their account) that created the abusive list, get off of the list, or to mute the abuse, the user might find out the

reason behind this hateful reaction, and decide to delete this specific content entirely as the most effective step.

Users expressed that the official Help page might not be helpful and they depend on friend's advice or have 'cobbled together' solutions from the Internet. - Many users said they've moderated their voices on Twitter to stay out of abuser's line of sight. Several users said that some of the pure enjoyment of Twitter has been replaced by hate in recent years. Some have begun to temper their speech on Twitter — using fewer f-bombs and trying to get their points across with a more empathetic tone. Sometimes, they just don't post at all.

But, for some, the only effective way to tune out the harassment as it block the messages before they even reach their targeted user, was turning to technological tools; An app called 'Block Together' is "intended to help cope with harassment and abuse on Twitter" and uses lists toward that end. Users can share the lists of accounts they block so that others can subscribe and block those accounts from their own profiles. The Google Chrome plugin 'Twitter Block Chain' similarly lets users block all of the people following a particular account.

These formal lists, however, much easier in dealing with in comparison to what users call the informal lists; by this they refer to harassers tagging several handles in a tweet. This makes it harder for targeted users to remove their names without having the platform removing the tweet entirely. One more effective way to ward off abuse was to be vocal regarding the abuse and expose it to your huge number of followers and get the attention of the company/platform. But, this doesn't work with smaller number of followers, though.

Users said that platforms didn't effectively enforce their own terms. Twitter's own policies say users "may not engage in the targeted harassment of someone, or incite other people to do so. We consider abusive behavior an attempt to harass, intimidate, or silence someone

else's voice." The company has tried to advance its ability to detect unhealthy or unsafe communication on its platform, like through a recent acquisition of an AI startup!

Other analysts would blame, not features, but Users themselves. Extremists are very powerful on social media; referring to what is called *Facebook Superuser-Supremacy*. This means that 'most public activity on the platform comes from a tiny, hyperactive group of abusive users. Facebook relies on them to decide what everyone sees.'

In Egypt, the space for formal and informal politics was shrinking. Since 2013, influential social media activists opposing his regime, mainly by the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), have been conducting a propaganda characterized by highlighting Egypt's social and economic ills, addressing the human rights situation in Egypt, spreading Fakenews, and calls to continue the revolution until the change of government. The Egyptian regime is following this phenomenon with concern and is taking various measures to curb it. However, it seems that the road to minimization is still long. On social media there are dozens of Egyptian influencers identified with the MB opposition to the current regime. Over the years, they have been able to recruit between several hundred thousand and millions of followers thanks to the quality of the videos, the sharp messages they distribute and the various platforms they use, especially YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. It is not for nothing that the Egyptian publicist Ibrahim 'Issa called the MB "geniuses and wizards" when it comes to the use of social media in order to incite the masses against the state. (Barak, M, 2022)

In 2015, headlines questioned [Egyptian] Ministry of Interior 'buying surveillance equipments.' It was a scandal and it forced the official bodies to deny it after the website BuzzFeed News a detailed report about the Egyptian-American agreement. The media coverage referred to 2008 'emergency room' that the Egyptian government formed and it included

representatives for the ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Telecommunication and the General Intelligence and the three Internet Service Providers at the time, and this is the committee that was responsible for Internet shutdown decision on the 28th of January. The names of international Tech companies and claims about 'experiments' that allowed a third party to disclose personal messages and send and receive through identity theft. The report questioned the effectiveness of these procedures and the role played by each one in this process.

Tech Companies Response

The main incentives currently prompting social media companies to address political disinformation and other harmful content include: (1) a sense of social obligation, which too often has been overridden by their business models and drive for growth, and (2) the threat of legislation and other regulation, which to date has not been sufficiently plausible to induce the companies to make meaningful changes.

The focal point was the companies' control over their users' data. It is stated that social media companies keep their users data private and no advertiser can have access to it, however, the company can access its users; data and direct the ad according to the advertisers goals. These platforms have detailed description for the users favorites based on each and every click, comment, watching, reading, following, and friendship networks.

Tech companies proved able to interfere and control content; it is repeatedly referred to the example of Twitter being forced to comply with Germany's strict laws, and managed to block hate symbols like the swastika. Users have set their location to Germany on Twitter to avoid pro-Nazi or neo-Nazi content. But, it worth mentioning that one of the reasons Elon Musk announced he bought Twitter for is 'mitigating content-monitoring rules.'

In general, social networking platforms and applications would state that criticism reflect that those criticizing them 'don't understand' the technical process behind self-regulation. In 2017, Twitter safety account shared that users would no longer be bothered with notifications when they've been added to lists. Two hours later, it reversed the decision, calling it a "misstep" after users responded with outrage and concern that they would no longer be able to keep tabs on the harmful lists to which they were added.

Twitter's spokesperson defended the platform and described the situation saying: "while we recognize that there is more work that can be done to make lists healthier, this was a first step (a reaction to people's feedback) and we continue to improve our service, rules and tools to keep people safe every day."

The rapid ascent of the Chinese video-streaming app TikTok has alarmed lawmakers and privacy watchdogs around the world. The question asked was "what are they worried about?" In 2018, ByteDance launched TikTok, which is modeled after its Chinese app Douyin, on the global market. In September 2021, the platform announced it had reached a billion active monthly users — a milestone that it took Facebook over eight years to reach. Within a few years, it rose from a niche app for lip-synching kids to one of the world's leading social media platforms, which users increasingly turn to for 'running search queries or following the news.'

As users increasingly use the app as a source of news — with major media outlets including DW posting regularly on the platform — critics warn that its powerful algorithm could be abused to deliberately spread disinformation. TikTok's spokeswoman rejected the accusations, arguing that the platform was striving "to proactively limit the spread of misleading information." She pointed to partnerships with fact-checking organizations and a new initiative

that now alerts users when videos are uploaded by "accounts run by entities whose editorial output or decision-making process is subject to control or influence by a government."

Reports stated that two companies asserted their efforts to prevent dark ads referring to the companies' effectiveness through algorithm in blocking the annoying content. Facebook announced focusing on increasing the content related to the user's close social circle in comparison to the content published in media accounts, in addition to the company's team in detecting fake stories.

In addition, activists would hire others to help them secure their online accounts, and few mentioned that they now are trying to provide a barrier between the harassers and her voice by posting on places like Patreon that require users to pay a small fee to access her work. Users recognize a bot or a hostile account through few criteria: an account that is less than two months old and they don't have any content, and also if it added the user to a list in which friends sharing certain characteristics are included: color, ideology, gender,… In addition, although, it is normal to have people who disagree with you on social media, it is when it is clear that it's a 'proliferation' and 'they are saying the same thing even if it is in different ways,' and they are targeting 'specific content.'

The Future Trends

"The state is committed to developing a comprehensive plan to eradicate alphabetical and digital illiteracy among citizens of all ages, and it is committed to developing implementation mechanisms with the participation of civil society institutions within a specific time plan."
(Article [25], the Egyptian Constitution, 2014)

In 2019, according the Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, the percentage of Internet users among Youth was 62%, and Facebook and Twitter were the two most important platforms; as 97.7% of Internet users used these two platforms. Number of Egyptian tweets on Twitter was 2.9 million representing 18% of all the tweets of the Arab region

that reached 27.4 million per day. The report stated that the number of Facebook and Twitter users is 45.5 million and 7.5 million, respectively.

Number of mobile devices and tablets and the increase in screen-time (specially in underdeveloped countries) across all social and economic classes in society globally, dependency on social media platforms for searching for information and news as well as communication, are the major indicators for predicting the future of social networking sites importance, impact, and relationship with national security. In Egypt, the development in the infrastructure has helped in this increase, in addition, the statistics are referring to the increase in mobile devices usage and this is within the framework of the country's plan 2030 in which one of the goals is to implement a digital transformation in all of the country's institutions and dealings.

Social networking sites will continue playing its rule as the fifth state. Moore's law, prediction made by American engineer Gordon Moore in 1965 that the number of transistors per silicon chip doubles every year. In 1975, as the rate of growth began to slow, Moore revised his time frame to two years. His revised law was a bit pessimistic; over roughly 50 years from 1961, the number of transistors doubled approximately every 18 months.

The question of the future within the Litany layer is based upon general observations related mainly to: the published and shared content, providing a healthy environment for communication, the targeted users, freedom, the new features and services, competition, and the changes in the platforms' business model. The basic characteristics are: copying features, voice and audio are to replace text, new state-owned platforms, and the core aspect in competition would be the easy usage and the ability for users to multitask. Finally, both 'users' and 'programmers' are considered the ones within their hands the future paths of social networking platforms.

The effectiveness of social networking platforms is that they are providing their services for free and they provide similar features and functions. (March 2014) New social networking sites/platforms and applications are developed, created, and added to the market. The focus is becoming more and more on specialization in the target audience/users and the content or social class, and some are not for free any more. In addition to the competitors to the mainstream big tech companies, they are the type of networks targeting a niche category of audience (apple devices only, for instance), or like-minded individuals or those sharing common goals (LinkedIn, Investmates), and applications that require payments to register. There are also the applications adopting the business model allowing their users to be partners and own shares.

The examples include: Ello; '*the Creators Network*;' a global community of artists dedicated to creative excellence, '*built by artists, for artists*' as an ad-free platform. In 2015, Discord, began as a network for game lovers and developers, and gradually became open to the general public and in 2021 it has 100 million users. Other examples to audio applications: Wafy, Spoon, Spotify Green room.

Apparently, Clubhouse is not the first audio app, but it appeared during the quarantine (COVID-19). The advantages include that users don't need to scroll continuously or to look to the screen and always interact; they can participate as speakers or listeners while doing some other activities. Then, this feature was copied by the mainstream social networks; Facebook Live Audio Rooms, Twitter Spaces. Copying the competitors is not new; Instagram copied 'story' from Snapchat, reels from TikTok, Rooms from Zoom.

The '*free now and forever'* new platform GlobAllShare; *'the real social network.'* It was widely referred to in media tech news stories translating English reports mentioning that it shall

become a very strong competitor to the main stream social networking platforms. However, users began sharing their experience trying to register and it turned out that it is just a scam:

"*It appears that Globallshare is indeed a SCAM! I have paid my $19.99 admin fee and indeed received the certificate - electronically - for my 206 shares. Now it comes to trading them. Whenever a date is reached to be able to trade the shares - which you can only do through their website if it ever gets to that point - another date is given without reason. They have a clock on the site that just resets as does the 'schedule'. Originally, these were due for 'trading' in December 2014 and now the latest date given is April 2015. Come on Globallshare! Give us some answers!"* (Richard Crowhurst, 2016)

Netropolitan is described as '*Facebook For Rich People*.' It was founded by an orchestra conductor in Minneapolis who says he wanted a place to '*talk about the finer things in life without backlash*.' It'll cost a new user $9,000 to set up a profile. After that, it will cost them a mere $3,000 a year for membership.

Shaping the future of social networks, an EU-funded HELIOS (2022) project is laying the foundations for a new social network vision grounded on transparency, trust and verification. The project argues that current social networks role is limited to distribution channels for content; 'some of the online applications fail to address the complexity of social structures whereby users change roles frequently from one network to another in several independent but interconnected contexts.' HELIOS developed a mobile peer-to-peer decentralized privacy-by-design social media platform, upon which developers can build social media services independently from any ecosystem, in contrast to more common federated paradigm does not rely on fixed servers storing data that people share. HELIOS has also studied and implemented novel features for social media, such as contextual communications, information overload control, trust and rewarding. "*Throughout the project, the development of HELIOS was inspired by real-life organic networking, taking into account contextual, spatial and temporal aspects of human communications.*"

In general, the current scene of social networking sites and applications is changing extremely quickly. Techno experts discuss six key expectations and recommendations for a better future: (1) you won't be able to avoid live videos. (2) Snap Chat will most probably gain more users after huge investments developing the application to become mature and attract users, and it could replace Twitter (3) More and more users prefer personal chatting and connection; Facebook messenger, Whatsapp, for instance. (4) You will read a lot those two letters VR that stand for Virtual Reality, and most probably everyone will buy the glasses of the virtual reality as they will become a trend, and it will have tremendous impact on the future usage of social networking sites in interacting with everything in real life through them. (5) The future is going toward voice-chatting. (6) There should be a dependency on time spent reading. Interacting with the post instead of depending on superficial criteria such as 'clicks' and limiting the content that can be shared daily so as to decrease what is described as chaos, and to force the users to reconsider their posts before sharing. In addition, applying different models for subscription, through payment, would filter the users and allow the platforms to target specific categories of users.

If this business model continues, then the current platforms are threatened with shutting down. In addition, the Facebook was attractive at its early days because it represented a platform for like-minded people and those who are already in your social circles. But this huge size and is different and not as much attractive as the old version. With 500 million users, TikTok is the first competitor now attracting mainly Generation Z; it blurs the line between watching and creating.

There are complementary and sometimes contradictory visions regarding how the Metaverse will look like. It requires cooperation; as no one company will own it or manage it. It will change how we define 'reality, 'truth,' and human interactions. It is a space that will

combine all the other virtual spaces and network. This connection could depend on Blockchain. It belongs to the Web 0.3; the Semantic Web. The term was mentioned for the first time in 1992 by the writer Neal Stephenson in his novel Snow Crash.

There are, in parallel, changes and advancement within the current mainstream social networking platforms. Elon Musk announced that Twitter will soon publish the details of how its tweet recommendation algorithm/s work, which will provide new insight into which tweets gain traction, how to maximize tweet reach through engagement, and which specific elements Twitter's system's looking to incentivize in the app. This is a 'risky approach' and a step has never been taken by any other tech company; their argument is that this will open the door for 'spammers and scammers to cheat the process.' But, Elon expressed his belief that transparency, in as many aspects as possible, is key to winning user trust, and making Twitter the source of truth, and a more viable, valuable platform for all users.

Twitter has been attracting a lot of attention since Elon Musk ownership of the platform. Although many voices would claim that hundreds are leaving to Madiston, the platform has witnessed constant changes made by Musk and shared directly through his official account. There has been increase in the number of users as new subscribers joined after the paid blue tick decision.

This would be provided to subscribers with verified phone numbers and allow them to create longer tweets, replies, and quote tweets up 4,000 characters long, be able to edit Tweet up to 5 times within 30 minutes, the ability to use NFT profile pictures, as well as, 1080p (Full HD) video uploads.

"*Given the modern AI can solve any 'prove you're not a robot' tests, it's now trivial to spin up 100k human-like bots for less than a penny per account. Paid verification increases bot cost by approximately 10,000% and makes it much easier to identify bots by phone and CC clustering. Obvious conclusion: paid account social media will be the only social media that matters*." (Elon Musk, March 27, 2023)

Recently, reports mentioned that the next stage for 'Twitter 2.0' includes a name change for the app, with Twitter Inc. now officially no more, with the company being rolled into another corporate entity called 'X Corp.' This links back to Musk's vision for an 'everything app' that provides similar, all-encompassing functionality to how WeChat has become a key utility in China. (Andrew Hutchinson, April 2023)

TikTok, meanwhile, was facing restrictions in the US, as the White House considers a full ban of the app on national security grounds. As Congress prepares for a hearing with the company's CEO, parallel conversations are taking place across the globe. (Access Now, 2023) The application, consequently, has been taking steps to gain the advertisers support in their struggle. The conversation, however, continues to question whether or not such regulations should extend to regular users. . (Andrew Hutchinson, 2023)

TikTok bans, are describes as 'short-sighted solutions to the wrong problem.' Policy analyst and organizations considered with digital rights assert that 'none of these crackdowns would dramatically enhance the privacy of people using the app; on the contrary, they would violate users' rights to express themselves online.' The policy recommendations call lawmakers to prioritize principles of data minimization, transparency, and accountability; to be focused on: passing strong federal data protection legislation. (Willmary Escoto, 2023)

The hearing, that could decide the future of the app, was described in tech-reports as '[the] regular smattering of accusations framed as questions, and vague queries that seemed to misunderstand how the internet itself works.' And, the CEO, Shou Zi Chew with carefully worded answers focused mainly on dispelling the US regulatory concern of the potential of American user data being shared with the Chinese Government. (Andrew Hutchinson, 2023)

The report referred to what has been tweeted by the official account of TikTok (News and Updates Team) on Twitter: 'In his opening testimony to the House Energy and Commerce

Committee, our CEO, shares our commitments to protect more than 150 million Americans on TikTok. We will firewall protected U.S. user data from unauthorized foreign access. We will keep safety, particularly for teenagers, a top priority. TikTok will remain a platform for free expression and will not be manipulated by any government. We will be transparent and give access to third-party independent monitors, to remain accountable for our commitments.'

First Layer Scenario: The 'Frenemy'

The output of the analysis in this layer supports the description of Sohail Inayatullah; '[it is] the narrowest going-no-where arguments. Criticizing has been always easier than creating. [In this layer], each side speaks a different language (technology versus ideology, for instance), and there is very little and even confusing evidence on any of the claims mentioned. It is considered as a one-way communication that is not enough to bring a meaningful and fruitful output.

Accordingly, a concentration on this layer would only lead to one way for solutions; innovating alternative applications that would meet the ideal recommendations required from the current corporations. In addition, Litany interventions lead to short term solutions, easy to grasp, packed with data.

This can be put into context under two major categories: (1) the key questions/arguments, and (2) key statements and solutions. The most important questions directing the conversation would be: Are laws issued for punishment? How social networking sites are related to lack of trust in mainstream professional Mass Media? What are the definitions of: Misinformation, hate Speech, Fake News, and Political/Societal Polarization, Threats to the Egyptian Family values, and Egyptian/Arab Identity? Is the world developing a racist AI? Do we take technology seriously in our world?

"*Egypt's Sisi ratifies law to clamp down on social media.*" "*The Brotherhood is Magicians in Using Social Media to Incite against the State.*" (2018) "*Sisi denies social media claims in Youth Conference.*" (Egypt Today, 2019) "*Why is al-Sisi at war with social media?*" "*The regime's strong grip had a positive effect on achieving the accomplishments.*" (2021) "*The War on Public Consciousness," "The Brotherhood is Developing a 'War of Rumors'… and*

'Egypt is Responding strongly.' (Sky News Arabia, 2022) "*How do the Brotherhood and their electronic committees use social media platforms to spread lies, stir up strife and incite public opinion?''* (AlMarsad AlMasry, the Egyptian Center for Strategic Studies, 2022)

In Egypt, the videos of the contractor *Muhmmad Ali* and the calls for protest in September 2019 revealed a shift in how the regime is dealing with opponent messages; Mubarak has been very famous with his word: "*Let them have fun.*" While in 2019, against the advice given by the security institutions, the president responded in an official conference to the claims: "*Yes, we are building [presidential] Palace*s."

During and After COP27, there were intense discussions around many issues related mainly to the public sphere; *'freedom without fear of revenge.'* The international pressure was met with silence and no response from Egyptian authorities or with justifying that the situation in *'Egypt is different.'*

In general, the Litany layer revealed that the key factors are as follows:

- Controlling and regulating the online content.
- Preparing and publishing a black list of users/groups/pages/any source spreading rumors.
- Positive pressure by civil coalitions is necessary for opening the public space; freedom for all suppressed categories, including digital freedoms and unblocking the websites.

In this scenario, social networking sites are to continue as a constantly evolving versatile tool that suits an increasing number of users, and mainly suits the future generations. A tool that successes to adapt to any changes and needs. However, there are going to be a growing sense of a careful use, especially among the older generation, regarding concerns related to privacy, security, and fake news.

It is the 'friend-enemy' platforms that are able to both empower the unheard, marginalized, and vulnerable groups to express themselves and to share information, mobilize supporters, and raise awareness about important issues, but also are used to spread

propaganda, misinformation, and hate speech that may drive users to 'seek out alternative platforms' or 'adopt new strategies' for organizing and mobilizing.

Each side among the numerous stakeholders will perceive these platforms according to their experience. It shall not be seen as either an ally or a foe to any of them; instead, as mere tools that facilitate and support to some extent any exerted efforts in different directions.

Globally, social networking sites are described as the early days of invention of Printing Press. History witnessed man versus machine struggle, and in the future it will be witnessing the struggle between real and virtual life that will represent the space for achieving man's dreams and aspirations with the least cost and without confrontation with traditions, ethical, security and legal barriers.

Overcoming the local and joining the global conversation; dealing with the internal issues in a sufficient manner would allow Egypt to take part in global conversations regarding the future of Internet, social media platforms, and AI; Arabs need to be asking the question of 'who is intellectually nurturing the future AI?' and to cope up with the international efforts to regulate and shape and form the cross-cultural online public sphere.

"The biggest plot twist occurred by the end of 2022 is that people were working and thought that when Artificial Intelligence takes its space, it will begin with the physical jobs, or the bottom of career ladder; but what happened is that it began with the top of the pyramid itself; it started to take a space in a real revolution that we shall not recognize until the end of this year." (Mostafa Gaber, February 23, 2023)

Also, it is becoming a necessity that social networking sites should not be studied merely as a competitor to traditional media, but mainly as a separate communication phenomena. Researchers expect that *computing power will double by 8 thousands* in 2026.

The focal points in media coverage have been the social impacts on family versus individual and isolation, social alienation, egotism and selfishness. The Litany analysis requires further investigation regarding the changes expected in the cultural, social, and economic aspects of the offline and the online space.

The phenomenon such as *electronic immigration*; companies can now outsource skilled labor across borders opening the floodgates to *virtual citizenship,* especially with theoretical debates on the future of citizenship referring to new concepts such as: Global Citizenship, Transnational Citizenship, and Postnational Citizenship.

Other scholars argue that social isolation, for instance, is not linked only to social networking sites and it is a well-known concept in studies of sociology years ago, but social networking site provided the individuals with the opportunity to rebel and look for alternative away from the local community. Other important questions related to the future varied and range from *Addiction* till the questions of '*Electronic Colonialism*.'

Social networking sites do not make change; they only reflect and facilitate it. However, it is worth mentioning that the impact of social networking sites in making social and political change within the Arab world is much larger than in American and European communities; as they are urgently needed since there are very little, if any, freedoms and partisan opposition.

5.2 SYSTEMIC/SOCIAL CAUSES

The data analysis in the second layer; Systemic Causes, *links* the individual with society; it maps the role of the state with other actors and interests. The analysis is conducted, in terms of decades, mainly within the ***editorials* and academic *literature*** spotting social, technological, economic, cultural, environmental, political, and historical interacting *drivers* and *factors* affecting the issue. It *questions* the language trends, forces, flows, and processes in government policies, sociocultural context, ideologies, and technical aspects. The analysis aims at

***interpreting* the Litany results** through answering the questions of: What's *creating* the situation? What *factors* are influencing the issue? Who is *involved*? What are the underlying *causes*?

This layer is more practical in that it reveals the different stakeholders responsible for the problems and the solutions, as well. Now, the conversation is more reasonable; as more evidence is required so as to get a response from the other actors. Reports, statistics, research, and policy papers are all analyzing the issue from different perspective. The solution here is a collective effort. Of course, the weights of the actors are not equal, however, no one actor can change the situation without dialogue and a shared responsibility and a change in the current procedures and rules. Systemic solutions seek to intervene by making the system more efficient, smarter, ensuring that all parts of the system are seamlessly connected. Governmental policies linked to partnership with the private sector are also resulted from the analysis.

In this layer, Media practitioner and academics focus on ethics of social media (the quality of the public sphere input and output, not only freedom of expression and/or the developments in the technological tools. If the modern society has a structural level and an action level, then communication would be in the action level, but the civil sphere is in the structure level. A public sphere is a prerequisite for communication; hindering the establishment of an effective and functioning civil sphere means the regime is not prioritizing 'communication.'

The key actors in this layer are: the State/Political Regime, the Market, Civil Society and Independent Media, and Technology represented as the Internet, Social Media, Satellite, Telecommunication, digital media. The key actors are: companies providing the technical solutions, governments deciding the legal framework, and users themselves. The solutions recommended are technical and legal alongside raising the social awareness.

When the term 'social networking sites' is used, there was a tendency to differentiate between the varied platforms; mainly Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. In addition, there was an attempt to make 'values' and 'culture' the means and the goals for returning social balance for any society. In addition, social networking sites were considered as a '*process of negotiation around meaning.*' The Twitter sphere, for instance, is described as a dynamic space consisting of a multitude of small clusters that function largely independently and in a decentralized fashion. [In addition,] there is much more of a plurality of opinions on Twitter than was ever possible in the traditional public sphere. (Bukhabzah, 2016; Yang, Quan-Haase and Rannenberg, 2017; Bumadian, 2019)

The term social media, however, brings up the question if not all media are in one respect or another social. This depends on how one defines the social. As a consequence, one needs social theory in order to understand what is social about social media. Jean Burgess and Joshua Green (2009) argue that YouTube is a *cultural public sphere* because "it is an enabler of encounters with cultural differences and the development of political 'listening' across belief systems and identities." (Fuchs, 2014)

Social networking sites were described as a major factor changing the 'geometry' of the public sphere. This referred mainly to the roles of 'opinion leaders,' 'gatekeepers,' and persons interacting with real identities instead of anonymity/nicknames. The 'public' in public sphere was describing the interests of the participants and the motives behind discussions; differentiating between a public sphere and any other type of tribal spaces that do not amount to a public sphere. Consequently, the virtual public sphere has contributed in a way or another in creating a reality in which the barrier of obfuscation and/or monopoly of information have been broken. (Bukhabzah, 2016; Bumadian, 2019)

The types of the topic discussed in social media are described as 'disappointing'; there was a separation between the people and their reality reflected; 'we are changing the signs but it is the same road.' The majority of online discussions are mere '*distractions or balloons; these are issues that are so provocative that the users can't resist taking part in*.' (@ElGabarty, 2022) In addition, voices are calling for battling ideas, questions, and thoughts, instead of persons of groups. This would drift the discussion from its focal point. This would make the conversation defensive.

Agustin *Goenaga (2022) identifies three normative functions that public spheres are expected to perform in representative democracies: they provide voice to alternative perspectives, they empower citizens to criticize political authorities and they disseminate information on matters of public interest. The article titled "Who cares about the Public Sphere" offers the first empirical and cross-national analysis of citizens' views about the democratic importance of the public sphere. The author argues that citizens develop differentiated views about the importance of these democratic functions, depending on (1) their ability to influence political decisions through public debate, and (2) the extent to which voice, critique and information address democratic problems they particularly care about.*
The function of the public sphere is not to produce a common will but to facilitate the pluralist exchange of opinion, arguments, claims, and demands about collective problems or salient concerns that then inform accountability and responsiveness. If echo chambers created a fractured and unconnected information mosaic, it would be impossible to have shared "topics" of conversation. But there is growing evidence that we are not in a '*centrifugal spin'* where our information sources are ever more isolated from each other.

A forceful example that we still share topics of conversation via social media can be seen in the recent George Floyd protests in the United States. The protest movement and subsequent public debate was sparked by the sharing of videos and reports of the events that took place on May 25, 2020, on a street in Minneapolis. There is no debate about what happened or "that" it happened; there is debate about what it means and what we should do about it. Here, we have a shared topic that can be the focus of collective (heated, partisan, and polarized for sure) public debate about "what is to be done?"

Currently, social media companies do not have 'liability' for the content on their sites; they do not consider themselves as publishers, responsible for reviewing and editing everything that others post on their sites, but, the development in technology encouraged policy makers to call the platforms for 'taking responsibility' for 'illegal material' that appear on their platforms.

The regulatory frameworks treat social media companies as 'hosts' of online content, the EU E-Commerce Directive (2000), as an example. These are described as 'out of date' legislations. The argument went further and explained that Facebook, Twitter and Google are not simply platforms for the content that others post; they play a role in shaping what users see.

Recent research focuses more on the technical aspects; the features, ethics, and legal frameworks, and their social implications; the Live broadcasting, for instance. The examples were mainly from Western countries. There were incidents related to entertainment, intellectual property rights in live streaming during concerts and sport events, privacy of kids, and violence. Although, the focus has been intensely on Facebook and Twitter, voices now are including YouTube as one of the platforms through which 'hate speech' and 'extremism; find their way to millions of viewers.

Twitter circles, that allow for limiting the Tweet views to a certain list of followers, was a feature that criticized by most of the users. It was considered irrelevant to the nature of Twitter as a platform encouraging diversity in opinions and discussions among different views in a logic manner. Twitter has been more effective in persuasion that other platforms according to the users feedback. Twitter spaces, stopped recently, were similar to the idea of Clubhouse application but they were more popular as they are easier to access and no prior conditions required.

There are many voices criticizing social networking sites among those who are benefitting from them; and the frenemy relationship, the boredom for these platforms, it is

becoming clear day after day, that new platforms are needed, however these new platforms to be effective and attract users, they can't simply copy the established platforms, nor should they neglect the criticizes to the current platforms; Mastodon as an example. *'Bankruptcy in innovation is dangerous for the Tech companies' future.' (@Zakovich, 2022)*

The technical aspect dominated the way social networking sites are described and analyzed. The term 'New Media' as a package was seen as a leading factor to a 'revolution' in 'communication' as it produced a global audiovisual and textual network of communication with which users interact electronically. The ideal Habermsian Public sphere was applied requiring a theoretical ethical/moral dimension, on one hand, and logical/rational dialogue on the other. It ended the differentiation between what is public and private, what is mass and personal. There was an agreement upon describing the 'new media' as a democratic public virtual sphere that enabled citizens to interact, discuss, and contribute to enriching the conversation for all. It formed virtual communities that overcame the geographical borders and partially eliminated all forms of pressure; as there is still surveillance to combat callings for any type of violence. (Bukhabzah, 2016; Bumadian, 2019)

The introduction of new media into the Arab world has affected many areas including the development of codes of ethics to guide communication work. The Arab world became a repeatedly referred to example to understand social media platforms within a changing ecosystem of communication and mass media, and, specifically in Egypt, applying media governance frameworks to assess the effect of ethical usage on the attitude of the users toward Facebook after the 25th of January revolution.

Social Networking Sites were also seen as an extension to the traditional mass media in terms of its role in forming and directing the attitudes and behaviors. Traditional theoretical frameworks were tested and applied to the new context; the ethics of online discussion (Al-

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Kidwany, 2011), how to make use of these platforms in publicity to the state national projects (Abd-Alaziz, 2017) and promoting citizenship (Abd-Alhady, 2021)

All Arab media charters and codes of ethics include references to freedom of expression and speech. They also incorporate provisions calling for penal actions against violation of religious, moral and security interests. Although those codes draw primarily on Arab-Islamic norms of morality, they seem also to be in tune with Western ethical orientations. Increasing liberalization and political democratization in 2011 seems to have been brought to bear on Islamic ethical components of Arab media work as journalists push for more Western-style freedom of information that may be incompatible with more restrictive, Islamic views of media work. (Muhammad Ayish, 2003)

The relentless growth of social media platforms in Africa has provided the means of resistance, self-expression, and national self-fashioning for the continent's restlessly energetic and contagiously creative youth. This has provided a profound challenge to the African "gatekeeper state", which has often responded with strategies to constrict and constrain the rhetorical luxuriance of the social media and digital sphere; from censorship, often via antisocial media laws, or less overt tactics such as state cyber-surveillance, spyware attacks on social media activists, to the artful deployment of the rhetoric of "fake news" as a smokescreen to muzzle critical voices.' (Farooq Kperogi, 2022)

The focal point of strength in 'new media' was its features and developments providing an effective, collective, decentralized, and interactive virtual public sphere with an accelerated horizontal-proliferation. The major criteria mentioned were: access for all, participation, gathering, empowering ordinary citizens [in contrast to experts and elites domination]; independence and ownership of tools of expression, publishing, even the mere existence of

specifically marginalized and vulnerable categories, interaction, and sharing of problems, complaints, and issues of interest, alongside spreading the culture of openness toward the 'other.'

It formed a context not only related to 'abundance of information' but 'generalizing the ability to speak' among individuals. The advantages addressed include: easiness in use, self-expression, sharing and exchanging emotions, offering new ways of forming society, access to data, down-top activities, and reorganization of the geography of the internet with the introduction of the 'global persona' of people aiming at peaceful coexistence, moral communication, and civilized dialogue. (Bukhabzah, 2016; Bumadian, 2019)

Social media structure, a multi-step horizontal flow of forwarding, endorsement and authorship of messages, facilitate the engagement with the content in terms of the social context not its source or credibility. This makes it more difficult to distinguish the original author than in the case of the centrally distributed mass media messages; 'to a citizen reading a social media feed on a mobile device, a headline from the BBC that has passed through other citizens, gathering likes or comments, will not necessarily look different from a rumor originating in a discussion thread in Reddit.' (Bimber & Gil de Zúñiga, 2020)

'Advertisers go to influencers.' This is how media practitioners build bridges between social media and traditional mass media clarifying that the way out is for advertisers to get that numbers don't equal impact. Journalists in the future shall not become a content-creator, though. Journalism is storytelling; people understand through narratives not quantitative data; and there must be balance in narratives, and tell them the story behind the story; the audience is conscious and seeks explanations, especially during emergency periods/events.

AI transforms journalism into a game for the user/reader, and so far it is weak with Arabic language. Only 5% of Facebook discussions are based on traditional media content.

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The major recommendations: personalize the content, quality over quantity, set the priorities, professionalism, and the ability to adapt in a constant state of change, specialization, in addition to having your own technology/tools, to change the system from within, and becoming a life-long learner; mainly depending on self-education. Provide in-depth social investigative journalism, change the audience; involve youth and target younger audience, and address 'solutions.'

TikTok attracts mainly the age group 13-20 years old. In journalism, alike, it is about building a journalist (the professional content-creator). The problem with the audience is lack of awareness among citizens about their rights 'to know.' The right of access to information precedes freedom of expression. Freedom to access information is '*the blood running into the body of the society.*'

Access to information is not only providing information; but most importantly to make understandable. The crisis is we are not talking; and this is not limited to journalism, rather, we are part of the society and affect and are affected by the society's problems; academic freedoms, press laws and regulations in light of the international law,..ect. Blocking [websites] is an impossible procedure. For the West, the future requires that you give people hope and humor; to reach their mind and heart, engage the audience in a dialogue; this is a safer and a much better alternative to social media, in addition to local radio stations directing local communities. Others think that the future is for the national, since the *Arab youth appeared to have common concerns.*

'*Law is an arena for social and political conflict.*' Journalists believe that Facebook standards are new censorship. People do not trust traditional mass media. There is no competition; the audience differs between the online and the offline. There are issues would have never been discussed, addressed, or 'saw the light' without social networking sites; but when the

professional media publish about it, this grabs the attention of the official institutions. In addition, the problem with social media is '*trivialization of everything*.'

The future is digital, and just as the Radio returned in the form of Podcasts; the print newspapers will find its way to the future. 'Egyptian [journalists], as their countries the mother of the world, might not understand the problem for small nations that depend on the countries around it to breath.' "*Journalism requires democracy*."

Media ecosystem has changed. Advances in computing efficiency, data storage capacity and connectivity have enabled the rise of new internet business models that have brought societal benefits but also significant harms. In the absence of adequate self-regulation, the social media industry now requires sustained government oversight.

The literature recommends drafting a code of ethics for social media users. The major problems referred to are: violations of privacy and incitement. The reason behind this according to literature: the legal vacuum. The results described the situation as 'a moral collapse;' black and grey propaganda techniques; exaggeration, misinformation, and direct and indirect attack. The majority of the studies depend on content analysis to public pages representing different ideologies and political views, in addition to survey distributed among users. However, the literature is criticized for focusing on quantity over quality and neglecting the question regarding ethics of usage.

The literature, also, reflects a situation of 'governments versus the companies' related to the balance between restrictions and freedom of expression. Policy recommendations, mainly in the U.S. and the UK, are targeting state and the government interference to reduce disinformation, hate speech, incitement of violence, and other forms of harmful online content that threaten democratic institutions. It is viewed that 'company vows' to improve are no longer

sufficient; as it is time for smart, precise government intervention,' in addition to achieving this goal while fully respecting people's constitutional rights, as well as, promoting innovation that drives economic growth.

In other words, to address such ethical issues effectively, the companies making promises through their corporate social responsibility programs are not sufficient. Accordingly, the changes that are needed must be part of an enhanced regulatory and governance framework. However, the government's role is limited, in a practical sense. It is expensive to monitor and difficult to control or prevent; as governments do not have access to problematic content in a timely manner and lacks the technical means to take corrective actions — for example, by making adjustments to algorithms.

In the UK, policy makers are concerned about the widespread use of social media which is described as a significant factor accelerating and enabling intimidatory behavior and creating an intensely hostile online environment. Social media companies are described as 'too slow' in taking actions to protect their users. Users, meanwhile, have felt the need to disengage. In addition, the political parties share the responsibility; as they are called upon to show leadership in changing the tone of political debate. Consequently, it is recommended that both the companies and the government must proactively address this issue.

The power of social media in documenting moments with image and sound, instead of only narrating a verbal/written testimony, makes it hard to fake and it is much more impactful intellectually and mainly emotionally, specifically with social issues.

Reports mentioned the 'man of the train' incident; 'Egyptian Goerge Floyd.' The Minister of Transport apologized to the family of the two young men who had no other choice

but to jump from the train, and one of them died. The video showed intense arguments between the train riders and the supervisor who was accused of murder.

In addition, social media contributed in raising the awareness and continue following-up the case of the child who was killed with a stray bullet at a social celebration. The child's mother, who initiated a campaign for banning gunfire in social events, said that his child's right was brought back thanks to social media.

The Egyptian official position is dealing with social media networks as an extended space for mass media' a 'weapon.' Users, accordingly, are called upon to publish the' positive accomplishments' of the government, to fact-check any rumors, and pay attention to the image presented about Egypt to the international community.' According to Egyptian law, any social media account that reaches more than 5000 followers is considered a publishing media platform that is monitored and checked like any other media outlet/website.

The comments of parliament member were calling for the punishment of whoever uses social media platforms in order to destabilize the trust in official institutions and distortion of persons, promoting extremist and terrorist thoughts. The comments added that social media were used to discredit the fundamentals of the Egyptian state and inciting violence and terrorism which is incompatible with the positive role of social media, asserting that there should be specific rules separating opinions from inciting violence.

The facts on the ground are that Facebook and Twitter announced in October 2019 that they removed accounts from Egypt, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia in varied occasions as they used fake accounts to manage and promote groups to increase the interactions. These accounts, according to the reports, belonged to companies linked to government-owned institutions and organizations. There were no similar reports published proving acts targeting or threatening the state by ordinary users.

Answering the question of 'How' this happened; journalists explained the superiority of social networking sites is stemming from official bodies and traditional media not paying attention to the concerns of the public opinion; people resort to these platforms after the gates of press, Radio and Television were blocked, and these platforms are becoming a space that involve the largest number of players. (Abd Al-Baseer Hassan, 2019)

It is recommended to provide traditional media with greater freedom, in addition to international ethical declaration to deal with these platforms, as the situation is becoming out of control. Journalists agree in this point; that t combat the negative impacts of social media platforms, there is a need t open the public sphere; opening other windows of communication between people and press, then social media would become a secondary means.

'Political Reengineering of Egypt'

'Private life is inviolable, safeguarded and may not be infringed upon. Telegraph, postal, and electronic correspondence, telephone calls, and other forms of communication are inviolable, their confidentiality is guaranteed and they may only be confiscated examined or monitored by causal judicial order, for a limited period of time and in cases specified by the law. The state shall protect the rights of citizens to use all forms of public means of communication, which may not be arbitrarily disrupted, stopped or withheld from citizens, as regulated by the law.' (Article [57], The Egyptian Constitution, 2014)

The Internet was first introduced to Egypt in 1993 by the Egyptian Universities Network of the Supreme Council of Egyptian Universities, originally serving 2000 users. In 1994, in an effort to diffuse Internet usage among the broader society, the Cabinet of Egypt's Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC) in collaboration with the Regional Information Technology and Software Engineering Center (RITSEC) began providing free Internet access on a trial basis to public and private organizations.

The vertical and horizontal penetration of Internet was intending to minimize the digital gap from the outset. This was done with financial support from the government, in an attempt to

boost global exposure of the local market and pave the way for commercialization of Internet services. In 1996, the government replaced its free access policy with an open access policy: commercial Internet services were privatized, and a dozen Internet service providers (ISPs) began operation.

By December 2001, more than 600,000 Egyptians were online, but only 77,000 were paid subscribers, served by 51 private ISPs. Such limited growth was perceived as hindering the development of the knowledge society and creating a divide between the haves and the have-nots. Therefore, in January 2002, MCIT launched a new initiative providing free nation-wide Internet access to all citizens. This has contributed to the fast-growing use, with the percentage of the population online rising from 5.5% (3.9 million users) in 2004 to 15.6% (11.4 million users) in 2008 reflecting an annual rate of increase of about 16.7%.

During the last three decades, the government, private sector and the civil society collaborated through public private partnership programs to introduce information and communication technology (ICT) as solid platform that can support socioeconomic development in Egypt. The benefits of which had gradually started to be realized across different sectors and throughout Egypt's different governorates, leading to the transformation toward a people-centered government with decentralization of the decision-making process and people-empowerment. It is important to note that ICT played a key role in shaping up an empowered segment of the population.

'The past is an important element for understanding the future because the past affects the future, that is, the past is the memory of human experience. Without the past, we cannot figure out who we are, or where we want to go.' (Son, 2013) It is well-established that there is a wide array of online political discussion taking place in the Arab world, more than in other regions.

The Egyptian blogosphere is both dominant and, to a substantial degree, political: from the beginning it has been closely connected to activism. Yet, the precise effects of these online deliberations have been more difficult to establish. Furthermore, the studies discussed demonstrate clear differences in their methodological choices: whereas some studies are based on analysis of online material and/or other sources, others provide a broader overview using detached examples from various sources.

The 2010/11 uprisings, and in particular the Egyptian revolution, and the role of online platforms in them have provoked much debate, as well as academic attention. Foreign and Arab writings exaggerated the role and effect of social networking sites and assigned a huge role to it while it was only a tool; fast and widely spread spaces that facilitated the inevitable revolution. These platforms are only a reflection of the social and political reality. After it is remarkable success in mobilization for the 25th of January revolution, it became a space for intellectual and political conflicts and fights among the different views. It reflects a situation of fragmentation and scattering views among the key actors: those pro the regime and those who oppose it.

The role of social media was more of a catalyst, a driver, a communication tool that helped as a platform for societal change. The developments of January 2011 are partially the culmination of a society that has increasingly been using ICT in recent years, regardless of the different challenges it was facing.

Using an extensive data set covering several countries, Howard and Hussain argue that '[d]igital media had a causal role in the Arab Spring in that they provided the fundamental infrastructure for social movements and collective action.' Rane and Salem, also looking at several countries, argue that social media played an important part in diffusing ideas across

national boundaries and in facilitating communication among activists, but point out that success or failure largely depended on other factors.

The centrality of power users is reiterated by Faris, who conducted extensive fieldwork in Egypt both before and during the 2011 revolution. He argues that social media is key to gaining wider attention for any specific issue through links between power users and journalists. Several studies agree that online platforms did play an important part during the uprisings, particularly due to their ability to connect people, to enable mobilization, and to document the situation and connect with the outside world. Eaton argues that 'while it may appear logical, even obvious, to suggest that WAAKS [*We are all Khalid Said*] increased the likelihood of its members participating in the demonstrations, there remains a lack of concrete evidence.'

Similarly, in their study of the Egyptian uprising, Eltantawy and Wiest make use of resource mobilization theory, arguing that '[s]ocial media introduced a novel resource that provided swiftness in receiving and disseminating information; helped to build and strengthen ties among activists, and increased interaction among protesters and between protesters and the rest of the world.'

In another case study of the Egyptian revolution, Khamis and Vaughn argue that cyber-activism played a crucial role in providing forums for 'free speech and political networking opportunities.' In their view, 'these aggregate efforts resulted in shifting the political and communication balance in Egypt in favor of freedom-fighters and political activists.' although they do caution that 'new media were nothing more than powerful tools.' (New media as nothing more than powerful tools)

Egypt's uprising (2011) was a function of people, passion and not of any particular communication technology, social media tool or application. It was definitely not the Facebook,

Twitter or social media revolution; it was the people uprising that capitalized on state-of-the-art technology to realize a dream of a nation in availing "bread, freedom and social justice." The promises of the public sphere seem to be 'fulfilled in unexpected ways' by the Internet's ability to 'transform passive connectivity into active mobilization' as seen in the so-called Arab Spring.

Research has investigated the role of social media in the decision to partake in protests, and argue that there was a positive connection between respondents' social media use and whether or not they attended the first day of protests. The study is based on what the authors refer to as the 'Tahrir Data Sets', which include survey data from protesters, interviews with selected 'power users' and a sample gathered from Twitter based on the most used hashtag during the uprising. Other researchers found that digital media was not 'dominant in Egyptian protest activity', although it was an 'integral and driving component in the media landscape.' Moreover, they argue that Twitter was used successfully to gain international attention, primarily due to a limited number of 'power users'—influential activists online. (Jon Nordenson, 2017)

Political analysts and academics focused on social networking sites role in bridging the online with the offline, its impact on the ground, changing the offline public sphere. Feb11 for them is the date of social networking sites proving its importance and effectiveness. Only after three years, they questioned the status of these platforms within the Egyptian political public sphere, and whether they have already reached their peak moment and were then deteriorating significantly or they, or their users, are passing through a phase called a warrior break. And, in contrast to the increasing numbers in users and the statistics showing the demographic characteristics of a majority of young people, there was not a parallel strong impact in the parliament and presidential elections. *Tamarrud* started on the ground, and was known also from

mainstream media coverage, and then its Facebook page came later on to support this mobilization not to call for or establish it.

This deterioration was explained within the cultural and intellectual specificity of the Arab societies and their social structure as follows: (1) the intentional or unintentional limitation of the role of youth in the political process. (2) Disappointment among Egyptians who expected stability, transitional justice, good governance, transparency and accountability, so there was little responding to any callings for protests. (3) SCAF and the successive governments were keen on creating their official page through which they interact directly with the people, then there were the phase of monitoring, and with cases of imprisonment, the users were careful when expressing their views online. (4) Traditional mainstream media, especially television, got back their effectiveness. (5) People losing trust in revolutionary youth. The future accordingly depends on the social, political and economic context within which these platforms would react not create an independent action or initiate another defining moment.

In 2022, the Public Prosecution in Egypt has even called for broadening the scope of legislation on digital platforms to guard what it referred to as the "new borders," or the borders of cyberspaces. (SMEX E-Newsletter, 2023) the critical equation: how to balance security policies with values of freedom in the Egyptian reality. This was expressed in one of the official statements made by the Egyptian president at his first year of presidency during an international economic conference. Political science conference titled: Egypt's political and economic challenges: visions for the future. Freedom was one of the demands of the 25th of January revolution and it opened the door for discussions about the term and the difference between freedom and chaos.

When referring to social media and Law in Egypt, it is first referred to 2018 when Internet Crime Combat Law was issued. This law is described in the report as the law states the penalty of imprisonment for whoever publishes information about the military and the Police, or promoting extremist thoughts of terrorist organizations. In addition, it states a 10 thousands fine for whoever found involved in the theft or hack of other's e-mail accounts. The law also grants the investigative authorities the right to block a website or more in case evidences are found that these websites published numbers, images, movies, texts, or any promotional content that threatens that national security.

Any disadvantages in the virtual public sphere are merely a reflection of the real public sphere within a society, nationally, or even globally. Examples are: the political clashes, the violent language, and fabrication; fake photos and videos, or real photos and videos that represent different context.

The Struggle over the Public Sphere in Egypt continues after the uprising against the regime of Hosni Mubarak in January 2011. The public sphere has been opened to various groups and movements. While the transitional period under the rule of the Supreme Council of Military Forces (SCAF) and then former president Mohammad Morsi witnessed an attempt to regain state control over the public sphere, these often failed because of the weakness of state institutions, which were unable to enforce their rules, while popular groups and movements were able to mobilize support around their activities.

Following the military intervention in July 2013, the balance of power shifted. State institutions regained a large part of their credibility because: (1) siding with the protesters in June 2013, (2) the weak opposition represented by the actors seeking to achieve a reformed Egyptian state, (3) The lack of agreement among the actors on which laws to address, (4) People's fear of

a collapse of the State that would have been followed by a civil war, (5) We've seen it, because people were coming out of 2013 tired, exhausted, frustrated, not believing in the value of the democratic transition in Egypt; as it didn't show them many positive sides to stick to it, and most importantly (6) there was a constitutional vacuum, as there was no Parliament for over a year.

The situation allowed the government to take a number of measures aiming at regaining state control over the public sphere. To achieve this aim, the regime has issued a number of laws and decisions targeting different actors. The direct control of the public space consists in the physical exclusion of citizens from it, in addition, to reviving another strategy of control, less direct but not less intrusive: indirect repression. (Meringolo, 2015)

Previous political prisoners who were detained due to their social media posts changed their online presence. Since the risk is high and the consequences are threatening one's own life, there is a tendency toward expressing views through official and professional channels of mainstream media, and to calculate one's own words.

Key political actors, specifically, the Judiciary, and the Business Sector, can work in parallel, if not exactly together, to influence, the country's trajectory over time. (Steven A. Cook, 2009) The problem has been the absence of political institutions that can represent the interests of young Egyptians and respond to their concerns quickly and effectively, in addition to the importance of inviting all stakeholders to the table of debate and discussions to ensure sufficient policies and regulations. Other key actors to be included are: individuals, social media companies, local councilors, regulatory bodies, broadcasters and journalists, police and security authorities. It is worth noting, though, that since summer 2013, there was no 'trust' between and within the different stakeholders.

In 2015, Leftists and liberals among the intellectual, cultural, media, and party elites have begun to raise their voices in condemnation of state violence leveled against Egyptian citizens. Repressive measures are employed by this system of rule not only to target opposition members and groups but also to clamp down on entire segments of the population, such as youth, students, and independent workers' movements. Through such measures, those who hold power in Egypt seek to entirely exclude these groups from the public sphere as long as they refuse to conform to the "official will" expressed by the state. Impose collective punishment on civil society organizations, such as human rights groups, and other non-governmental organizations, as well as associations of soccer fans, and other groups.

There has been a frustrating aspect in Egypt's public debate. [People] are trying to substitute the question of institutions and mechanisms with leaders. *What is really key as of now is to agree on what is going to happen; not only to the constitution, but to the political reengineering of Egypt through opening up the system and creating and sustaining competitive elections. What will happen in terms of rebuilding and reforming state institutions and reforming state media? What does it take?* The right mix of procedures, mechanisms, institutions, structures, institutional traditions, precedents. This is not being discussed.

In 2019, within an atmosphere of acute polarization among those accusing social networking sites with destabilizing society calling for strict laws to control them and describing their context with 'herd culture' that lead to spreading rumors and defamation and insults, on one hand, and those considering these tools as alternative media that can't be controlled as traditional mass media, these platforms witnessed a peak moment in making impact on the ground bridging the online with the offline and one more time they were utilized in mobilization and callings for

street protests. The response to the calling of protest in September 2019 was not expected even from the caller himself, as stated by Abd-Albaseer Hassan (2019).

The writer is referring to the short videos of the contractor Muhammed Ali who lived abroad and kept posting messages to Egyptian regime and the people, and one of his accusations was replied to on Television by the President during a public conference confirming the information but justifying the action.

This increased the level of suspicion; the Ministry of Interior sat a new security measure; to stop passers-by, especially around the public squares, and checking their cell-phones to access what they write on their social media accounts.

Social media platforms, in Egypt, are subject to review and investigation by the Egyptian authorities who feel concerned about any interaction or escalation of anger on any issue of any kind, whether political, economic, social, or even humanitarian. These platforms have thus become the only media platform speaking for the Egyptian people, as a result of the absence of the role of parliament, the opposition, newspapers and the media on the one hand, and the closing of the public climate and silencing of voices on the other. Social media sites have become the most common platform for Egyptians to express their views and hopes, despite the penalties for doing so, which may lead to lengthy jail terms and heavy fines.

Issues and debates usually get mixed up on social media platforms and information can be conflicting. This is due to the absence of facts and official data, which opens the door to countless interpretations, as is the case in the law of registering housing units, which has sparked widespread controversy on the Egyptian street.

The Egyptian authorities have realized the role of social media, and it has become one of their goals over the past years to reduce the role and influence of social media platforms. The

Egyptian government approved four laws that included harsh penalties to counter what it called spreaders of rumors and false news. Publishing on communication platforms is dangerous as some Egyptians were arrested because of what they published on communication sites, and accused of spreading false news and rumors that would disturb public security. Perhaps the recent case of the lack of oxygen in the intensive care unit for corona patients in a city in *Sharqia* Governorate is the latest of these cases.

In addition to the laws, the government has established a permanent apparatus that reports to the Council of Ministers to monitor rumors and take legal action against them, whether internally or even externally. This body includes in its membership representatives of many sectors of the state, including the military and security, under the pretext of curbing the spread of rumors. (Egypt Watch, 2021)

This was criticized by the National Council for Human Rights and other international Human Rights organizations (2022) that commented saying that the Egyptian Supreme State Security Prosecution has expanded the definition of 'Terrorism' to include peaceful protests and online social media posts, which led to treating state critics as enemies. One month later, as the report stated, the Egyptian General Prosecutor issued an order to establish a unit to follow-up social media content and detect persons and/or bodies that publish lies and fake news.

The future of the public sphere is mainly dependent on the question regarding 'economy.' An upgraded democratic playbook in Egypt requires addressing the question of the economy. No one can push forward a democratic platform by simply suggesting to citizens that they are defending human rights and liberty; but that they are amending bad laws or taking them out, or demanding accountability and transparency. All of that is not possible unless the economic concern of citizens is addressed. The current regime may not be able to produce economic

growth while maintaining control over media, due to budget constraints at state outlets and the increasing alienation of the Egyptian business community, which operates major private outlets. (Mansour, 2015)

There exists a 'pervasive tendency to homogenize the Arab digital experience,' which should be avoided. This, in turn, raises the issue of what is context-specific, and what is more general, when it comes to Internet use among activists in the Middle East. (Nordenson, 2017)

The Egyptian virtual public sphere is interconnected to other Arab and Muslim public sphere. Palestinians struggle during the *Sheikh Jarrah* case is representing one of the milestones in the relationship between activists and the online platforms. These platforms rules and censorship techniques; account banning, content and accounts takedown, shadow banning, although were met with counter-creative resistance techniques, it formed a '*frenemy*' relationship. It seemed that the activists were occupying the online public sphere to keep their voices heard; they came up with few alternatives to overcome the surveillance: the watermelon and spoons digital symbols as a substitute to the Palestinian flag and the victory sign. In addition, they wrote without dots specific words that are considered by checking and filtering content tools as 'hate or violent speech,' and there was a campaign to give Facebook a one-star rating on Google Store.

'Improving the Public Discourse'

'We haven't come past the stage of hypothesis building. In the absence of more systematic research, cyber-utopians and cyber-skeptics will continue to throw anecdotes at one another to demonstrate how effective or not social media is in bringing about revolutions.'
(Albrecht Hofheinz)

In his book Egypt after Mubarak, Bruce Rutherford (2008) mentions the demographic "youth bulge," claiming that the region would need 50 million new jobs by 2010 to

accommodate 38 percent of the population that is under the age of fourteen. He analyzes this phenomenon from the regime's point of view and concludes that "this demographic challenge draws attention to one of core weaknesses of the current order; the poor quality of state-led economic management."

The importance of Internet and social networking sites questions in the field of communication is based on the fact that there is a fast growth in these platforms; 'every month, more than 320 million people use Twitter in more than 35 language, and 1.59 billion Facebook users every month. YouTube has about 1 billion users, who are watching hundreds of millions of hours of video every day.' With a growth in Internet penetration of more than 3,500 per cent in the Middle East region over the past 15 years, online platforms demand— and have received— scholarly attention.

There were two major questions leading the content tackling the virtual/digital/online public sphere. One is the definition [and the changes in that definition] of both the social networking sites [and its other interchangeably used synonyms] and the virtual public sphere; its limitations, characteristics, and content. The second is questioning the relationship between the traditional Habermsian public sphere and the emerging virtual public sphere, in terms of: social, cultural, and political dimensions of technology, values, objectives, and actors and impacts on communication. (Bukhabzah, 2016; Bumadian, 2019)

ICT, in general, helped different activists find each other and enabled more diffusion and visibility for their discussions especially for a computer-literate younger segment of the society that was looking for a space through which they could communicate, express their views and address the issues that concern them and that relate to their future. Social media, in particular, is proved to build an aware and effective public opinion through active online interaction with a

content varied from political satire, harsh criticism, and looking for solutions to the numerous social crises.

One of the beneficial of referring to the results of the studies researching social networking sites from a marketing perspective is that it reveals the fact that: there is a problem in addressing social networking sites as a one package. Studies indicate that there are core differences among the numerous social networking sites, and there is no justification in studying all these platforms as if they are the same thing. This would even, if understood clearly, affect the policies, laws and regulations according to the expected consequences. It could also change dramatically the way the different stakeholders define social networking sites.

Following the model developed by Yakoub Madi (2022) determining the content in each platform; Facebook is mainly asking 'what's on your mind?' so, it is a platform for expressing your continuously flowing thoughts and ideas that are still in-progress and it is a space for discussion about them. Twitter, as the fastest medium for getting news; asks 'what's happening?' so, it prioritizes news and coverage which is mixed with one's own perspectives and personal convictions; '*it is each one's side of the story*.' Therefore, Twitter's quick and short tweets flowing in the timeline, would allow for forming the big picture through following as many accounts as possible and reading as many tweets. And, network analysis would figure out the centers that are representing tweeps who seek retweeting even the tweets they might not align with its content; '*RT# Endorsement*.' YouTube is mainly for audiovisual content, and it is the closest medium to Television, and it requires less action, and therefore, you become a viewer/audience. Instagram is for building a network for like-minded people.

It is important to identify the role of the different social media platforms that were used. While Facebook was used mainly to exchange excessive audiovisual content, write- ups, and in

the formulation of discussion groups, Twitter was used for logistical purposes on where to meet, what to avoid and how to deal with tear gas among other uses. Flicker was used to post photos of different incidents and locations and YouTube was instrumental in documenting all sorts of developments taking place across Egypt. YouTube also contributed as the institutional memory of Egypt and of the different events taking place reflecting a real-time sharing of events where developments that started on 25 January were posted and shared with the world as they happened and it rep- resented drivers for other developments to take place.

It is argued that there are so many neglected details when studying the potential of the Internet in achieving social and political change. There is a repeated criticism to the generalization of media coverage, as well as, a critical review of the academic research that has been conducted; in terms of methodology, theoretical framework, and sample/case studies. In addition to focusing on users reactions and the type of the shared and published content, as well as the discussions related to 'conspiracy theories.'

The following critical notes are based on Jon Nordenson book 'Online Activism in the Middle East: Political Power and Authoritarian Governments from Egypt to Kuwait.' (2017) Nordenson is trying to answer two major questions; (A) what can and what cannot be attributed to the Internet? And (B) what has the Internet introduced into the relationship between people and democratization in the Middle East? In other words: '*How we can best study online activism and its repercussions?*'

> ➢ Researchers cannot simply investigate the influence of 'the Internet' per se. they have to pay attention to what is meant by 'the Internet,' that is, which platforms are used, and for what purposes.

- There is a clear difference between discussing corruption in an authoritarian state and organizing a revolution, though both may be important in bringing about the eventual downfall of a dictator.

- To gain further knowledge on the use and effect of online platforms as employed by activists in the Middle East, this inevitably involves engaging with challenging concepts, such as political and social change, democracy and democratization, and the relevant literature is not restricted either to Internet studies or to any particular geographical area. Thus, a variety of sources from different fields will be used.

- There is, as well, a big difference between how much certain social media were used during, for instance, a revolution, and how much this usage influenced that revolution. These distinctions are overlooked in the media and public debate, but they must be addressed from a research perspective.

- Different questions demand different strategies and different material. If researchers cast the net too wide, the ever-important task of properly contextualizing our study might become difficult.

- The online environment, factors such as geographical location, political system and social norms, the issues discussed and the groups involved from the context within which the online material is situated add meaning to the data interpretation.

- Researchers cannot separate the online from the offline. The online is not less complex than the offline. It is hardly expected to describe and understand online activism and politics in a single study, just as it is not expected to explain activism and politics in general in a single study.

- To see the Internet and its use within its proper context; to avoid Western-centrism in order to understand its meaning within the local setting, both online and offline.

- The mere fact that people are discussing sensitive topics online does not, in itself, necessarily lead to political change, but it may create important expectations and, no less important, practices. Researchers identified two characteristics of Internet use in the region (2005): 'First, religion has a greater weight than anywhere else in the world, and secondly, Arab users are particularly eager to engage in discussion—not least of politics, religion, and sex.'

Pew Global Attitudes Project survey (2012) supported this point stating that '[e]xpressing opinions about politics, community issues and religion is particularly common in the Arab world.'

- Researchers, who argue that we must abandon pessimistic or optimistic outlooks in favor of a more balanced view, are considering how these forms of communication are adopted within specific social movements, rather than assessing their properties in the abstract.

The focus on contextualization is an expectation that the specific possibilities, needs, and limitations that a particular context provides influence the online behavior of the actors involved. That is not to say that online behavior depends on offline context alone; the online is also a context, and the different platforms share the same technical possibilities.

- There are several crucial questions raised in the literature for over two decades: Did people use social media, when available, during and before the revolution? If so, what did they do online? Was it online platforms that tilted the balance in favor of the revolution? And what about the other, less dramatic but still highly influential, campaigns that activists have led in the Middle East over the past few years in which the use of online

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platforms was also a very visible factor: Could police torture have been exposed as convincingly in Egypt without YouTube?

➢ Although, the use of online platforms was highly visible during the 18 days of the Egyptian revolution, it is now proved that visibility does not equal impact. Also, as stated clearly in the literature, the 25 January 2011 was not the first time that activists used the social media platform to plan protests.

The earlier attempts did not have the same magnitude; however, the majority believes it was a 'building process.' Social media was, for more than a decade, described as becoming the 'backdoor' platform for activists to discuss different ideas that relate to socio-economic and political issues. Since the early 2000s, prominent Egyptian bloggers and activists began using blogs in addressing key socioeconomic and political issues.

➢ Radsch article (2008) traces the development of the Egyptian blogosphere, arguing that, by the time of her writing, it had been through three distinct phases: An early experimentation phase an activist phase during the period 2005-6, followed by a phase of diversification and fragmentation from then on. She ties the rise of the Egyptian blogosphere closely to the beginning of the secular pro-democracy movement in the mid-2000s, part of which is known as *Kifaya*, and the diversification phase with the demise of this movement, along with the entry of new groups online, including young members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

➢ Mapping the Arabic Blogosphere project (2009) found politics and religion to be important subjects. The comprehensive study identified a base of 35,000 blogs in the region, created a network map of 6,000 of them and hand-coded 4,000. On this firm empirical basis, the study observed that the Arabic blogosphere is predominantly

organized around countries, with the Egyptian and Kuwaiti blogospheres being two of the largest. Within these country-specific spheres, they identify several sub-groups, which in Egypt are partly related to ideological orientation.

➢ The case or field covered in each study varies greatly, as some seek to cover the Egyptian revolution as such, whereas other focus on particular sites or samples, which has implications for the level of details that can be provided.

➢ In terms of theoretical approaches to the material, different sources are drawn upon, including social movements' theory, diffusion theory and resource mobilization theory. By far the dominant framework, however, is that of the public sphere. To some extent, this debate has produced two lines of inquiry. Some studies look at particular sites, places, campaigns, and so on, and discuss their findings within the framework of the public sphere. Other studies are more purely theoretically constructed and are often concerned with the structural features of the Internet itself, particularly with the advent of Web 2.0, and with whether or not the conditions provided encourage and/or have established one or more public spheres in a more or less Habermasian sense. Papacharissi claims that '[r]esearch on the political potential of the Internet is frequently rapt in the dualities of determinism, utopian and dystopian.'

The year 2013 was a turning point. Before and after 30 June events, many voices believed that this is an indication that 'social media is here to stay.' Few months later, the perspectives changed completely.

News report titled 'Facebook and Twitter: the Republic of Confused Reality' was addressing the disappearance of many voices from social media since summer 2013, both individual revolutionaries and political public figures and official pages that marked a central

point before and after the 25th of January revolution. The report quotes one of these pages' admin saying: '*it's confusing, everything is confusing, no one trusts any one, and suspicious is the basic rule now on social medi*a.' Others said: '*we got Facebook wrong, we need to have balance*.' '*We are no longer united, we are scattered into tens of pieces; every morning there are new news, we are talking to ourselves and questioning, we are spinning*.' There was a sense of tiresome from the social and political pressure; non-stop flow of shocking and unexpected news, events and decisions, alongside '*silent public figure who are confused and are unable to decide what is wrong and what is right.*'

The report addressed that social networking sites were used for communication between the Muslim Brotherhood members and their leaders, especially after the June 30 uprisings; quoting the former minister of Information, Osama Haikal, book '150 days of the History of Egypt' as he mentioned that social networking sites played a crucial role in 'fueling' the events.

Social media users were divided into two groups: the silent, the commentators; and the later was divided into those who post on their own accounts and those who interact on others' accounts and pages, and most of the content is cynical and abusive. People were no longer taking part in political and religious topics; they are now escaping to entertainment and online games.

Political discussions were continuously changing, and people's opinions were changing in parallel, it was becoming like watching a daily match, and every day there two different teams playing. Then, there was the term "sleeper cells" and those who said they changed their opinion 180 degrees after discovering the conspiracy against Egyptian Police and Military, and there was a total rejection to anyone criticizing the police or the Military.

A Human rights report (2014) referred to the Egyptian Ministry of Interior as it has intent to issuing laws for regulating social media platforms. The report is based on the publishing of the

brochure of conditions for a tender for establishing a project of security risk monitoring, in which the MOI statement described the step as including all social media platforms entering 'the brightest era of democracy.' The statement said that the ministry intended conducting expanded search measures so as to detect anything violating the law or spreading destructive ideas that cause chaos and sedition destabilizing families and children.

The report criticized that the ministry published its plan directly without first presenting it to the Parliament so as to abide by laws and constitution, nor did the ministry cared about having social conversation regarding this idea, and to justify to the users whose privacy is threatened; as national security and terrorism electronic crimes shall not contradict with the citizen's rights for privacy (referring to Article 57, the Egyptian constitution).

The report, also, criticized the language used in justifying the procedures; focusing on the negative aspects of social media as if such crimes, if committed, are not already criminalized by law outside the Internet, and there is no need for specific measurements, and if the ministry would punish acts that are not criminalized by the law, why would it be considered crimes at the first place? In addition, the report addressed what is described as the 'loose terms' used for describing the targeted acts; pillars of the Egyptian society, destructive ideas, violations of public morals, stinging cynicism.

The report said that the ministry didn't limit its effort to combat terrorism, but to address the public opinion and direct it through the software that allow publishing content (text, photos, video,..) on varied platforms simultaneously, and the ability to display the users' posts on the screen as a timeline; including everyone's posts; which, according to the report, makes anyone is suspected until proven otherwise.

To break this deadlock, the recommendations require basically a change in the official mindset; (1) reframing the 25th of January revolution as a positive achievement that led to national accomplishments, and changing the wrong concepts such as stereotyping Egyptian women, and combating corruption and violence, (2) encouraging the civil society to raise the awareness regarding social media use asserting on the right to communication within a legal framework that protect individuals reputation and privacy, and the (3) important role played by social media platforms in monitoring the public performance of government, the parliament, and state bodies allowing for self-correction especially with the current unclear political, security, and social climate. This is beside the (4) code of ethics.

For more than a year, Matthew Hindman, Nathaniel Lubin, and Trevor Davis (2022) have been analyzing a massive new data set that were designed to study public behavior on the 500 U.S. Facebook pages that get the most engagement from users. Overall, 52 million users active on these U.S. pages and public groups were observed, less than a quarter of Facebook's claimed user base in the country. The top 1 percent of accounts was responsible for 35 percent of all observed interactions; the top 3 percent were responsible for 52 percent. Many users, it seems, rarely, if ever, interact with public groups or pages.

This study has been repeatedly referred to within the argument accusing social media companies with lack of transparency and being responsible for lowering the quality of the public discourse, and revealing the importance of empowering users to combat hate and misinformation. Their research aims to better understand those users, the type of content they share, and how Facebook responds.

It concluded that in advance of legislative change, social media companies have to create a safe experience for users on their platforms; they must take responsibility for developing

automated techniques to identify such content posted on their platforms. They should use technology to ensure intimidatory content is taken down as soon as possible. The major indications are: (1) Facebook users follow a consistent ladder of engagement. Low-public-activity users overwhelmingly do just one thing; they like a post or two on one of the most popular pages. As activity increases, users perform more types of public engagement—adding shares, reactions, and then comments—and spread out beyond the most popular pages and groups. (2) So who are these people? These top users skew white, older, and—especially among abusive users—male. Under-30 users are largely absent. (3) How they behave? Racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, and anti-immigrant comments, Name-calling and dehumanizing language about political figures were pervasive. In addition to the torrent of vile posts, dozens of top users behaved in spammy ways. (4) There were no large-scale evidence of bot or nonhuman accounts in the data, and comments have traditionally been the hardest activity to fake at scale. But the analysis showed many accounts that copy and paste identical rants across many posts on different pages. Other accounts posted repeated links to the same misinformation videos or fake news sites. (5) Toxic mix of misinformation and hate culminated in fantasies about political violence. Many wanted to shoot, run over, hang, burn, or blow up Black Lives Matter protesters, "illegals," or Democratic members of Congress. (6) These disturbing comments were not just empty talk; many of those indicted for participating in the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. (7) Facebook activity (nearly 2.9 billion monthly active users) turned out to be far more concentrated than most realize. The analysis shows that public activity is focused on a far narrower set of pages and groups, frequented by a much thinner slice of users; only three pages generated tens of millions of interactions a month; it is a winners-take-all pattern, such as the dominance of a few best-selling books. (8) Public groups differ from pages in several ways;

pages usually represent organizations or public figures, and only administrators are able to post content on them, while groups are like old-school internet forums where any user can post. Groups thus tend to have a much higher volume of posts, more comments, and fewer likes and shares. (9) Disinformation and propaganda, though, are considered as symptoms of deeper structural problems in social and media environments. Rather than targeting content, policy-makers should identify and address the vulnerabilities that illiberal narratives exploit. Researchers focus on strengthening democratic resilience and adapting media policy;

'It is advisable to create a package on how to improve the relationship between citizens and the state or decision makers, primarily through good governance, transparency and integrity, as well as social dialogue, addressing the realistic needs of society. Research shows that for false information to be challenged effectively within the human brain it needs to be replaced with an alternative narrative.'

In her qualitative testimonial research with 40 young Egyptian activists (25 males and 15 females between the age of 18 and 35 years from Cairo), Vivienne Matthies-Boon (2017) argues that her focus on youth activism is not because the 25th of January revolution was exclusively a youth movement, but because in Egypt's hierarchically structured society the destruction of their hopes and aspirations has been marginalized from internal political debates."

Tech Companies Efforts

There is a need for defining what is meant by 'control, monitoring, surveillance, censorship,' on one hand, and clarifying the difference between them and 'intelligence, tracking, and targeting,' on the other. In addition, as stated in the literature, to clearly determine their mechanisms to prevent transforming these varied procedures into tools of oppression under the pretext of security and stability.

The terms 'control, monitor, surveillance' and their synonyms are linked to government and security agencies, however, there are many levels of surveillance; first the administration of

each platform, second the users themselves who are able to report specific offending content that violates any of the platform policies and guidelines (mainly User Terms that are mandatory approved in advance), and then the external sides, both state-owned and independent, for varied social, political, economic, and security reasons.

These terms differ from one platform/application to the other, but agree in the platform right to reject or remove any content or user account without prior notice if it violates one of its policies and guidelines. The social media companies need to be at the center of any effort to mitigate the problems related to the content, in part because they alone have real-time access to material that appears on their platforms and the capacity to quickly identify and then remove harmful content.

The debate over corporate-self-regulation, though, focuses on political bias. In the U.S., 70 Human Rights watchdog groups announced (2016) that Facebook is censoring content documenting Police abuses, and the administration argued that it was a 'violent' content. Likely, YouTube (2015) removed the official channel of Palestinian group Hamas following a request from the Israeli Foreign Ministry. Twitter (2016) blocked the official account of the spokesperson for Al-Qassam Brigades.

Facebook, as well, blocked 90 pages affiliated with the Palestinian Resistance in 2017. Back in 2012, Twitter announced that the platform could remove content if the legislations in a country require so. Facebook announced in 2019 that a third-party would be responsible for monitoring the content, opening the door in front of prior and instant censorship.

The analysts consider it a step to access the Chinese market; it is blocked since 2009, which brings huge market of advertisement and profits. In addition, international and local institutions have dedicated departments responsible for tracking and analyzing the trends and

attitudes as it affects their activities as well as its image and reputation through feedbacks and comments depending on software that human rights defenders address abuses and violations to the users' privacy rights. These are justified monitoring and analysis actions.

While, the government' surveillance is controversial as there are questions regarding its legality and rules, especially with software collecting personal data without warrants and it comes under illegal surveillance:

(1) Establishing observatory and monitoring units to track the content, respond to rumors, and combating extremism.

(2) Beside the human efforts, many institutions depend on social media data mining and text analysis engines for instant indicators.

And, although it is acceptable to analyze the public content, human rights watchdog groups reported varied that spending millions of dollars on social media monitoring technologies to track, document, and archive the data of millions of users, is suspicious, in addition, there were cases of violations in which these technologies were used to track the online activity for prominent activists in specific movements.

(3) Agreements between governments and social media corporations allowing the state to access the personal data of these platforms' users through legislations. In the U.S., the law is more specific; Combat Terrorist Use of Social Media Act (December 2015).

(4) Data disclosure requests submitted by executive bodies based upon judicial decisions on criminal and security grounds, and transparency reports issued by social media platforms state the number and the country that submitted such requests either for data access or removing content.

(5) Reporting content; this feature is mainly for users, however, reports revealed that governments make use of it to block/remove the opponent content depending on software or what is known as 'electronic committees.'

(6) Surveillance software that violates personal rights and it is a scandal is it is proved that a governments or a political administration bought such software (examples: PRISM in the USA and Tempora in the UK and Hacking Team company).

(7) Partially and complete blocking for websites. In addition, there is the temporary blocking during/after certain occasions/events.

In the U.S., Extremists are proved to be part of hyper-influential elite that produces more likes, shares, reactions, comments, and posts than the majority of Facebook users (top pages came from about 700,000 users out of the more than 230 million American users). So, they aren't merely fringe trolls, or a distraction from what really matters on the platform. Those superusers are previously unreported class that influences greatly which posts are seen first and which are never seen in other's timelines, and described as 'hyperactive users veto.'

Research states that Facebook algorithm is the reason behind such dominance. A former Facebook data engineer Frances Haugen's trove of internal documents concerned the inner workings of Facebook's key algorithm, called "Meaningful Social Interaction (MSI) introduced by Facebook in 2018, as it was confronting declining engagement across its platform. It ranks posts by assigning points for different public interactions; a "like" was worth one point; reactions and re-shares were worth five points; "non-significant" comments were worth 15 points; and "significant" comments or messages were worth 30. Such metric gives more weight to less frequent behaviors such as comments, and thus empower an even smaller set of users.

Facebook official response stated the company's inability to comment on 'a research we haven't seen' describing the parts that have been shared with them as 'inaccurate and seem to fundamentally misunderstand how News Feed works.' The respond explains that 'ranking is optimized for what we predict each person wants to see, not what the most active users do' adding that in the fall of 2020, the company made a permanent change reducing the weight of 'angry' which subsequently reduced hate speech and misinformation on the platform.

However, researchers commented that 'so long as user engagement remains the most important ingredient in how Facebook recommends content; it will continue to give the same ultra-narrow, largely hateful slice of users the most influence, claiming that 'things are much worse outside the U.S.; since there are no similar active moderation efforts.

'The Evergreen Pearl of Content'

Social media marketing expert assert that the social media platforms allow easy access to information, and misleading information alike, and a large-scale dissemination, therefore, the impact of social media will increase and more interactions, both negative and positive, to be witnessed in the future.

One of the key issues is evaluating social networking sites in light of the professional standards of mass media. This is the strongest argument repeated to diminish the credibility of social networking sites as a source of news and a tool for democracy or public opinion. This is so as to weaken any of its outputs. From the digitalization of the traditional media to media-oriented social platforms, the Western world began with democratization of what is digital to digitalization of democracy. Now, this is a challenge to be considered to form new social and political systems.

What metrics could measure thoughtfulness, warmth, harmony, or the value of ideas that emerge from a conversation? Can journalism metrics be applied to social media platforms? It's often referred to the problem of the vanity metrics; methods that make product-builders feel good (or make them look good to funders), but don't ultimately lead to awesome products. For instance, the success of an article is measures through counting the number of times a page is loaded — it is argued that page-views are a vanity metric.

There are better metrics; the longer-term ones, such as "Engaged Time" (a reader's attention, measured by things like scrolling and highlighting); and "Readers and Returning Readers" (number of readers coming back to the content, and their engaged time across sessions). These metrics are still argued to lead the observer astray; as a digital media product might have a high engaged time because it's addictive not necessarily because people get deep and long-term value from it.

Lydia Laurenson (2017) said that 'there is no New York Times of social media' and called for a future where social media platforms are built around quality not scale. The most common approaches are to specialize in either high-quality information or to specialize in deep, emotional relationships. Laurenson explained that a high-quality social media platform is a user-based 'warmer' or 'more vulnerable' platform, a 'luxury' or 'intellectual' platform, or the social equivalent of a trade publication.

The challenge, as Laurenson clarified, is not market demand; rather it's the metrics and business model; as quality is hard to measure and t pursue quality a company will surely struggle in terms of scale; '*but perhaps scale, in this case, isn't about creating a massive, Facebook-sized platform; perhaps it's about a proliferation of smaller, niche platform.*'

Traditional media has to reconsider its relationship with society and authority so as to prepare for the future: a new understanding of journalism is needed. New intellectual and cultural structure to journalism as a profession is needed. Journalists have to examine the complex and interconnected revolving social phenomenon that is in a constant interaction with social actors: the public opinion, policy-makers, opinion leaders, technology, and money. It is a new approach that liberates the individual from the domination of traditional media.

From a technical perspective, a new report from the National Democratic Institute (NDI) – Influencing the Internet: Democratizing the Politics that Shape Internet Governance Norms and Standards (2022) – explores barriers for organizations, individuals from the Global South, to meaningfully participate in the development of internet norms, policies, and standards. The report outlines recommendations for donors, development agencies, governments, activists, civil society organizations, internet governance institutions, and the private sector to improve coordination and make meaningful progress towards more inclusive processes.

Technologists often discuss 'noise reduction' procedures. It is overwhelming to look for an evergreen pearl of content mixed in with hundreds of tweets/posts; 'I follow 882 accounts on Twitter that together have produced 92 tweets within the last 10 minutes. Everybody shares things that they're passionate. None of them, however, *are very interesting 10 minutes later*.' (Sarah Kesseler, 2015)

The future is heading toward encouraging users to see the act of sharing as valuable; one strategy is to limit users to posting one link per day. Another way of thinking about noise reduction is to force users to apply to the network, or to focus on specialized material.

Quibb, for example, requires users to apply and bills itself as "a professional network to share industry news and analysis" within the tech industry. Alternatively, there is the niche

network for community of creators; it is argued that if users pay a subscription fee to support a network, then it's clearly valuable to them. It is notable that this is different from the public sphere structure.

In her article titled 'How New Social Networks Plan to Shrink the Internet to One Meaningful Story per Day?' Kessler (2015) is referring to two new social networks (for now, both are invite-only) that allow users to post only once per day. (1) This; an iPhone app (named for the Internet shorthand for '*read this*') its founder, Andrew Golis, says it has signed up about 10,000 users since launching in November 2014. (2) A startup, Catchpool, is a scrappy independent site. Its founder, Erica Berger, says a few thousand people have signed up for the beta version launched in May 2014. Both products are, for now, invite-only.

The two apps, This and Catchpool, in Kessler's words, work a lot like Twitter; users can follow people and organizations that they care about, and after that, those users' followers appear in their news feeds. On This, a user can even "Rethis" something, like a retweet. However, the difference is that the two apps are taking precisely the opposite approach by sending the user to publishers' sites instead of spending their whole time within the app.

Another technical argument is that social media features were introduced "without considering the type of impact they could have on people who were marginalized," as described by Bailey Poland, author of "Haters: Harassment, Abuse, and Violence Online." The suggested solutions are: (1) thinking through the ways features might be abused, (2) diversifying the workforce to help it see new features through a wider array of perspectives, and (3) inviting people from diverse backgrounds, both in terms of identities and professions, to learn how their product impacts different communities. (Lauren Feiner, 2019)

From a political perspective, regimes became aware of the 'power' of social media platforms and accordingly began to apply varied techniques for control; either legislations or society self-control. For social media to be effective in political and social change, analysts suggest the first step is a consensus. Forming a unified political action that would contribute to real change on the ground is hard, though.

The future does not depend on the tool itself nor the features or the technical advancement, then, but it is directly linked to the real context within which this tool is used and how the users make use of it, and the creation of a deepening and evolving content.

In general, security analysts and policy makers are calling upon governments to bring forward legislation to shift the liability of illegal content online towards social media companies. While specifically during elections, it is recommended that governments work with social media companies and develop an independent body; 'a trusted flagger' social media reporting team for illegal, hateful and intimidatory content. In addition to enhancing the overall quality of the public sphere through cross-party collaboration to develop a joint code of conduct that guarantees challenging poor behaviors and requires appropriate tone both offline and online from the leadership and the members.

In Egypt, a similar discussion is expressing the need for certain prerequisites to be implemented before opening up the public sphere. There should be legal rules to regulate and organize it; not only administrative or procedural, but mainly the governing professional and political agreements, even the red lines, upon which elites and varied political forces will be integrated. Only terrorism and national security issues are discussed by experts with policy makers, all other issues need to be publicly discussed. The public debates are not luxury or 'make-up' on the face of the political regime; rather they are the path to stability as citizens feel

as partners and that they have an impact, even within local issues and problems, to guarantee a gradual and organized transformation toward building a state ruled by law. This will enable people to take part in discussing major issues in the near future and vote for their representatives. Only then, we can say that Egypt has taken actual steps toward inclusive political reformation process and a safe transition to building a state of law.

The current Egyptian regime has been concerned about media support. Since 2014, there have been direct criticism and tacit threat against journalists, in addition to attempts to incite Egyptians against the media. The Egyptian president described '*Gamal Abdel Nasser*' as fortunate in that he received support from a media geared toward public mobilization, and said clearly: "*Don't listen to what anyone else says, just listen to me […] The media doesn't understand anything […] Whoever wants to know, let him come to me. I say again, me – alone.*"

Even while independent and opponents were struggling to survive online and in exile, voices were hopeful that the Internet, alongside other essential ingredients; critical media, a true vibrant civil society, and a growing and popular opposition satellite, could offer another chance for a significant progress; as they are 'antibodies for the collapse of democracy' as long as the new authority does not repeat the past's mistakes. (Azzurra Meringolo, 2015; Sherif Mansour, 2015)

Figure 2: Driving Forces Interaction

Future of social networking sites as a public sphere in Egypt
Driving forces interaction

Internal → Economy Security | Legal Framework | Users

Civil society

Socio-cultural changes

Transformative Scenario

Political will | Media

Social Science Analysis

External → Technology advancement

Global/regional Internet governance policies

Source: Author

Second Layer Scenario: Occupy the Cyberspace

The Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government at Haravard University issued a report (2021) titled 'Recommendations to Biden Administration: On Regulating Disinformation and Other Harmful Content on Social Media. The report is recommending to focus on six areas: (1) creation of industry standards of conduct and a new regulatory infrastructure for oversight of the social media industry and, more broadly, the commercial internet; (2) amendment of Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to incentivize more vigorous content moderation; (3) measures the Biden Administration can take using its existing independent executive authority; (4) enactment of new financial incentives, such as fines, to

encourage desirable reforms; (5) adoption of an expanded version of the previously introduced Honest Ads Act; and (6) support for credible local news as a counterweight to disinformation. (Caroline Atkinson, Dipayan Ghosh, Michael Posner, et al, 2021)

The future can be described as a context in which there is no access to information, lack of trust in official institutions and traditional media, laws preventing real and impactful decisions, and political correctness alongside with social judgment. In addition, active social media users became aware that the price is too high, and it is becoming less preferable to express opinion via social media. This is slowing down reaching democracy; as it is a learning process.

The shift in direction requires enhancing the public sphere in terms of the quality of the discussions and following a code of ethics, in addition to prioritizing debates related to channels to link people with the authority, privacy and freedom of expression, digital regulations and human rights, the economic pressure in relation to social violence, building bridges and diversity.

In this scenario, the continuous suppression in the public sphere with the continuing political instability and unrest, societal upheaval, and the deterioration in the economic circumstances shall push dissenting voices, individuals and groups, to depend on the only available and proved efficient tool for mobilization and raising awareness; social media platforms. Social networking sites are to become even more central to public discourse. A larger proportion of the population would consider social networking sites as their primary source for information and forming communities.

The government may introduce new regulations and laws to regulate social media use, which could impact freedom of expression and online activism. Social media will continue to be an integral part of activism in Egypt and will likely evolve to meet the changing needs of society.

Technological developments, such as artificial intelligence (IA), virtual and augmented reality, would transform the virtual public sphere; to personalize users' news feeds and offer new pathways for immersive engagement with public issues, such as 'virtual protests' or community organization, in addition to providing a decentralized spaces that are harder to be controlled; such as blockchain-based social networks.

The users' double standards and the daily intolerant and uncivilized behaviors will lead to accepting the discourse of hate, accusation of treason, and justification of collective punishment dominating the public opinion in Egypt, alongside the state of war; '*either you support or stay silent*.'

In general, this layer reveals that the key factors are: (1) Efforts must be made to ensure greater freedom of expression and access to information. (2) Challenging laws and policies that restrict online speech. (3) Taking measures to increase internet penetration and access to technology. (4) Digital Literacy programs; ethics, fact checking and personal privacy protection. (5) Individuals and organizations to promote the responsible use of social media encouraging civil discourse online conversations. (6) Social media companies to take steps to improve their platforms; enhancing privacy policies and reducing the spread of fake news and disinformation. (7) Empowering traditional media. (8) The prompt responses by the official pages of the different institutions to combat rumors. (9) Launching social campaigns depending on influencers for raising the public awareness. (10) Providing the security authorities with the required technical expertise, especially through international cooperation mechanisms. (11) Conducting more academic research on the impacts of social media platforms on individuals and societies.

To achieve the desired output from such plans and strategies (such Media Literacy programs in schools), it is a long terms process; so for a short term solution in order to encourage public participation, other alternatives need to be provided; political participation opportunities at universities and active political parties, empowering civil society, allowing peaceful protests and cultural and social events within the public sphere, Media objectivity, independence, law-abiding (not political interference).

There will be a revival to the virtual public sphere; it will likely continue to serve as a powerful tool for citizens to voice their opinions and engage in public debate: more and more issues shall be discussed, opinions and information are to be widely shared, as well, it will serve as a catalyst for people to unite and demand political and social change, it will continue as a vital space for political accountability, and empowering civil society and groups to challenge government and political elites. Then, it will turn out that the extent to which these platforms can function as a public sphere is limited; as access is limited due to language barriers, government restrictions and censorship, among other factors.

The government in Egypt will continue, with an increasing rate, its control, surveillance and censorship over these platforms; it could limit access to certain social media sites or even shut them down entirely during times of political unrest, leading to a decrease in the 'perceived legitimacy' of social media as a platform for public discourse. This could lead to a shift towards alternatives or 'closed or niche' online communities, causing social media use to become more fragmented.

Alternative public sphere refers to spaces where individuals can share their perspectives and engage in critical conversations outside of traditional mainstream media.

Some examples of alternative public sphere include social media platforms, community radio stations, podcast networks, and independent journalism outlets.

People use these spaces to challenge dominant narratives, elevate marginalized voices, and engage in discussions around social issues. Alternative public spheres have become increasingly important in the age of digital media, where news and information can be easily manipulated or distorted.

Alternatives that can supplement and complement social media as a public sphere include: art and cultural events, political parties and associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions: Universities and research centers, public spaces; such as parks and cafes, religious institutions, and online forums and blogs are less restricted and provide more freedom for people to express their opinions and engage in discussions, community groups, and finally, international organizations and platforms.

Some alternative platforms that have gained popularity as public spheres in Egypt include messaging apps like WhatsApp and Telegram, online forums such as Reddit and Quora, as well as niche social networks like Minds and MeWe. Additionally, some individuals and organizations have taken to hosting live streams and webinars to discuss current events and issues.

5.3 WORLDVIEW

The analysis in the third layer, Worldview/Discourse, involves the unconsciously held cognitive paradigm that constitute the *thoughts* about *reality* reflected in discursive *assumptions* in *debates* forming the *lenses* through which the different stakeholders shape the *big picture* of the issue. The analysis explains the sociocultural constructs behind the Litany and Systemic Causes. It reveals the *language* and *conceptions* through answering the questions of: What are

the hidden assumptions? Who are the *stakeholders*? Who has the majority of *control* over the issue? What are the dominant views and ideologies of the 'powers' for this issue? What are the 'perspectives' shaping it?

Researchers, in this layer, can conduct '**meta-analysis for secondary sources**' to **verify** the arguments of the discourse analysis of newspapers, editorial columns. *Micro-discourses* could be identified under the larger ones. The analysis represented '*struggle over meaning*'; as there is no society in which just a single discourse can be identified. Original discourses are usually limited and durable. (Talebian and Talebian, 2018)

The 'Media' in Social Media

When social networking sites are termed as 'social media/new media' the analysis is mainly focusing on social media platforms as a developed modern landscape for newspapers and books. "*There is no New York Times of social media,*" this is how the counter-argument would frame the problem of assessing and evaluating social networking platforms according to professional media standards. This is a global debate that continues to compare social networking sites to art, literature, and media landscapes throughout human history.

The expectations are high-quality information and connection, and the questions are deep enough to shift the conversation away from the essence of social networking platforms as public and freely accessible spaces for ordinary users around the world. The questions are directing toward new forms of social networking sites and application: What might a high-quality social media platform look like? How about a 'warmer' or 'more vulnerable' platform? How about a 'luxury' or 'intellectual' platform? How about 'trade publication social media' — or a platform that serves non-professional yet well-defined niches? What's the business model for any of the above?

This problem is doubled in the Arab world where as described by Muhammad Ayish (2003) communication is characterized with the 'flowery, broadly phrased, and hyperbolic language and expressions' following the rule of 'form over content,' in addition to referring to what Mowala (1988) observed that 'journalism and literature are practically synonymous in most Middle Eastern countries, and the press is and always has been considered a respectable vehicle for literary productions.'

Social networking sites within the field of communication have been considered as a 'revolutionary' opening providing a powerful capacity to influence, cooperate and communicate across continents without borders or control, in addition to the unique feature of live streaming. It supported media in getting their content accessible to large and varied audience, but it, also, ended the 'monopoly' of media industry. And, most importantly, social networking sites 'changed the core of the communication theory' per se.

If the relationship between media and social networking sites to be explained, it could be mainly focusing on the technological aspects facilitating communication. Media content production and distribution depend on this immense prevalence of social media for achieving economic growth in numerous media outlets. It is not surprising, then, that the most apparent function is marketing, promoting products, and providing these companies, institutions, and organizations commercial services, public relations, selling, and improving the image of the company/organization. Accordingly, within this worldview, the definitions of social networking sites are limited to four key components: the technical; the usage and the features, the users; the characteristics, and motivations. The unique factors about social networking sites are described as: tailored and detailed databases, user-friendly, are forming communities in new ways, self-

expression, universal, and interactivity, cost- time- and effort-saving. This is mainly because we live in the so-called "***the era of networking and advertisement***."

In the Arab world, social networking sites are used as efficient tools to generate public interest, spread a culture of diversity, promote dissident ideas, and foster the citizens' capabilities and democracy. Citizens, and social movements, in particular, are increasingly looking for alternative means to express their discomfort, ideas and opinions. Accordingly, social networking platforms are used as a virtual public sphere to debate on social, political and economic issues that are overlooked, for decades, in the mainstream media, such as *corruption, torture, discrimination against women, human rights, fake elections, etc*. Researchers look beyond criteria of Internet interconnectivity and speed and toward 'convergence' that best clarify how Arab users bypass their marginalization in traditional public spheres including mainstream media. Consequently, social networking sites are shifting '*power away from mainstream media to ordinary people, allowing groups and individuals to share their thoughts, ideas and opinion with a wide audience*.' (Rabah, 2013)

There should be, and there is, a discussion regarding the quality of the virtual public sphere input and output, but there is not, and there will not be, a competition between user-generated content and the professional media content; it is as simple as that. One of the strongest motives behind posting, sharing, and creating a trend about an issue is to get the attention of mainstream media; it is like an agenda-setting theory in reverse.

In addition, there is the point regarding dominance, gate-keeping and power. Social networking sites framed as the Fifth Estate is now put in a position above the Fourth Estate. It is to watchdog the watchdog. Journalism being restricted in playing their role in serving and empowering the people in their struggle against authorities, increased the dependency on the

Internet in expanding the available channels for public participation in decision making, and for the vulnerable and marginalized voices, demands, and complaints, getting heard and responded to.

'Information technology' is the key factor in present-day worldwide market place of personal views, experiences, audiovisual content, and infotainment. It has facilitated, with few and quick clicks, the exchange of information and opinions, as well as, free access to entire libraries and archives, the world's newspapers and magazines. Yet, '*this luxury of choice amid such rich variety has received brutal blowback not just from trolls and contrarians but even governments*.' Globally, this battle over power, however, is not framed as users against journalists; rather the concentration is on the power within the hands of the owners of mainstream tech-companies; those who are developing and managing social media applications and platforms.

Technologists are pushing towards decentralization. They expressed dissatisfaction with the 'poor levels' of user data sovereignty and open communication, and they are seeking developing decentralized and open-source alternatives. This is in parallel to the debate around Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996. Section 230 is 'protecting' today's Internet; it protects platforms from 'liability' for user-generated content and to 'voluntarily' self-moderate their platforms. Without it, the companies would be obliged to remove or keep content. (Andrea O'Sullivan, 2022)

The Arab technical writings are quoting the shift in the American discourse toward the term '*dark sides of social media*' after 2016; one is related to individual user (tech-companies adopting techniques similar to casino gambling and propaganda to foster psychological addiction among users), and the other is geopolitical (automated platforms, especially Facebook, can be

exploited to interfere in politics, commerce, and foreign policy and undermine democracy in Western Europe [the Brexit referendum], Asia, and the United States [presidential elections]). Facebook is accused of providing significant relative advantages to negative messages over positive ones. The analysis stated that the reason behind that is 'absence of regulatory supervision.'

Such claims are heavily repeated in Arab reports as an example of international efforts seeking government regulation. The other half of the picture is ignored, however; as the Western debates is clearly mentioning that within authoritarian contexts, social platforms are used by governments to promote public support for repressive policies (such as in Myanmar, Cambodia, the Philippines). The American writings are describing it as '*a critical juncture*' and are discussing paths to find sufficient regulatory frameworks that protect democracy without contradicting with the first amendment and other constitutional-guaranteed and preserved personal rights and freedoms. In addition, the discourse involves users and suggests raising their awareness (following the European experience) and empowering them to change this situation in a similar strategy to *anti-smoking* campaigns.

A 'Nationalistic Worldview'

It has been argued that activists were able to organize and mobilize in 2011 partly because governments didn't yet understand very much about how to use social media, and they didn't see the potential. Few years later, these governments described as becoming adept at using those same channels to spread misinformation; '*you can now create a narrative saying 'a democracy activist was a traitor.'*

By the end of 2014, the social and elitism discourse began to frame social networking platforms as 'western tools' provided by the 'other' not as options, available choices, or alternatives, but as the natural development of human production, then, Arab wasted their time

fighting ghosts, and argued about matters that the 'other' has overcome decades ago. In addition, the 'other's ancestors' were our colonizers, and such tools are subtly a way to control and dominate us; the guests in the 'other' home, who are welcomed but we don't know much about the service itself; as users, domestic/local service providers, and/or even as critics and observers.

This represented a turning point for social networking sites that were once-celebrated as empowering tools. These views, as expressed clearly, targeted influencing the platforms' political usage, level of public trust, and their actual impact. That was in parallel to what was described as 'the death of the public sphere.' It was the beginning of a phase described as '*the mockery of politics,' 'the death of politics,' 'the republic of fear and sadness, and 'a shocking dysfunction in the standards of judging matters in the public sphere*.' Two key forces were behind this situation; power and money alliance; and mainstream media was a major player in supporting the regime in '*restoring autocracy*.'

'*The Egyptian public opinion has created a firm impression that the will of the authority/power did not want values of 'transparency, accountability, and monitoring' to take root in reality in Egypt, instead of morals and values of knowledge, science, and reason, and love of life. These are [days] of hiding facts and information from the citizen, and practicing snobbery over his personal, civil and political freedoms. The Egyptian government has been re-enshrining authoritarianism primarily by using the tool of law-making; within four years [2014-2018], over 700 laws and legal amendments were released and most of which do pertain to re-enshrining authoritarianism, and redefining state society relations in a manner which makes the government —and the government is seen as an embodiment of the nation state —powerful vis-a-vis citizens, more powerful vis-a-vis civil society organizations.*' (Amr Hamzawy, 2015; Amr Hamzawy, 2018)

There have been few voices that continued expressing their opinions online opposing the then-followed political track and calling for the reviving of the 25th of January demands; including citizens' 'normal' right in having an open, inclusive, and a functioning public sphere where they practice their 'constitutionally granted' rights. This has been viewed in relation to all of its three demands: freedom, dignity, and social justice.

The arguments stated that the relationship between the public sphere and freedom is obvious; as there is no public sphere without freedom of expression. Regarding dignity, the public sphere is based on acknowledging equal value to all humans in reason and consciousness and accordingly, no one would monopolize thinking and expressing on their behalf, otherwise, one view point/group would believe their value surpasses the values of others.

In addition, the public sphere requires social justice; because wide social gaps among citizens would allow the wealthiest to use their resources to affect and direct others and this would null the "equality" in discussion and argument. Such a public sphere is framed, also, as beneficial to the government that would be enlightened with citizens' views and opinions, and this is the guarantee that their distress will not be transformed into massive protests destabilizing the political process.

There is a perspective that consider exaggerating social media role is a similar phenomena to what happened with traditional mass media; there was the phase of highly and intensively focusing on 'media effects,' then this was followed 20 years later to the shift from the means to the message. The exaggeration of social media role during the Arab Spring was followed, only two years later, by the phase of interpreting what happened as 'loopholes' in the political public sphere bringing the strict security procedures against civil society, the public space, media, and freedom of expression.

Back in 2011, the major challenges were to ensure the rule of law; the creation of democratic institutions, peaceful competition in the formal political sphere, citizens' participation, so as to ensure having fair and competitive parliamentary and presidential elections and safeguarding the competitive and transparent nature of the elections. This is described as to transfer the protesting and striking citizen from being a protesting and striking citizen into a

participating citizen. The second challenge was the constitutional amendments, and whether or not they were enough to secure peaceful transition to democracy in Egypt; to institutionalize democracy; to let democracy, as an organizing principle, procedures and values not only formal politics but beyond, for the Egyptian polity, really influence each vital sector of society; be it civil society, education, state institutions, the security apparatus, media, and so on.

Worldwide, from a security perspective, it is expected that '*as revolutionary technologies such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing stray further from science fiction and edge closer to reality, they will increase the effectiveness, quality, and quantity of disinformation and the unethical use of technology.* (Eric Li, 2019)

In Egypt, there is no difference, communication technology, in general, and social networking sites, in particular, from a security perspective, are discussed within the framework of the 'Fifth Column' or the 'Fourth-Generation Warfare' and their negative consequences on the national security of the Arab region, Egypt specifically, and the efforts of 'Re-Building' the State. The development in communication technologies and bringing the world closer is considered within this discourse as a 'threat.' The Arab Spring is directly considered as the most dangerous example; as an international conspiracy to bring down the Arab countries.

The counter-argument rejects the official narrative that the current regime is 'rebuilding' the demolished state after the 25th of January; asserting the fact that Egyptians began building the modern state for 150 years, and its protected by the people and all of its institutions. These voices, also, criticize the Arab intellectuals adopting the Western discourse in limiting Arab and Middle East region as extremism region and replacing writing about democracy with writing about terrorism and civil wars. In addition, the writings criticized what it called the 'new science' of mixing the Fifth Column, the Fourth-Generation Warfare, and the people of evil *ahl al-sharr'* as references for accusing any peaceful struggle with treason and conspiracy for the downfall of the state.

The Internet and social networking sites are mentioned as '*the nuclear weapons of the Fourth-generation warfare.'* (Shohoud, 2022) Targeting every aspect of the targeted nation; religion, the morals, economy, ethics, principles and values, and social cohesion, are how the 'hidden' objectives of these platforms are framed. In addition to claims that mainstream media, civil society, and 'international pressure' represented in Human Rights demands, all these no longer depend on 'men' as traditional wars; but it recruits women and children, as well, and using 'non-violence' as an approach. The major premise is that '*any internal tensions affecting the national consensus would distract the country from facing the external threats*.'

Pro-democracy discourse, in contrast, welcomes divergence and disagreements; as it considers 'confusion to be a form of the desired community dialogue' and an 'access' to the discussion around the 'collective efforts' to achieve the 'dream of the second republic.' In addition, the grinding economic crises, political polarizations, and terrorism, are all viewed as the reasons behind creating such a complicated situation in which '*trust among the components of the political community and society was lost*.'

A dynamic and efficient virtual public sphere in the Arab world not only require information and genuine ideas, but mainly requires an *online public*; to proactively educating people to meaningfully use communication, and moderating their discursive exchanges. In Brandenburg's (2003) words "the core requirement for a functioning virtual public sphere is *citizenship*." (Rabah, 2013)

*'Democracy remains a rare commodity in the Middle East. Countries that once seemed promising terrain for democracy now feature clashes between citizens and governments, military domination, and the imprisonment of activists and journalists. And one thing I think that we've known for a long time from studying democratization in Latin America and East Asia, and other parts of the world, it's that democracy is more likely when all parties have a seat at the table.' (*Tarek Masoud, 2015*; 2016)*

The tone of 'fear and suspicious' has been widely debated in political opponents' writings as the major obstacle in front of achieving inclusivity and coexistence; '*the security solution that prevented any type of peaceful public protesting to achieve stability; it was a zero-sum battle*' that made the situation more complex and complicated. It is described as a 'propaganda' that relies on 'conspiracy theories' and a public discourse of 'hysteria' in order to 'defame, demonize, and label as traitors' those who are not acceptable to the government, and who thus fall outside of its protection. It is documented as since summer 2013, security and stability was chosen over freedom and right to protest, the state thought the Islamist voices were suppressed, followed by criminalizing human rights and blocking the public sphere, and pitting citizens against civil society organizations claiming they are serving foreign agendas.

This is described as a 'dangerous' situation dominated by 'illusions' insulting objectivity, truth, and awareness; '*the Egyptian authority outdid itself and is taking 'the mind' is its direct enemy.*'' (Amr Hamzawy, 2016) Moreover, the problem extends to experts say that citizens expressing their different views and opinions are accused with fragmenting the nation.

In contrast, this discourse is considering that the state and its supporters are tracking those who are considering that the real danger facing the security of the state is injustice that is undermining the principles of the rule of law and the values of dignity and freedom, and they are accused of charges of demanding modifications in laws and expressing their views publicly. This discourse states that 'who speak will be imprisoned' and since '*ahl al-sharr'* are both inside and outside, accusations shall continue against each other and deepening the polarization and fear within the country, and sending a message to the 'other' that they don't have any plans but to conspire against us.

"Diversity, then, is becoming a cause for failure, and different points of views is a cause for the falling down of the country, and individual choices are path to ruin, while imposing a 'one and only voice' is the way for salvation. Egypt is developing [its own] concepts of human rights, and the international community shall [accept] any abuses under an imaginary specificity. Youth, then has to follow the orders and become one body; this is killing the energy of creativity and cancel the existence of youth. When are we going to be a 'normal' society?"

Meanwhile, pro-change activists and ordinary citizens who enthusiastically took part in the public affairs during 2011-2012, were withdrawing from the virtual public sphere, as well. The phase of 'decline in the political role of social media platforms' has been merely a reaction to troubled political reality, the locked public sphere with its tragedies, and the feeling of defeat surrounding the generation of the revolution. The 'social role' of social networking sites was growing; the political forum has transformed into a social forum gathering partners in victory and defeat, along with their setbacks and amputated dreams, incomplete hopes/aspirations, religious and intellectual testimonials, from the far right to the far left; '*as a sort of escaping, so to speak, we recoiled, consciously or unconsciously, to revise all of our thoughts and convictions that ruled our choices in the past and discussing them eagerly and with more interaction.*' (Zahraa Bassam, 2018) Therefore, the real and rooted outcomes of social media platforms, becoming 'displays' to its owners, can't be stated until the scene ends, through determining the movement of thoughts, its shift, its reflection on the daily life.

In 2018, the phase of issuing laws that legalize this suppression began. It is described as a shift in how the Egyptian regime controls the public sphere; the state not only is trying to repress structurally—by using laws that undermine civil society and the public space for people to express their opinions and views freely—but it also 'harasses' opponents to the extent now a law on citizenship is introduced which enables the government to deny any Egyptian citizen the right to have citizenship if, according to the regime, are seen as a threat to public order. This is considered in the opponent political discourse as a formula that hasn't been part of the Egyptian

scene from the 1970s, and no government since the end of 1960s has done such intense actions leading the country more into the police state.

It is also described as 'an upgraded playbook of autocracy.' The question of 'legitimacy' both domestically and internationally despite criticism on the country's human rights record, is now raised. This upgraded model of authoritarianism is examined chronologically as follows: previously, under former president Mubarak, the role of the military establishment and security services was dominant but wasn't the only dominant role. As of now Egypt has become a country ruled by the military establishment and security services. You cannot find a meaningful civilian-ruled establishment, nor can you find politicians strong enough to share politics.

A second issue is under former president Mubarak; the Egyptian government did mind its image domestically and abroad, especially since the 1990s. They did care about injecting an image of a government which is introducing democratic reforms, and working hard to minimize human rights violations. It did not simply do away with international criticism with regard to its track record on human rights by claiming it is a paid conspiracy.

The current regime, in contrast, doesn't care about its track record. It doesn't care [about it] domestically because whoever speaks up on human rights violations gets tainted as a traitor. It doesn't care about international voices, and international human rights organizations have been defamed in the public and official discourse as "*Qatari and Ikhwani funded*." It is the playbook of autocratic governments in Russia and/or China which does not deny being an authoritarian regime.

It is repeatedly mentioned that no opposition can compete with the state in fashioning a convincing nationalistic narrative; simply because governments have many more tools than any opposition. It is preferable if the discourse of political groups focuses more on clarifying and

explaining to the people that, in some cases, reforms and policies aiming at modernization have, as an unintended consequence, generated greater inequality rather than greater inclusion. In other cases, exclusion has fueled societal tensions, instability and ultimately violence, putting people at greater risk of marginalization. Accordingly, the ongoing conflicts have to be resolved; otherwise, 40 percent of people in Arab countries will live in crisis and conflict conditions by 2030.

In addition, the discussion has to include the fact that social activism and radical changes in policies don't only result from revolutions. Revolutions are one of the prototypes of dramatic shift, but not the only one. There are numerous factors that would lead to such radical change in any country; such as threats to the national state as a concept or a change in the nature of the political regime. Arab Spring uprising, therefore, should be excluded as examples because these are considered by political scientists and experts as incomplete events that require time and long-term observation and analysis to understand it in a scientific method. The historical examples also include cases for countries that decided to sacrifice one of the two values for the sake of the other and it explain the negative consequences.

Fighting terrorism inside its borders alongside with the economic deterioration is documented as reasons behind the restrictions on peaceful protesting and expression rights. In addition, the country's situation is viewed as similar to that before the 25th of January revolution, and the demands of the protestors back then are still unmet fully, if considered at all, yet; Bread, Freedom, human dignity, and social justice; the basics and pillars of any nation lives in peace.

Therefore, political analysts explain the fear of the authority in opening any fraction of freedom to the people it could face a similar public anger and frustration which the country can't handle at the moment surrounded by political and economic instability in the region and varied

external threats. The protest law was rejected by youth and they considered it a sign for unrepresentative procedures would follow. They were against military rule because it will bring back the security solutions and prefer it over any other political solutions and would restrict the civil society, the public sphere, and public political participation.

On September, 2019, the famously known as Muhammed Ali 'the Contractor' videos, called and managed to mobilize thousands of Egyptian citizens who took part in peaceful street protests. Few days before that, there were public televised comments by the president on Ali's claims that were directed to the president himself. The president said that the security apparatus advised him not to comment, but, he decided to respond. The president didn't deny the claims; and confirmed the building of presidential palaces. He insisted that such claims aim at undermining the people's confidence in his rule:

"*Scepticism started before [the presence of] social media and has struck the Egyptian society over the past 50 years. What has been circulating on social media since the past two weeks aims at undermining the people's confidence in that person [pointing to himself]*." (Egypt Today, 2019)

In 2021, ten years after the 25th of January revolution, the official discourse regarding Human Rights is framed as 'infeasible.' During the Launch of the National Strategy for Human Rights, a panel discussion was held under the title: 'Human Rights: The Present and the Future.' The participants; civil society and one parliament member, human rights advocates and media personalities, were described as speaking from a narrow social, intellectual, and elitism perspective, and theory detached from reality in addressing inessential priorities, then the Egyptian president commented and called for '*the differentiation between theoretical approach and feasibility of implementation*' within the current phase; to '*differentiate between what is being and what should be*', otherwise, '*Egypt will keep spinning in the orbit of speech without*

having the ability to achieve tangible results on the ground.' He adds that this justified in light of '*historical phases and the gradual development that societies pass through*;' so nations should not seek '*copying*' other societies in a way of '*skipping historical phases*' to reach what these societies have reached after long decades of development.

The report summarized two more points: (1) to clearly define the issue discussed and not to confuse topics, as well as, (2) for each stakeholder to present practical steps and procedures for their views to be implemented in the ground.

'[Democracy is] a set of values and a ruling system that is not exclusively for specific nations; it is an incomplete system, but it is better than any alternative. Democracy is not an instant coffee, but it is the hope and the road to stability in our Arab world.' (Muhammad El-Baradei, 2020)

Year after year, variables are put into perspective and within the wider context revealing a deeper and a different view. The National Dialogue has represented a shift in the relationship between the regime and political opponents and the public. Although, there is still a division on whom to be included in the dialogue, new windows have been opened for a hopeful tone. Opinions, though, expect that Egyptians experiencing the pitfalls of a purely majoritarian understanding of democracy that is not accompanied by respect for basic rights, restoring legitimacy and creating long-term stability in Egypt will not be easy. In addition, the term 'elites' in the Arab region is not a positive term; it refers to personal interests.

The Arab Spring is considered an event from the past and an example of psychological warfare aiming at conflict between the people and the governments and the official military institutions. One of the reasons behind the increase in spreading rumor and their effects is the delay in clarifying the truth by the official institutions. Repeating a certain rumor without any response to deny it would increase its credibility among people. The reports would add that user-

generated content published as a personal testimony is more credible; however, the security discourse would call for legally questioning the publisher and monitoring the published content.

Matthies-Boon (2017) found that the violent revolutionary aftermath in Egypt has been deeply traumatic on an individual and social level: it ripped apart activists' assumptive world, namely, their everyday working assumptions about themselves, others and the world.

'*Whilst feeling angry and hurt by such encounters, they admitted that they themselves were also often unwilling to listen to the stories of those who maintained a different political position. They explained that due to the stressful and disappointing political situation, they lacked empathy and patience to look beyond political differences. Hence, the solidarity of the revolution had broken down and social polarization inhibited the creation of a shared holding space across political divides, even if people suffered similar traumatic experiences such as killings, injuries and torture*.'

Trauma of the post-revolutionary period, along with the negative outcomes, made them turn away from the political sphere and retreat into their private world. A positive outcome could enable people to reinterpret their experiences in more positive terms; in this situation, the trauma would have been seen as worth it. However, this was not possible in Egypt, because of political polarization and the disappointing post-revolutionary outcomes.

Social trauma frequently expresses itself through polarization, dehumanization, demonization, and a normalization of everyday community-based violence. They narrated how friends, colleagues and family members now openly fought each other on the street, at cafés and in their homes as verbal and physical violence became normalized. All interviewees had at least one close family member or long-standing friend who belonged to the 'other' side, and they explained how heated political arguments tore (or threatened to tear) family relations and close friendships apart.

The public sphere if beneficial to the state; it plays a developmental role regarding the local issues; education and health services, as well as combating poverty. In addition, a public

sphere co-carries some social and economic tasks with the government that is unable to provide sufficient resources and fund for such tasks. In addition, the public sphere is important to governments as through it the priorities of the citizens can be addressed. When the government is responsive to the public opinion, this deepens its legitimacy among citizens and makes them more committed and loyal to the political regime which ensures stability. A government's role in the public sphere should only be limited to putting the rules that facilitate its functions within the constitutions and the international obligations. The Egyptian public sphere since summer 2013 is facing increasing downsizing, diversity of views is shrinking in main stream media. When the public sphere is not available, the citizens would search for other channels to express their opinion, and some might use violence against the government.

All Arab Spring, even the cases that turned into civil wars, countries tried and still to build a democratic and participatory public sphere. Occupying the public squares and opening them for discussion, mobilization, celebration, and all human activities; even the symbolic takeover of walls through graffiti. All the groups occupied part of the public sphere including the Police and military. The president's media advisor said that '*the online state of clashes and dominant nihilism are becoming a danger [facing] the future.*' It is possible to avoid "*nihilism*," he asserts, and "*to find sufficient meaning in individual consciousness and experience"* with the help of "*the great myths and religious stories of the past*."

Reports documented throughout the last ten years mass violations of digital rights in Egypt, from restrictions to freedom of expression on social media platforms to blocking news and media websites under anti-democratic laws and legislation. The analysis explained this within a cultural aspect of 'burnout' (when the work is overwhelming) due to institutional-based pressure, the result is depersonalization; security bodies during instability, similar to health

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sector during Corona, begin to see the person in front of them as an object, they deal with them with no contact. In addition, when the power distance is high, there are no truths passing between the top and down in the hierarchy. Power distance stops us from talking openly.

'Egypt is part of the Arab nation and enhances its integration and unity. It is part of the Muslim world, belongs to the African continent, is proud of its Asian dimension, and contributes to building human civilization.' (Excerpt Article.1, Egypt's Constitution, 2014)

There are few key points that require further investigation, and they are taken into consideration as a 'Golden Thread' in the Egyptian context:

- Egypt's identity is seen as formed according to the powerful actors in each phase in history. There is no unchangeable foundation, system, except the structure of a modern state. Egypt as official ruling institutions is considering above its people. This has to do with the struggle that Egypt went through as a nation in independence from foreign occupation.

- The cultural and intellectual specificity of the Arab societies and their social structure is a motive behind protecting their identity from fragmentation, and their unity from tearing-up, and seeking immunity from oblivion or withering. This was intense to the extent that media began to publish studies on Egyptians DNA proving that neither Egyptian Muslims nor Copts are Arabs; 'Egyptians are not genetically Arabs, but they may be so culturally and linguistically.' (Ibrahim, 2010; El-Behary, 2017)

- In contrast, others would ask whether or not Egyptians consider themselves African; "the majority of whom replied" I'm a Muslim Arab, of course" or "an Arab Muslim, and only few of the interviewees said that they "were descendants of the Pharoahs" but none in the sample interviewed thought of themselves as Africans; '*it wasn't simply a matter of geographical location-the issue turned out to be much more complex than that*.' (Shahira Amin, 2012; Sharafeldin, 2022)

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- On December (2012) an internet campaign named "*Take him off the Minbar*" was launched. The campaign aimed to encouraging people to actively stop Imams and preachers from expressing their opinions on the constitutional draft during Friday sermons or in religious classes taking place inside the mosque. The campaign provoked a response-campaign, called "*Tie him up to the column*", encouraging worshipers to physically stop anyone who tries to interfere with the Imam's during sermons or class, or anyone who tries to stop Imams and preachers from voicing their opinions and providing guidance and advice to people. The campaign called for tying them up in one of the mosque's columns. 'Against the backdrop of a political crisis at its height, marked by heavy polarization between the two poles: "Islamist forces" and "civil forces", the two calls were reflections of a struggle over the right to employ religion in the public sphere.' a number of measures have been enacted to end the religious sphere's political activities and its autonomy from the State. In March 2014 when the Ministry of Endowments issued Decision Number 64 to bring all mosques and oratories in Egypt under its control. At the same time, a hotline was created for citizens to report any violations of the state "instructions" or the use of preaching at mosques for political purposes. In June 2014, the Ministry published the preaching code of ethics. It is now the Minister's responsibility to set both the topic and the theme of Friday sermons before prayer. (Amr Ezzat, 2013; Meringolo. 2015)

One Internet...Different Perspectives

'*Intimidation in Public Life*' is how policy-makers reports [UK, 2017] framing social media platforms' abuses. Online social platforms are 'missing out' on a wide of diverse perspectives due to users avoiding posting what could expose them to online abuse. This is

affecting the quality of the public debates, and more and more users are expressing that 'the benefits of the platforms no longer outweigh the negatives.'

Regulation is recommended, and for the companies to be 'liable' for their content. The factors behind this situation, according to the reports, are: the '*public's lack of trust in politics and the political system.*' Shaping the public political culture is the responsibility of '*everyone in public life.*' This includes building public trust and upholding high ethical standards; so they never themselves encourage dehumanizing political debate. In addition, the reports are calling all parties to 'work together' and 'put aside partisan differences', and protect the reputation of the public life. The seven principles of public life: *Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, and Leadership*. (UK Government) In addition, it is required to develop a strategy for 'engaging with international partners' to promote *international consensus* on what constitutes 'hate crime' and 'online intimidation.'

Matthew Hindman perspective does not change from (The Myth of Digital Democracy, 2008) till (The Internet Trap: How the Digital Economy Builds Monopolies and Undermines Democracy, 2018). Answering the question regarding the Internet's role in democratizing American politics, and whether or not political Web sites and blogs mobilize inactive citizens and make the public sphere more inclusive, In contrary to the dominated discourse, Hindman stated that the 'Internet is not as open and democratic as people make it out to be, and is heavily controlled by a small handful of big corporations; the nature of the Internet and the architecture of the web.' The Internet has neither diminished the audience share of corporate media nor given greater voice to ordinary citizens. In contrary to popular belief, the Internet has done little to broaden political discourse; while the Internet has increased some forms of political participation and transformed the way interest groups and candidates organize, mobilize, and raise funds,

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elites still strongly shape how political material on the Web is presented and accessed. They focus on the economics of online web traffics, the relationship between the sophistication in architecture and infrastructure and larger audience and monetization of the content.

Social media platforms are facing political pressure in the U.S. Twitter, Facebook, and Google are accused by the Senate Judiciary subcommittee with discrimination against conservative speech suggesting Congress could take regulatory action against the companies to decentralize their power over popular forums for self-expression.

'Monopolies' and 'Power' are two 'threats' repeatedly mentioned in the discourse of political leaders, businessmen, and official institutions alike. In his article titled 'Facebook Is a Doomsday Machine' Adrienne LaFrance (2020) stated that U.S. intelligence agencies identified Facebook as a main battleground for information warfare and foreign interference (2020); describing Facebook as a borderless nation-state, with a population of users nearly as big as China and India combined, and it is governed largely by secret algorithms. Hillary Clinton said that talking to Zuckerberg feels like negotiating with the authoritarian head of a foreign state; '*this is a global company that has huge influence in ways that we're only beginning to understand*."

The new oversight board that was formed in response to critics and backlash against the company, and is responsible for content moderation, is considered as extension of Facebook power. Joshua Geltzer, a former White House counterterrorism official, described saying: '*the first 10 decisions they make will have more effect on speech in the country and the world than the next 10 decisions rendered by the U.S. Supreme Court. That's power. That's real power."*

The issue of Internet platform *monopolies* was discussed as a top priority for attendees of the World Economic Forum. In a different context, 'Internet monopolies' was framed as a threat to 'Public Health' recommending a new approach in dealing with social media combining education and regulation; similar to *tobacco* and *alcohol.* American businessman Roger

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McNamee is quoted for saying '*it is time to disrupt the disrupters*' for the sake of restoring balance in life and hope to American politics. McNamee asserted the 'good intentions' of the founders of the big tech companies and their adopted business models. In his article titled 'Social Media's Junkies and Dealers' (2018), McNamee wrote: "they were young entrepreneurs, hungry for success. They spent years building huge audiences by reorganizing the online world around a set of applications that were more personalized, convenient, and easier to use than their predecessors. And they made no attempt to monetize their efforts until long after users were hooked (brain hacking) […] Then, the Smartphone transformed all media and effectively put Facebook, Google, and a handful of others in control of the information flow to users. The *filters* that give users 'what they want' had the effect of *polarizing* populations and *eroding* the legitimacy of fundamental democratic institutions (most notably, the free press). And the *automation* that made Internet platforms so profitable left them vulnerable to manipulation by malign actors everywhere – and not just authoritarian governments hostile to democracy."

This discourse is backed with Marc Andreessen warning article back in 2011 titled 'Why Software Is Eating the World' [economy] with their global ambition and reach adopting versions of Facebook's corporate philosophy – "*move fast and break things*" – without regard for the impact on people, institutions, and democracy; referring to '*digital false realities*;' known as filter bubbles in which 'existing beliefs becomes more rigid and extreme.'

Arab analysts are monitoring the America scene, especially Mark Zuckerberg 'successful' testimony and responses to the critics during the Senate hearing (2018). The writings stated that the American decisions are going to affect the Arab region; '*at least it could be a model followed by other countries to criminalize using such tools*.'

For his part, Mark Zuckerberg was keen on focusing on the 'social' aspect that comes in the core of his company's mission and vision. He published a post via his official account

saying: *"Facebook was built to bring people closer together and build relationships. One of the ways we do this is by connecting people to meaningful posts from their friends and family in News Feed. Over the next few months, we'll be making updates to ranking so people have more opportunities to interact with the people they care about."* (Mark Zukerberg, 2018)

On 15th anniversary of Facebook (2019), Zuckerberg described the 'power' of social media that has been provided mainly to the 'people'; '*Facebook is far from the only network enabling this change -- it's a part of the broader trend with the internet.*' Zuckerberg described how the Internet networked experience liberated people from the 'inaccessible and remote hierarchical institutions; '*If the first part of this century was about wiring up these networks, the next phase will be about people using these networks to redefine every part of our society.*' He also referred to the balance between freedom and responsibility: "*Now, you can connect with anyone and use your voice. People now have much greater power, and that creates opportunity, but also new challenges and responsibilities. This will require finding the right balance between the freedoms and responsibilities of a connected world.*"

Zuckerberg, also, mentioned clearly all the ethical debates related to the 'new world' where people share 'too much' information that requires content governance, balancing freedom of expression with safety, and privacy protection. In addition, the social and political issues related to 'how to improve health and well-being' in a constantly connected world, and ensuring the integrity of elections and the democratic process; '*These are all critical issues, and we have a responsibility to manage these networks more proactively to prevent harm. We've made real progress on these issues and built some of the most advanced systems in the world to address them, but there's a lot more to do.*'

From a technological perspective and entrepreneurial strategic thinking, '*it's just getting started.*' Zuckerberg concluded the statement defending the Internet and social networking platforms that empowered people;

"*as networks of people replace traditional hierarchies and reshape many institutions in our society -- from government to business to media to communities and more -- there is a tendency of some people to overly emphasize the negative, and in some cases to go so far as saying the shift to empowering people in the ways the internet and these networks do is mostly harmful to society and democracy. To the contrary, while any rapid social change creates uncertainty, I believe what we're seeing is: people having more power, and a long term trend reshaping society to be more open and accountable over time.*"

Within the Arab context, Muhammad Ibrahim Saad (2017) argues that there is an 'illusion' of considering the Internet as a revolutions maker, and as a medium for toppling dictatorships and authoritarian regimes, and that lead to the marginalization of the civil society and to accept a virtual participation that does not [make a difference] toward an unchangeable reality of crises. Ibrahim explain this based upon the interference between knowledge and culture. He argues that the scientific discourse and the political and media discourse [are] to serve the interests of globalization with its new analysis, and, consequently, addressed the course of media research development and the ideological conflict as follows: *Ilm* is a mental social activity with civilizational dimensions, accordingly, *Ilm* has no home country nor does it have an identity. *Ilm* is a natural [by default] enemy to authoritarian regimes and those with interests that reject changing the status quo. Freedom of scientific research is one of the most dangerous intellectual revolutions in the human history. Systemic Scientific skepticism is the path to progress and renaissance, as the brain refuses to surrender to the status quo. The scientific methodology is an inevitable tool for curing any human or natural malfunction. The scientific knowledge is a result of accumulation in knowledge and a communication between civilizations; while the Arab scholars were at the forefront since the 8th century and till the 12th century, the

Western scholars are dominating the floor of modern science the 16th century till the present. The development in media research has been related to a number of political, economic, social, and technical factors that contributed to the ideologizaition of most of the Western theories, models, and techniques.

Bruce Bimber and Homero Gil de Zúñiga (2020) discuss a relevant concept arguing that it is an old problem. Decades of socio-technical systems analysis for how to understand the role played by technology in complex social or political developments long ago rejected causal accounts that entail various forms of technological determinism; technological artifacts, including software systems, are not political actors, though they are created and employed by political actors, including corporations, government elites, organized political interests, and citizens themselves. Separating technologies from social phenomena, or the social and the material, is not straightforward, though. As Bimber and Gil di Zúñiga state: (a) The apparent connection between social media and epistemic failures across democracies shows limitations of the view that technologies should have no prominent place in explaining outcomes. (b) Scholars of media and political communication agree that social media and related technologies have different implications or exert different forces on politics than do technologies of mass media.

Tech Companies Discourse

"Best way to fight misinformation is to respond with accurate information, not censorship."
(Elon Musk, 2023)

The major usages of social networking sites as public spheres are viewed as: monitoring the performance of the government by individuals, access to political information, understanding the different dimensions of the political reality, empowering citizens to make decisions regarding political candidates, public figures, and/or issues, and effectively taking part in political

discussions. While, any control by the state or commercial interest group affects the reasonability and objectivity of an independent public sphere.

> "*I have unblocked everyone I blocked, apart from scammers. I recommend others do the same. Negative feedback is a good thing.*" (Elon musk, Feb 24)

Threats to the public sphere are considered direct threats to democracy as a whole. These challenges are viewed as global problems that require a coordinated international response. Technology experts and analysis share a commitment to an open internet, one that promotes free expression and contributes to society by enhancing communication and the sharing of knowledge and information across borders. They are keen developing strategies to make online discourse stronger and platforms fairer. The key factor is collective action; '*together, not individually, the change is better.*'

> "*Power to the People.*" (Elon Musk, November 5, 2022)

The civil society found the cyber-space very effective in public deliberations regarding important issues, both locally, nationally, and globally. It becomes a space for activists and young political and social leaders to spread their principles and ideas which facilitate social and political change. It provides equal opportunities of participation to youth, apolitical *couch-party*, minorities, and vulnerable and marginalized groups within societies. The electronic public opinion has influence on the public affairs. The digitalization of democracy resulted in new concepts and models in modern politics; electronic democracy/digital democracy/techno democracy. The milestones of cyber space are documented as follows: Barack Obama 2008, Iran 2009, Arab Spring 2011, and Indigandos in Spain, May 15, 2011.

> "*The case for taking Twitter into public ownership has never been stronger. It should be managed as a public good, not as a billionaire's plaything.*" (Jason Hickel, Nov 19, 2022)

With Twitter disclosing an earnings report, analysts are worried regarding the future of Twitter's user growth. "New account sign-ups are at an all-time high, with the chart going back to 2014; 2 million per day. That could mean that more people are keen to get in on Twitter conversation, and with Facebook getting stale, and Instagram suffering an identity crisis, Twitter is seemingly becoming a more interesting consideration. Maybe freedom of speech-ers signing up to Elon's new, more open public square. May be they are in developing markets, as has been Twitter's predominant growth trend for the past three years.' (Hutchinson, 2022)

'Everything happening on Twitter now is a lot easier to understand if you've ever had a younger sibling that invented a game and added a new rule every time they started losing.' (Andrew Nadeau @TheAndrewNadeau, Nov 7, 2022)

Several users said that some of the pure enjoyment of Twitter has been replaced by hate in recent years. One of Elon Musk tweets (2023) describing Twitter saying 'The ability of Twitter advertising to reach the most influential people in the world is often not fully appreciated. While a few other social networks are technically bigger, Twitter is where the writers & leaders spend their time.' But, the question remains 'why Twitter users keep coming back?' Lauren Feiner (CNBC, 2019) asked this question and the responses of her interviewees include: 'The list of positive ways that Twitter has impacted my life is a lot longer than the list of negative ways.' '[It is] a space to share very very intimate things about my life; deadly diagnosis, for instance.' 'Twitter's short and fleeting messaging qualities have helped expose her to new perspectives.' 'It has the capacity to drive people apart and harm people, [but also there is a] kind of natural discourse that allows us to feel close to each other, that allows us to feel greater empathy to each other.' 'Using the platform to fund raise for causes we care about; through Twitter, [I managed to] raise $5,000 to $10,000 for various causes in a single month.' 'I've just come to accept the fact that Twitter is not really concerned with the safety of their users.'

"Twitter needs to become by far the most accurate source of information about the world. That's our mission." (Elon Musk, November 7, 2022)

What does the future hold for Facebook? It seems likely that the company will continue to grow at a rapid pace, especially in developing countries where Internet access is becoming more and more commonplace. Additionally, Facebook will likely continue to expand its features and offerings, such as the recently launched Snapchat-like messaging service called Slingshot. With so many users already hooked on Facebook, it's hard to imagine that the site will lose its popularity anytime soon. (Newsd, 2023)

The issue of 'liability' is linked to 'monetization.' It is argued that 'a restaurant Graffiti' is how social media content is viewed; it is not the responsibility of the company or the platform; rather it is purely a user-generated content. While, the demands for strict regulations comes from a different view; it is the photographer selling the photos of that 'restaurant's bathroom graffiti.' If social media companies are making profits out of their users' data; tailoring the audience for advertisers, then, these platforms has control over the published and shared content, and accordingly are directly responsible for it.

'Today's Twitter would have been abandoned in 2011 by Egypt's revolutionary activists; it's such a reactionary piece of software today.' (Wael Eskandar, Twitter, September 20, 2022)

For a Better/Different Future

Security and stability was chosen over freedom and right to protest. Was it effective? Causal Layered Analysis states that there is no right or wrong narrative; however, it questions its outcome and whether or not it aligns with the desired destination.

The literature states that both security and freedom are interrelated values and that there is no society that can sacrifice one for the other; especially in case of the country's that witnessed a revolution or mass protests, the authorities should not ignore or suppress these callings for

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freedom. And, the society that practice discrimination and exclusion is proven to face threats to its current and future security and stability.

The society that has its rights and freedoms met is the society that has the factors for its stability and security. In addition, the literature states that protecting the society from risks and threats require providing law that establish the pillars of building the state; however, within this vision, the security procedures don't mean: prevention, arrest, torture, and enforced disappearance; but it means (1) raising and developing the awareness and knowledge, (2) enhancing a sense of responsibility among the society members, (3) encouraging and laying the foundation and frameworks for societal participation in public affairs. Security in its core means feeling of homogeneity and sharing with each other the rights and duties.

There is no effective security unless each and every individual in a society is free from their worries and fears and embarks in the journey of building and development without any worries freezing their capabilities or preventing them from positively adapting with their community, or fears stopping them. Security and freedom are not mutually exclusive; they are interdependent and inseparable values for any society, it is not an adversarial relationship; there is no contradiction in directions nor objectives.

During transitional periods, there is a division among those putting freedom above anything else, and those demanding security at the expense of any other rights. Both seek the higher interest but differentiae in the procedures claiming that either or, both are wrong. This happens due to political immaturity and unaware public will. It is a complimentary participatory relationship; security policies aim at protecting the rights and the duties of the society members from attacks/assault/abuses or violations, and freedom aims at enhancing the values of security and stability moving forward to a prosper society. Historical cases prove this to be right.

Many writers would announce that they have changed their opinions and transferred to what it is called a 'post-polarization' phase avoiding the dichotomy or 'whether with us or against us' that dominated the 'public mindset.' The national issues are considered as complex and no easily diagnosed through the lens of one personal experience out of 100 million fellow citizens. It is a humble perspective and it supports listening and understanding instead of expressing and persuading as functions of communication.

In addition, accepting the other opinion is the first step to reject any claiming of monopoly of absolute truth. This is the base for authoritarianism and extremism; accepting differences in roads and destinations through peaceful and civilized dialogue.

Mass communication in the Arab world has been always a powerful means for control in times of crisis and peace alike; 'like today's media representatives, tribal chiefs and state leaders counted on poets and speakers to defend their tribal and national interest against foes.' (Ayish, 2013)

Media discourse was viewed as the reason behind many crises increasing the social chaos, since 2015, it is considered the key to solutions, and has been called to stop attacking the 25th of January revolution, framing the 25th of January and June 30 as two contradicting events, get rid of the inflammatory tone against Egyptian citizens regardless of their affiliations, and stop accusation without evidence, and to promote an awareness-raising mature discourse about freedom as an equally important value as security.

The future of nations depends on adopting technological advancements. A social perspective views a smart state paying attention to the impact of social networking sites on human behavior; as these platforms are becoming one of the most important tools in making the future; they facilitate raising the general health awareness, spreading stability in security,

spiritual, values, community, and economic empowerment, enhancing virtual national identity. This is based on reframing how social networking sites are considered and making use of their positive aspects. Otherwise, Egypt will be like 'caveman' (Fathy Shams Al-Din, 2020); as it would be far behind in digital transformation, and it would not able to protect itself from hack attempts and disintegration of the state.

The public sphere in the writings of other political and social thinkers (Hannah Arendt, for instance) was replaced; instead of the rational space aiming at the public interest through discussions among individuals who share homogeneous concepts and arguments, the public sphere expresses differentiations as the citizens have heterogeneous perspectives.

For Egypt, optimistic messages about the future were exchanged during the 12th anniversary of the 25th of January revolution in 2023. The core message is for the authority to release that the revolution was a turning point in rulers-people relationship, in addition, the social maturity and the collective awareness and consciousness, especially among youth, regarding freedom true meaning and mechanisms of expressing it and its essentials and manifestations were limited.

'The political regime does not realize the shift occurred in the Egyptian mindset since the 25th of January, instead of acting as an adversary, the political regime must act as a judge between disputing sides, and provide a space for debate and discussions; especially with the fact that in politics it is not a matter of obeying orders, as in the security context, but it is based on principles of negotiations, harmony, and achieving the biggest possible gains. This is the road for solving the hard equation.' (Amr Hamzawy, 2015)

In general, the Arab Spring is considered as a catalyst for an in-progress change; Arab uprisings can be understood as another phase of a longer historical process of modernization and cultural adjustment in the Arab world, begun in the 19th.

Prior to the uprisings, persistent economic underperformance, including the "market" reforms of the 1980s, undermined once robust social welfare protections– a key element of the "old social contract" – especially in non-oil exporting countries. This underperformance led to a breakdown in the old social contract and rising dissatisfaction in Arab publics, eventually triggering the uprisings.

During the transitions, many of the political, economic and social problems that triggered the uprisings have deteriorated and many countries' political economies have not changed in meaningful ways.

People in the region want more than political transitions. Narrow-minded – often failed – political reforms pursued by the political elite during the transitions did not and cannot deliver the profound societal transformation needed to realize the political, economic and social ambitions of the uprisings. Institutionalized social dialogue holds great promise to facilitate the public debate and state-citizen communication essential to design and build consensus for the terms of a new and inclusive social contract.

For Egypt, specifically, there were certain issues that are considered the pillars of a better future, in general, and a more democratic public sphere, in particular. The messages focusing on a 'bottom-up' type of change; in which 'the people' are in the core of any change, are dominating the political discourse as a response to what was described as an official discourse of 'mockery of politics.'

'*The Fascism within; in our heads and daily behaviors is the reason behind accepting the discourse of hate, accusation of treason, and justification of collective punishment dominating the public opinion. The state of war; either you support or stay silent. Double standards are mainly among upper and middle classes*.' (Amr Hamzawy, 2014)

'*Even if history never repeats itself in the same way, Egypt's recent past clearly shows the risks of such a scenario. For example, the success story of state control on the religious sphere could have adverse effects. As happened under former president Gamal Abdel Nasser,*

people could lose confidence in the official religious establishment. This, in turn, could lead to the emergence of a parallel – and dangerous – religious sphere.' (Azzurra Meringolo, 2015)

"The way we are speaking these days is revealing to where we are heading." (Ma'moun Fandy, November 13, 2022)

'*[The key actors for any change are the people]; however, people need vision, organization, objectives, consensus, and this is the function of the civil society, independent media accepting differences in opinion, political parties and syndicates.*' (Muhammad El-Baradei, 2023)

The major obstacles addressed are: corporate economic domination, managerial control and monitoring, reflexivity is hard to grasp, and fragmentation with the variety of opinions and information.

Third Layer Scenario: 'The Centralization of Truth'

"The virtual public sphere was analyzed in relation to 'the cultural aspect of modernism' and 'the emergence of democracy' in a Cadre Médiatique; a mediating sphere playing the role that the Press played in the 18th century challenging all forms of political and financial clout. It represented an unlocked edifice for making meaning and communicating, as well as, a strong force for mobilization. And, most importantly, it provided an effective mechanism for surveillance in its philosophical, sociological dimensions, alongside the aspect of Media." (Bumadian, 2019)

Internationally, the desired future is heading towards 'a new agora.' Communication for Governance and Accountability Program (CommGAP) policy brief disclosed in 2010 stated that '*a healthy and open public sphere is a remedy against uninformed and unconsidered opinion.*' Democracy, conceptually, is people having the right to determine how they are governed. It consequently requires 'education, access to information, and deliberation' on issues of common interest.

There are two competing, at least at first sight, narratives that replicate the old dichotomy between structure and agent. The first narrative focuses on '*systemic, technological, and impersonal forces working behind the scenes to dominate and exploit*

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Internet users for profit.' The second narrative is tied to '*bad actors exploiting a neutral technology for nefarious purposes.*' Both narratives can be partially true, but the first narrative is getting more attention and it is believed it leads to an unwarranted techno-dystopian defeatism.

> *"Digital platforms, for the most part seek out to balance the demands of democracy with the goals of profit; they do not set out to undermine democracy—in fact, many are quite idealistic about the positive contributions to public life—even if some of the design choices they have made for the sake of profit have indeed undermined democracy. New authoritarians, by contrast, do set out to undermine and weaken democracy. It used to be that authoritarian states focused on civil society and the suppression of social movements. This of course still goes on. But authoritarianism has gone virtual;* '**wrecking the public sphere**' *is the new authoritarian strategy that in some places has replaced the direct suppression of civil society."* (Simone Chambers and Jeffrey Kopstein, 2022)

In Egypt, an open and accessible public sphere is referred to as one of the demands of the 25th of January revolution, and it is related to all of its three demands: freedom, dignity, and social justice. It is viewed that a free public sphere where citizens practice their constitutionally granted rights is also beneficial to the government that would be enlightened with their views and opinions, and this is the guarantee that the citizens' distress will not be transformed into massive protests destabilizing the political process.

The political regime is viewed as not realizing the shift occurred in the Egyptian mindset since the 25th of January; instead of acting as an adversary, the political regime is called to act as a judge between disputing sides, and provide a space for debate and discussions; applying principles of negotiations, harmony, and achieving the biggest possible gains.

The media discourse was the reason behind many crises; however, it could be the key to solutions, as well, as stated. It is required to: (1) stop attacking the 25th of January revolution. Stop framing the 25th of January and June 30 as two contradicting events. (2) It

should get rid of the inflammatory tone against Egyptian citizens regardless of their affiliations, and stop accusation without evidence, otherwise this increase the social chaos. (3) Promoting an awareness-raising mature discourse about freedom as an equally important value as security.

'*After 11 years of squabbling and polarization, there is an urgent need and an ethical commitment for everyone to move from focusing on the past that we can't change to looking ahead to the future which shaping it is in our hands. Achieving the goals of the revolution; freedom and human dignity, is a debt all Egyptian owe it to the homeland and the coming generations.*' (Muhammad Elbaradei, 2022)

The societal alignment sought is not the alignment of one sector against the other in a zero-sum battle in which everybody loses, and it doesn't not mean that personal believes shall be abandoned, nor imposing s unified life style; rather, it does mean all Egyptians are agreed upon the basic principles and values that enable them to live together.

If the political climate stabilizes and traditional media outlets become more accessible, social networking sites may take on a less critical role in shaping public discourse. In this scenario, social media could still be used as a tool for organizing and coordinating activism, but may not be as influential in shaping public opinion.

The importance of public opinion, which is not the 'tyranny of the majority,' is that governments' legitimacy and success are based on achieving 'a national unity' that enables effective implementation to policies; active and informed public support to the official programs and reforms. The public deliberation ensures equal representation to diverse voices and groups; allowing citizens to provide their 'inputs.'

"*Yesterday was the anniversary of the birth of the blind [referring to 'the Dean of Arabic Literature,' Taha Hussein, 1889-1973] who saw what the successive rulers of Egypt since July 1952 failed to see*; *the critical importance of the quality of Education and Freedom of Scientific Research without restrictions; as the anchors of his project of Egypt revitalization and achieving an advanced position in the world, as they were the ingredients of advancement against the ottoman domination and the British colonization.*" (Bahai Aldin Hassan, November 16, 2022)

The Egyptian president declared 2019 as the 'Year of Education.' The official page of the Egyptian ministry of Foreign Affairs published a piece in 2018 asserting the importance of Education for democracy all over the world;

"*US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was right to emphasize that 'a successful democracy relies heavily on the abilities and intelligence of the populace.' This is not pushing the claim that the 'Egyptian people are not ready for democracy'; to the contrary, Egypt is already striving with vigorous steps towards building a democratic society.*' (Egyptian ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019)

5.4 MYTH/METAPHOR

The deepest layer, Myth/Metaphor, is bringing to the surface the *unconscious* emotive dimensions of the key concepts of the issue. It tells '*why*' of the three previous phases of analysis. It requires psychological and subtext analysis that extract the ingrained deeply-rooted archetypes woven in the fabric of almost each and every intellectual, entertaining, religious, technical, and/or emotional content defining and impacting the individual and collective *reality*. This requires delving into these questions: What encapsulates the *feelings* in which this Worldview is grounded? What *myths* or folk stories come to mind? What *metaphors* come to mind? What are the underlying *stories* feed it?

"If you want to liberate a nation, give them the Internet." (Revolution 2.0, 2012)

Pro-Internet narrative is that 'there is something profoundly human about the Internet; its infrastructure, the ability of people to join without permission and innovate, to communicate, and the ability of actors to act independently.' It is enough that it has proved an old Arab metaphor to be possible; '*Borders are but dust, and our struggle is one.*'

All of these features are of a very human technology. At the same time, beyond this heavy machinery, humans feed the Internet constantly with data that affects their lives and those

of others. While researchers talk about issues of speech in the Internet, they rarely pose to consider the impact speech suppression has on humans.' (Konstantinos Komaitis, 2022)

'Everyone keeps saying goodbye on Twitter but we're all still here.'
(Farah-Silvana Kanaan, Nov 16, 2022)

Social networking sites as a public sphere in the Arab region in general, and in Egypt, in particular, is narrated as the story of a generation of young, tech-savvy activists utilizing Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms to bring Egypt's dictator of 30 years down, is a powerful narrative, and one which to varying degrees has been embraced by the news media and others.

Yet this view also has its critics. The Egyptian revolution had manifold causes, including corruption, police brutality, unemployment, low salaries, and poor prospects: realities faced by all Egyptians regardless of whether or not they had a Facebook account. Moreover, as Egyptian blogger Tarek Shalaby pointed out, 'it all comes down to taking streets. The over 800 people killed during the revolution did not die online.'

"What are you going to write in your report? I will write that all values are lost but security in place." (Naguib Mahfouz, The Crime, 1973)

As Egyptian public opinion has become polarized between pro- and anti-government voices, political discourse online has also become highly contentious. Verbal harassment is common, and many activists have been chased offline by aggressive pro-government social-media campaigns. Furthermore, online activity brings both positive and negative attention. It is possible to build an audience online, but doing so risks attracting the unwanted gaze of the security services.

"Listen to people's pain.. not their anger." (Faten Salah, November 13, 2022)

"Samuli Schielkes book, 'Egypt in the Future Tense', is the result of such an undertaking." (Emanuel Schaeublin, 2016) Schielkes is questioning what if '[researchers] take

people's hopes and existential anxieties as the starting point of anthropological analysis?' It is argued that life in contemporary Egypt is primarily determined by global capitalism; characterized with a 'deeper sensibility of being in the world.'

The rapidly changing and expanding world has deprived people of 'many of the grounds of certainty that existed in a smaller and slower world' while opening up horizons of promise that are mirrored in profound anxieties about the future. It is this new 'temporality of the future' that is said to make people live in 'a state of tension between frustration and powerlessness, on the one hand, and the expectation of something better to come, on the other.'

'If you've ever used the words "Arab Spring and social media" in any of your work, this is part of that story too. We can't abandon political prisoners who put their bodies and freedom on the line and expanded our imagination of what the digital age could be. We take, we build, and we move on. We forget the people for whom this is not theory or an abstraction.' (Nanjala Nyabola, Nov 8, 2022)

The struggle for definitions and reaching a common ground when it comes to balancing regulation and freedom of expression is mainly narrated as a representation of 'law.' The discussions in this layer go beyond understanding and analyzing laws to interpreting the intentions behind such laws and their contextual paraphrasing, alongside the consequences and the alternatives; 'laws are never finished,' 'it is not law that dictates just; rather, it is just that dictates what it legal,' 'if it is a man-made, then it can be women-remade.'

'Egyptian people are not ready for democracy.' (Vice president Omar Suleiman, 2011)

*O*ne of the narratives is telling that 'Egyptian political, cultural, and religious elite' do not want the people to participate in ruling their country or to have a say in the political public affairs. The situation is described as 'efforts to close the Egyptian political public sphere.' The story is told as follows; 'the current regime's goal is to return Egypt to the pre–Arab Spring status quo by restoring the state's control over the public sphere.'

"The applied standards of freedom of expression in the developed world countries can't be applied to developing countries." (Egyptian Prime Minister, January 2023)

This extends to the cyber public sphere; 'state scrutiny is told to 'become increasingly sharp as new regulations restrict online anonymity and prohibit the use of encryption, making surveillance easier.' Internet service providers are required to maintain databases of their customers' activities and allow the government to access the information.' Cybercrime bill, framed as Anti-Terrorism legislation that allows law enforcement agencies to block websites and pursue heavy prison sentences against Internet users for '*vaguely defined crimes*' such as 'harming social peace' and 'threatening national unity.'

'The enemies of the state these days are its people.' (Wael Eskandar, Nov 12, 2022)

Alfarafir[1] is repeatedly referred to when discussing 'autocracy,' 'the hierarchal world,' 'social classes,' and 'people-authority' relationship among other concepts. This play from the 1960s is based on a long human history where there has always been 'a master' and 'a servant.'

In general, the play is discussing the different types of political systems that all share in common this relationship, as well as the aimless and irresponsible wars within and among nations. The play reveals that the human nature tends to freedom, equality, and brotherhood; in short, '*human rights are universal*.'

The master-slave model has been deep-rooted throughout human existence; a master is the one in control and gives orders, while the servant follows the orders/obeys. However, the '*farfour*' or the servant is represented as a smart character that continuously looks for solutions to change the situation and exits this dilemma. In modern performances, the role of the servant

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[1]A sarcastic plural noun/adjective for small bird/sparrow. A play by Egyptian nonfiction writer, playwright and novelist *Yosuf dris* [1927-1991]

has been replaced with a female, focusing on specifically women's issues within the Arab world. (Azza Ahmad Haikal, 2015; Ali Abu Humailah, 2021; Ibrahim Al-Arees, 2022)

'The House has a Lord who protects it. We don't have politics to participate in.'

The stagnation of the political process in a community is reflected in the narrative; the 'absence of politics,' 'the death of politics,' and 'the death of the public sphere' reflect a problem in 'reasoning' and 'dialogue' in social practices. 'People no longer are able to differ without stigmatizing each other with being agent, spy, traitor, and/or a terrorist.'

"*I was chatting with someone in Tunisia about why so many people no longer follow politics and don't even want to believe that the government is seriously intending to increase the prices/cut subsidies. They suggested a simple reason: detached and denial as a coping mechanism.*" (Mohamed Dhia Hammami , Nov 9, 2022)

In 2017, the Egyptian president addressed the United Nations and stated that the only way to settle the disputes between countries is '*not intervening in the domestic affairs of each country and respecting their sovereignty.*' Adding:

'*The protection of human rights will not be realized through media defamation or the politicization of Human Rights mechanisms, while ignoring the need to tackle all human rights in an equitable manner, including economic, social and cultural rights on equal footing. Egypt has a solid constitutional foundation for the protection of human rights.*' (The Egyptian President, 2017)

There is a 'fear of democracy' narrative; Egyptian society is viewed as not accepting that social networking platforms are diminishing the borders between classes. There is a subtle class-based division within the Egyptian society since the monarchical phase, and there is within society a fear from democracy as an approach 'allowing everyone to have a say' in the country's future.

It also presented as the fear of 'psychological wars' on social media in Egypt; '*psychological wars, on contrast to military wars, follow no rules and has no limit in the tools it*

applies. [They] target people's nervous system and their spirit.' It is mainly discussed within an ethical frame. This narrative focuses on smear campaigns, accusations of atheism and heresy from different sides against the 'other,' sometimes directly after someone's death (a public figure). The Egyptian society is described as one of the 'miserable communities.'

"*Adrenaline dominates reason and logic; and makes us [communicate] in [a way] as if each and every discussion is a struggle for survival. This is the simplest example of the importance of education for the future of the peoples.*" (@xgypt, November 8, 2022)

The '*power of social media*' is referring mainly to social media platforms role in creating and spreading effective social initiations and raising the public awareness. The social role of social media is growing. From charity campaigns to changing specific stereotypes about vulnerable and marginalized categories of the Egyptian society. This public discussion is part and parcel of its role as a public sphere, since it is not limited to purely political issues; '*everything is politics, but politics is not everything*.'

It is stated that rumors are mainly spread during populism era, wars, and epidemics. During peaceful periods, rumors argued to spread first then are confirmed later on; as '*rumors were used as synonyms to fake news, lies, misinformation, disinformation, and exaggeration*.' It is narrated that the ultimate goal for rumors is 'chaos in society' as they cause it 'to lose its will and determination.'

"*Kant's question of ethics is: what should I do? It becomes in today's social media era: what should I say?*" (Awny Belal, August 31, 2022)

A religious framework is apparent; this narrative refers to Islam *Qura'n* and Prophetic *Sunnah* so as to assert the importance of a 'good word' and 'morals' in a society, and to differentiate between freedom of expression and causing corruption or sedition within a community, which *Islam* prohibits. {*Nuun. By the pen, and by what they inscribe*} [Qur'an 68:1]

{*O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion, indeed some suspicions are sins. And spy not, neither backbite one another...*} [Qur'an 49:12]

It also calls upon intellectual thinkers and writers to act responsibly and lead the change through aiming at spreading opinions, not personal interests; principles, not to outbid others or for political scores; to seek truth not authority and power; to be wisdom lovers not sedition.

"*When an Arab is able to say his/her hidden opinion in public, then we have evolved. Till this moment comes, we are [living] in a world that has nothing to do with the world.*" (Ma'moun Fandy, November 18, 2022)

Diversity, having different views and perspective within and across communities and nations is told to be a positive and natural thing; it enriches the thought and is means of progress. It also, from a religious perspective, aligns with the way *Allah* arranged this world. {*And had thy Sustainer so willed, He could surely have made all mankind one single community: but [He willed it otherwise, and so] they continue to hold divergent views*}. [Qur'an 11:118]

The intellectual and cultural general narrative in the Arab world is that there is no real personal freedom in Arab region. There are a sacred heritage of traditions and norms that are more valid than any personal 'different' choice.

The egalitarian message of Islam is 'noted in that all Muslims are equal before God, and the most favorite to God is the most pious. Social power is bestowed on institutions through a process of popular delegation. At the family level, males are granted *quwama* or responsibility for females. In Arab secular traditions, authority is vested in individuals like the father, the tribal chief or leader, the elderly, the male child, and the rich.' (Ayish, 2003)

"*Arab [citizen] is Bedouin in his subconscious mind. He extols power, pride and arrogance in his actions while in his speech preaches people to fear God and egalitarianism.*" (Iraqi Social Scientist, Ali Al Alwardy, 1913-1995)

Challenging these traditions that might most of the time contradict with logic or even common sense, is the hardest battle to go through. That's why it is believed that the problem in the Arab region is not economic as much as it is the unfinished conversation about cultural and social issues.

"*The crisis of the Arab world is not the type that can be simply measured in quantitative economic indicators; it is a deeply-rooted social crisis that is constantly being fed and replenished with social disintegration, religious and made-up ethnic conflicts.*" (Lebanese thinker and economist Ali Al-Kadery)

The metaphor of '*an ostrich burying its head in the sand*' is describing the older generation in the Arab world; as they are argued to be responsible for the greatest share in the absence of harmony and understanding between them and the younger generation.

Youth, on the one hand, need to understand that the older generation seeks 'taking care' of them not 'guardianship'. The older generation, on the other, needs to change their stereotype image about young people; '*they rebel against the old, and they have negative impression related to others, mainly the older generation, and they would sooner or later return back broken and submit to [our] vision.*'

In general, societies depend on the two of them. The counter-narrative is to understand youth; '*what are their complaints? How they think? What are their biggest problems? How they consider the older generations? How can new bridges be built for dialogue not guardianship?*' To tell them that '*if they are successfully and properly engaged with ambitious projects and civilization building, they are the most important asset for their nations, the pillars of any functioning society, and the real force supporting the stability and continuation of communities.*' This is a 'great mission' that told to be ignored and considered 'as it is way less important than other issues.'

As explained by Ayish (2003) earlier, one of the attribute of communication within an Arab-Islamic perspective is the individualist-conformist orientations which produced two distinctive patterns of communication processes; one associated with secular Arab traditions, defining communication as 'a process of liberating the individual from conformity to a collective lineage-based system' and of assisting in the assertion of a code of dignity, while the other is considering communication from an Islamic lens as 'a spiritual and social process of harmonizing the believing inner self with the *Umma*; the collective community' as a rewarded act of *ibadah*; worship. In addition, to paternalistic; reflecting centralized control over what is to be communicated and how.

'*Freedom of expression means that expressing opinions shall not be a crime. Freedom of expression does not means that your opinion is right; but it means that it is not a crime to express a wrong opinion. Freedom of expression does not mean there will be social and political consequences to your opinion, but it does mean that you shall not be arrested, interrogated, trialed, and imprisoned because of it.*' (@Sultan_1, November 23, 2022)

"*Each tweet you write as a reaction to specific events has an expiry date; it expires at the end of the [event]. You can't strip words from the circumstances within which it was written nor to try it according to today's circumstances and logic. And, if you want to do so, then you should bring all the tweets that were written within the same period and compare it to them and the events that occurred previously.*" (Amal Alharithi, November 9, 2022)

At the core of the criticism directed toward the *Tahririans,* (relative to Tahrir Square*)*, is that they are 'leaderless' and they are practicing 'slacktivism' criticizing their heavily dependency on social media platforms, and that it would have been better if they joined political parties to practice politics in a professional manner.

Many prominent persons, apolitical, responded to such a call, and many new political parties and coalitions were created so as to represent the movement's voice and to be part of the political equation on the ground; on the real public sphere.

After the dramatic shift of the Arab Spring throughout the Arab countries, the dispelled from the public sphere scattered majority found in the Internet the easiest way for staying in touch with revolution-mates. In addition, though, a lot of political activism was transferred to Art, Journalism, and other on-the-ground practices, and away from both the real and the virtual squares.

For instance, Syrian Waad al-Kateab director of many international awards winning film 'For *Sama'* sent a powerful message 'we dared to dream, and we will not regret asking for dignity." (The New Arab, 2023) A Yemeni short movie, won the Amnesty International Award at the Berlin Film Festival, chose the title of *Al-Morhaqoun* The Exhausted and documented the war in Yemen.

The same reaction is witnessed in journalism; most of those who started as immature or citizen-journalists built capacities and became gradually involved in the professional context; and with the strict becoming tighter on the public sphere, with the price of online publishing and offline coverage getting higher, they created or joined professional media outlets.

Al-Araby Aljadid (The New Arab) under the umbrella of *Fadaat Media* (Spaces) is an example. The title itself says a lot about the identity point previously referred. Now, they are presenting themselves as professional journalists so as to gain access to information and events in a credible responsible presence, and in addition, they are presenting themselves as a new Arab; the Arab after the Arab Spring; those who are different than those who were passive and irrelevant for decades. They are now speaking the language of "numbers" and "real impact."

'We are a progressive, non-partisan news outlet that focuses on issues of democracy, social justice and human rights, especially but not exclusively in Arab states. Our editorial line is independent and objective, although we are clear in our commitment to highlighting and

covering issues that affect youth and marginalized segments of society. We believe in the right of all citizens to a free, dignified and just life.' (The New Arab, December 12, 2022)

"[We are] a pioneering media model that provides an objective and free expression space within the Arab media scene keeping pace with the wave of change sweeping across the region while offering the Arab audience platforms that reflect their hopes and aspirations. [We] believe in several values and utilize them as ethical, professional, and practical controls in our media work and projects, including: biased towards Arab individuals pursuing their rights, the first of which are justice and freedom; biased towards the Palestinian cause, supporting all efforts of the Palestinian people, Arab, and foreign nations in order to achieve justice in Palestine." (Fadaat Media Network, 2012)

In addition, long established TV Networks and Newspapers would add new outlets that would reflect the spirit of the Arab Spring; such as *Midan* (Square) that is born from Al-Jazeera, and it is one of the blocked websites in Egypt till today.

These transformations in the media landscape has to be acknowledged; as there is still under the ashes a nostalgic narrative waiting the return of a 'two local TV channels only' media landscape of the 60s. It is somehow related to the general narrative of 'fear;' passing fear of change, democracy, the other, differences,…through conspiracies. Other media scholars claim that a developed media can't be built within a 'retarded society.'

"The only conspiracy is that they persuade you that you are naturally a loser, and that your destiny is not in your own hands. There is no a more destructive plot than that."

'Conspiracy stories are not a rare phenomenon.' It is a feature of human thought that is discussed in various shapes and forms, sometimes sarcastically, sometimes more seriously. The book Conspiracy in Modern Egyptian Literature by Benjmin Koerber (2018) is examining conspiracy theory (*naẓariyyat al-muʾāmarah*) as a fictional mode in a selection of Egyptian novels, poetry, and drama, ranging from the 1950s until the present decade.

Koerber argues that conspiracy theory not only has a long-standing presence in Arabic literature, but that it also takes on a multiplicity of forms, as an expression of political

commitment (*iltizām*), or as 'a uniquely rich fountain of imaginative trajectories, counter-cultural currents, and non-ritualized play.'

'Conspiracism—a radically suspicious view of history as a series of hidden machinations by shadowy, transhistorical individuals and groups encompasses a paradox at its heart; the secret societies that control the world are both hidden and ultimately knowable; all-powerful yet skillfully exposed by a heroic discoverer of the truth.'

Tellingly, as Koerber notes, 'all the texts examined are by male authors and feature male protagonists—a reflection of the fact that conspiracist discourse is so tightly bound to gendered notions of masculine agency and fears of its loss. The only female voice, Radwa Ashour's work, Koerber remarks that conspiracism, or *waswasa*, alerts us to lurking dangers, but it also constitutes a danger in and of itself.' (Mende, 2019; Rossetti, 2019)

There are two narratives that seem contradictory at first glance; one claim that 'economy is the key,' while the other states that 'it is not an economic issue; rather, it is political.' However, a deeper look reveals that they are similar in their core; they both are saying that authority has to seek preserving its legitimacy granted by the 'people' so as to immune the system against any potential mass anger. The regime doesn't explicitly mention this; rather it referred to it as 'national security' and 'social stability.'

In other words, social networking sites, and the Internet in general, and the future of democracy are all common questions. The problem is political; a political discourse that establish trust and collective action, not propaganda or a narrow nationalistic narrative.

In his article titled "The poor people first" Muhammad Abuelgheit (2016) is refuting what he called '*the myth that all Egyptians bought expensive mobile phones to access Facebook.*' Abuelgheit states that the percentage of those who own mobile devices is indeed high; it is equal to 88.1%, but this is not luxurious; it is a substitute to the land line, and in contrast, the percentage of those who own a modern smart phone to connect to the internet

doesn't exceeds the 22.1% only, while the percentage of IPads and the Tablets doesn't exceed 3.7%.

He explains thoroughly saying: '*A large segment of the middle and the upper classes in Egypt, and this includes both the pro- and anti- the current regime, doesn't understand what it means when you say 'Egypt is a very big country;' its habitants exceeds 91 millions, in addition to 9-10 million expats. These numbers do not allow the existence of tens of worlds and societies and totally separated peoples. It does allow having huge numbers, hundreds of thousands and millions of each category; rich and poor, educated and illiterate, polite and impolite, Islamists and secularists and revolutionaries and the pro-state who doesn't care about anything.*'

Although the article point out that the middle class, educated class, is the one leading the politics globally, and it is the class that provide the governing elites and opponents as well, but, Abuelgheit clarifies that the world doesn't claim those are representing the whole population, and the world doesn't bury its head away from the factual numbers so as to blame and accuse their crushed people; either pro-state or lazy or passive or revolutionary, with being a '[nation] of slaves.'

In addition, the article addresses the concept that the class that makes politics in Egypt is a minority in numbers, and this should have its reflections on the work style, the political discourse, and the governance and the opposition, alike;

'*the first role for social and patriotic peace for all the habitants is for these millions to see the [other] millions, to know about their existence at the first place, then to understand the differences and their economic and social and political motives. We must know ourselves, and the first step is to stop trusting any expressions [of generalization].*'"

Fourth Layer Scenario: A Nation versus a Generation
*"In history, there are numerous narratives, and it's not wise to accuse the 'other' when the narratives differ; because each one is narrating from their spatial, functional, factional, conceptual position in the same scene in the specified moment. And, each side has [their own] effort and assessment, and their human mistakes and their own interests. [So] instead of hurling, a reasonable person ought to listen and be mindful. But, denial is dominant and bias is there, and repeating what was rooted in consciousness is controlling [..] And, this is called in political psychology 'cognitive impairment' resulting from a deeply-rooted perception in minds. Whoever doesn't admit mistakes is a recalcitrant, and whoever isn't good in manners is an arrogant, and whoever doesn't reflect would inevitably fall into the same mistake, round after round.' (*Heba Raouf Ezzat, 2021)

Narratives are stories that consist of a mixed component of myths and metaphors. Some of these stories are conscious and some unconscious. They define how individuals and societies think about varied concerns including '*how they think about thinking*.'

When it comes to 'visioning' the future, narratives help in determining 'what is stopping us from where we wish to go; which story, myth, mtaphor…?' CLA necessitates that no worldview is considered 'the truth;' as it might be only a metaphor/narrative. Although, there is no right or wrong; making sure that it matches where an individual or a society is heading, certain questions to be answered: '*Does it serve you? Does it prevent success? Do you need negotiation? Does the preferred future match your story?*'

Depending on the answers, any suggested solution in this layer result in 'the deepest interventions;' as this requires '*telling a new story*,' '*rewiring the brain*,' and '*building new memories in the personal and collective body*.' The future scenario is developed through discussing definitions.

Inclusivity is what guarantees reaching the most 'realistic' vision. History, also, proves that it is 'hope' not 'fear' that pushes individuals and societies forward. In addition, as it is said, any leadership has the ability 'to bring out the best or the worst in its people.'

"*Jan25 taught me a different lesson; in contrast to what others have learned from it. I learned that we should open more the windows for the citizen toward freedom, and respect his/her dignity, and the operationalization of speedy justice, and the actual separation of authorities, so as the people won't explode and demolish both the good and the bad. Others learned that the provided space of freedom was the reason behind the revolution and therefore we should close all windows.*" (Hossam Badrawi, April 16, 2019)

Social media platforms have liberated people from the 'experts know best' notion that limited who have access to traditional media platforms. High-quality content is the fastest and

most efficient means for combating vulgar, superficial and insignificant content. However, the current narrative does not support this path.

The 'revival' of the public sphere was the concept referring to the crucial importance of communication that aligns with the 'nature of man as a social being.' It described the motive behind creating social networking sites. The Cyberspace was considered as a technical virtual community that gathers individuals from different regions and countries into one place in which 'value' and 'culture' are the purpose, not merely the technological advancement. Technology was, then, expected not to across its limitation as a tool, while 'value' and 'culture' were monitoring the limitation of usage to enhance the benefits and returns of any tool.

"*Prisoners of censorship, isolation, disappointment, trauma, depression, anxiety […] Prisoners in the past, prisoners in a too idealistic vision, prisoners in an incapacitating pragmatism, prisoners in anger and the desire to revenge, prisoners in hopelessness and indifferentism, […] How many prisoners in Egypt?"* (Amr Salah, 2020)

When it comes to the political participation, it is witnessed in Egypt throughout the years 2014 - 2018, in elections and the constitutional amendments that less than 50% participated, while others preferred to boycott. In addition, there were calls for public protest on September 2019 and November 11, 2022. While, some have labeled refraining from participation as a '*patriotism decision,*' others keep calling on the state '*not to test the patience of the people.*'

It is asserted that '*people have not given up their power yet*.' In addition, 'be the media' has been a widely proved narrative via the online public sphere, and 'the power of social media' is real; while its impact differs and can't be expected precisely; as the power of social media depends on the power of 'its users; the power of the people themselves.'

"*Time is important. Finding a solution to Egypt's crisis should not wait forever.*" (Abdulrahman Ayyash, 2023)

The future of social networking sites as a public sphere is first and foremost the future of the people; their level of awareness, eagerness for political participation, and economy either becomes a burden or a motive for social and political change, among other variables. A different future requires a new narrative; that there is no nation has ever been ready for democracy; it is something generations practice decision by decision, and even in the oldest and well-established democracies, they are still struggling with extremists and odd public choices, in addition to similar issues related to polarization, hate speech, …ect. This is democracy.

'[…] On a distant island in the south-east of the Pacific Ocean called Tonja, there are pleasant rituals [followed] in conflict and animosity between protagonists; each group would tell their version [of the story] for a whole day without interruption, then everyone [listens attentively] till the session ends, and on the next day, the other group would speak and tell their version for hours without interruption, and so forth till each side would consider the other's point of view and comprehend their story/narration. And as the days pass, souls cool down and controversies fall, and rapprochement and reconciliation become easier. Consider and hold fast." (Heba Raouf Ezzat, 2021)

To make social media more efficient as a public sphere, the state should empower citizens, civil society, mass media, and political parties within the borders of the country's sovereignty. When it comes to regulating the Internet and social media platforms, it is argued that it is a matter of time till the old accepts the new and adapts; to open the door to others to push for a different narrative, and for the owners of the story to restore their right in telling it in their own words.

The overall Egyptian and Arab context is described as follows: The 'earthquake' of the 25th of January revolution was a turning point in rulers-people relationship that required rewriting a new inclusive social contract. Arab uprisings (2011-2012), in general, are understood as another phase of a longer historical process of modernization and cultural adjustment in the Arab world, begun in the 19th century.

Historically, as narrated, reforms and policies could aim at modernization, but have an unintended consequence generating greater inequality rather than greater inclusion. Exclusion, consequently, fuels societal tensions, instability, and violence. It puts people at a greater risk of marginalization.

During the transitions, described as 'a dangerous period,' many of the political, economic and social problems that triggered the uprisings deteriorate. Many countries' political economies have not changed in meaningful ways. There is an urgent need to '*reinterpret the past'* to avoid violence that would consume the country.

The ongoing conflicts across the region have to be resolved and demographic projections to be deviated from current trends; otherwise, the people in the Arab world will continue living in crisis and conflict conditions.

People in the region want more than political transitions. Institutionalized social dialogue holds great promise to facilitate the public debate and state-citizen communication essential to design and build consensus for the terms of a new and inclusive social contract.

In 2011, Egypt was looking forward to the 'institutionalization of democracy' as an organizing principle with its key procedures and values; '*to transform the protesting citizen into a participating citizen*,' and influence civil society, education, state institutions, the security apparatus, mass media, and all other sectors of society.

It is not enough, though, to 'wish' for a public sphere, as argued; a political will is not enough, either, and not even recognizing and celebrating diversity; rather, it requires an examination of definitions; terms and concepts. Everything seemed easy and uncomplicated during the 18th days; and everybody welcomed the other; (1) united around a common goal, (2)

afraid of evacuation, (3) the center was the people, and (4) the struggle was not to get power but against it.

The learned lessons: graffiti is not effective unless you own the walls, civil society alone is incapable of building a democratic and participatory public sphere, no matter how much money was pumped, freedom of expression and media can be easily ripped out and swallowed by the authority if it is not based on communal and class foundations as well as legal and political structure, even the virtual public sphere with all of its impact can be trapped, restricted, and marginalized.

The public sphere is formed historically through institutions and classes, a peaceful frame to the social political struggle, and the ability to introduce what's public, and the ability to peacefully and in a productive manner engage in debates regarding it. A public sphere is both physical and virtual and it is wider than the political sphere, and it is expanding the participatory democracy model against the representative model.

For Habermas, a public sphere is based on intellectualization and rationalization, and accordingly, individuals shall be free from religious, sectarian, and emotional irrational dimensions so as to reach consensus. (Amr Hamzawy, 2011; Hedi Larbi, 2016; James Zughby, 2016; Atlantic Council, 2019; Democracy Digest, 2019; Ali Al-Rajjal, 2020; Emanuel Schaeublin, 2023)

Social networking sites will continue to host the voices that are speaking out of 'the official' tone.' So far, there is no government around the world has been able yet to 'control' the digital public sphere. Silence is said to be the future act of resistance.

Some Muslim analysts argue that *Shura* is closer to the Arab ear than the Latin Demo Kracia, and it has a religious reference. The Islamic and Arab world, however, need a model to

follow in adopting this pillar of belief and one of the praised characteristics of believers: {*and who respond to [the call of] their Sustainer and are constant in prayer; and whose rule [in all matters of common concern] is consultation among themselves*} [Qur'an 42:38]

Democracy is viewed to be better achieved through the indirect political means; from bottom to top. It is related to a new political culture among the authority and its opponents alike, allowing for building a new political awareness in society. Jan25 is seen as an example of electronic social movements that generated what is known as tele-democracy.

It is argued that democracy within the Egyptian context will be such a long, complex, and multidimensional process, it is represented in what is called the '*Khaldounian* Cycle' attributed to *Ibn Khadoun*, in which the new elite is competing with the old elite in its economic, social, political, and cultural positions.

For an actual change, there are basic prerequisites as follows (Bassem Rashed, 2015; Future for Advanced Research & Studies, 2015; Shaimaa Al-Sharkawy, 2015): a political will; for the regime to know and believe that freedom is an important value just as much as security. A gradual shift, basically intellectual, that elevates the value of freedom to be equal to security. The authority has to understand that security is achieved through providing more freedoms to citizens instead of restriction; especially with the fact that such restrictions lead necessarily to working in secret groups that explodes in a certain moment off-guard when the government and security bodies least expects it.

Restoring the lost trust between the political regime and the citizens; laws are viewed, to be issued under the claims of regulation, organization, and security, while the content is different; the protest law in Egypt is for preventing protests, but in other countries that have similar laws, they are aimed at notifying the Police so as to take measure for protecting the

peaceful protest and to deter any extremist behaviors. The same goes with Cybercrimes; in the USA, the law is restricting terrorist use of social media, but in Egypt it is expanded to include any opponent opinion. This created a crisis of trust between authority and the people in Egypt.

Politically, exclusion only deepens the social division. The state has to include all sides especially the young people, and encouraging them to actively participate in the political process through political parties.

In addition to opening the public sphere to cultural and political activities; which if organized in public would be much better than in secret; then through public debates, ideas would fight counter-ideas, and this would weaken the extremist and terrorist thoughts. The official political discourse lately has already balanced freedom with security, but it needs to be put into action and real practices.

"*Give Salutation to those who unite us.' (Glory to Arab song, Qatar World Cup, 2022)*

DSICUSSION AND CONCLUSION

"We are living in a world of tension right now; different futures, different possibilities, and those tensions are what make day to day life difficult for organizations and persons. Future says: Let's get clear on the vision, let's look at the tensions and find ways to actually resolve those tensions. Strategic foresight is reducing the lag between the preferred future and today's reality." (Sohail Inayatullah. Series of interviews with Steve Gould, 2022)

When it comes to applying the Causal Layered Analysis on social networking sites as a public sphere within the Egyptian context; for the Litany, the analysis mainly revealed media coverage and the general role played by social media platforms in political communication, in particular during the Arab Spring and the 25th o January revolution in Egypt.

For the Systemic Causes layer, the analysis focused on reviewing the literature in addition to document analysis; laws issued for Internet regulation, and legal and academic organization reports that critically refuted these laws and regulations applications on examples and models addressing the extent of influence and the required modifications to ensure a beneficial impact that does not contradict with freedom of expression and democratic political participation. In addition to academic papers and studies that explained the varied factors and variables within the technical, economic, and social context in Egypt, the Arab region, and internationally.

The worldview analysis demonstrated that the major concept is 'democracy' as 'a pattern of thinking and a debatable, negotiable, and competitive ecosystem of values and morals' that facilitate managing conflicts in the public sphere through collective efforts seeking reaching a 'middle ground;' instead of forcing the change or imposing it by one side. It is better when inclusivity is achieved.

Four scenarios were developed for each layer representing the overall result of the layer; the Litany is represented in the '*frenemy*' scenario, the Systemic Causes is represented in

'occupy the cyberspace', Worldview is represented in *'centralization of truth,'* and Myth/Metaphor layer is represented in 'the *story of a nation versus the story of a generation.*'

Figure 3: CLA Scenarios: Alternative Futures
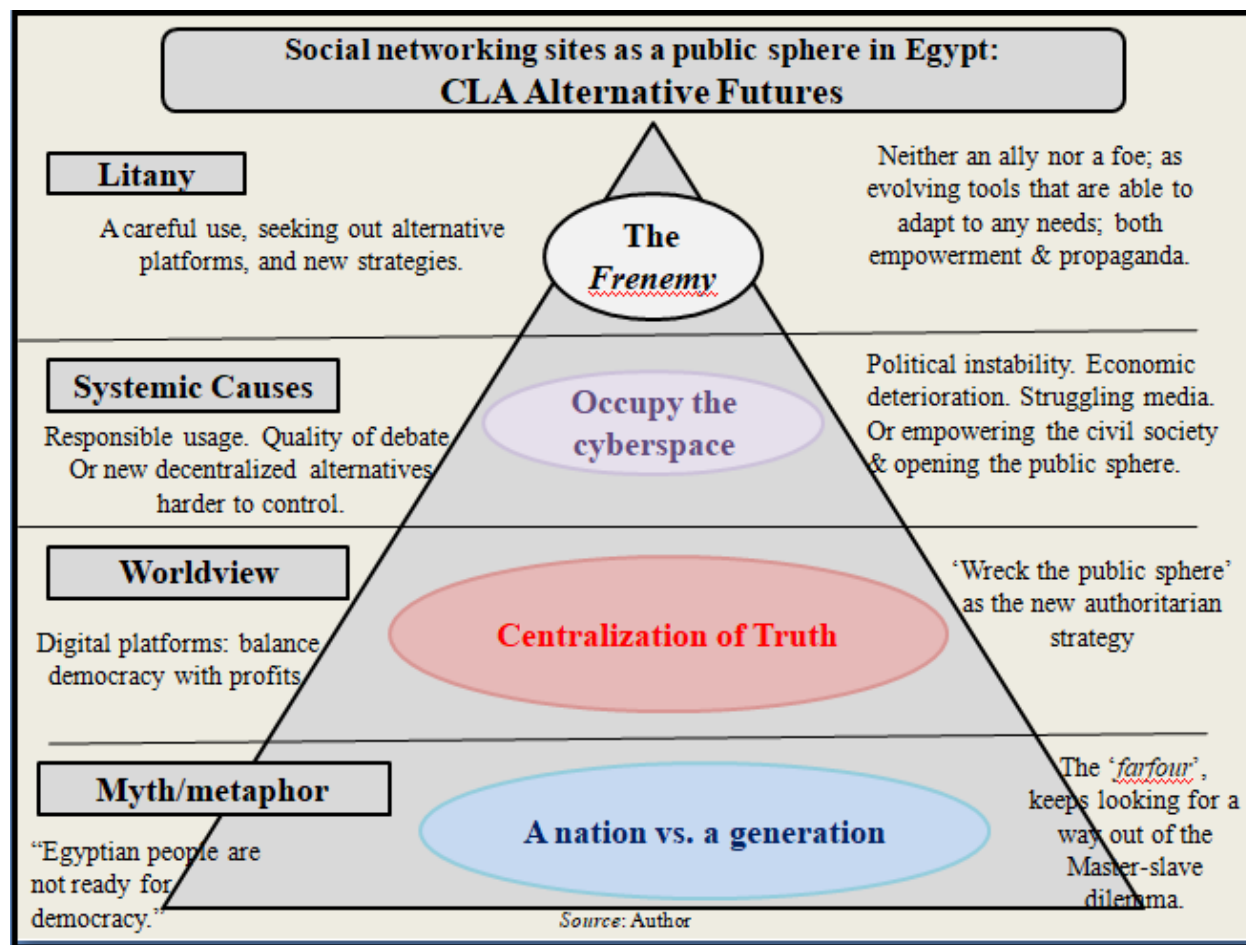
The major interacting driving forces are the internal circumstances; mainly economy and security, and the external circumstances; technology advancement and global and regional Internet governance policies. For a transformative scenario, the driving force could be socio-cultural changes; as it requires inclusive efforts to represent the different narratives regarding the past, present, and the future. (see Figure 2)

The current study belongs to critical futures studies; a systematic study of preferred, probable and preferable futures including the worldviews and myths that underlie each future.

Applying CLA approach involves understanding a diverse range of perspectives and experiences of the numerous stakeholders. CLA ensures that the analysis is grounded in the lived realities of the people affected by political communication in the region, and that any recommendations arising from the study are contextually appropriate and sensitive to local needs and dynamics.

Habermas believed that all disputes can be solved through open/public debate. The democratic communicative action can't obtain real legitimacy based on the authority of the reason except within a frame of critical discourse liberated from authoritative restraints and obligations. Mass media can't represent a public sphere since it depends on a one-way model of communication and flow of information.

The public sphere is people's social space and it occurs when they engage in a reasonable and human interaction. The Internet of course was considered as riving the spirit of the public sphere and enhances the democratic process.

It is obvious that social networking sites as a public sphere are facing several challenges, both globally and within local contexts that signal risks and opportunities. As described by Son (2013); challenges attempt to draw the great transformation of the future not only by providing new interpretations of the past, but also by offering new visions of what the future might hold for the phenomenon.

'Technologies are not only changing our world in a materialistic and pragmatic way but they are a primary factor in defining our conceptual models, influencing the way we understand and perceive our experiences.' (Carbonella, 2016)

Treating online Social networking sites as 'merely a technological advancement,' brings a 'negative' attitude toward online social networking sites in 'Egypt;' as few things have had such a high impact on the citizens' polarization. For this reason, the mainstream discourse has weakened the use of these applications. From that point of view the orientational metaphor

'*technology is down*' that is related to '*technology is bad*' has dominated the vision of technology during the last ten years.

Direct and interpersonal communication is still and will continue to be the most effective way of communication, delivering messages, and persuasion; changing thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. Online public sphere is not a substitution to the offline public sphere, and it should not be. It is complementary; both interchangeably affect each other in a way that is rewarding to the overall progress and stability in a community.

Verbal communication is one of the strengths of the Arabic tongue. As stated in the literature; 'Arabs enjoy speaking itself regardless of what is being said.' For political and opinion leaders, intellectual thinkers, journalists, poets, among others, freedom of expression is vital; not necessarily to rebel; but the opportunity to be heard and get their messages delivered to a large audience. This aligns with the rise of audio-chat applications.

Social networking sites are continuously developing their features and tools so as to be more real, close, and relevant in terms of communication style and discourse. If a healthy and ideal online public sphere is needed, then the easiest route is opening the offline public spaces. Critical thinking requires practice.

Media practitioners and academics focusing on the question regarding ethics are somehow questioning the quality of the public sphere; aiming at enhancing this vital space for public participation. However, every time the ethical/moral question is raised it is to push toward less trust in social media platforms and framing its users as irresponsible uncivilized barbaric type of people.

Although, previous research referred to online communication as allowing for more intense and extreme speech than face-to-face conversations, this doesn't by any means indicate that what is on social media is due to social media; in other words, those users, if they are real

individuals expressing their emotions and views and comments, not electronic committees intentionally causing noise, then they are simply Egyptians and they represent the reality.

As stated in the literature that 'much of the social and political online debates do not, and will not, seem different from those taking place in a casual or formal face-to-face exchange.' Instead, social media platforms bridged the gap between different sectors of the society and allowed for different perspectives to put partisanship aside and assess rationally their opinions and attitudes. (Rabah, 2013)

The ethical question, then, is a general question about Egyptian society in a critical moment, not specifically social media users. In addition, the comparison in analysis was between official pages representing political candidates and public pages created by ordinary people even if they claim their affiliation to certain ideology or group, it is still unofficial page.

Also, political discourse is fair in that it links between the quality of the online public sphere and the performance of those within the political public sphere; the culture of politics. Even the most advanced democracies witness polarization and extremist views, this doesn't by any means put all this in one package; this needs detailed and in-depth contextualized analysis that focus on enhancing the public sphere not on the security and legislation procedures alone; because as Inayatullah asserted: '*culture eats strategy in breakfast*.'

The current study argues that social media has become an integral part of the everyday lives of people worldwide, and this is especially true in Egypt, where social media platforms have played a vital role in shaping public opinion. The current study explores the impact of social media on Egypt's public sphere and what the future holds for this relationship.

In addition, social media platforms have been significant in providing platforms for political and social discussions, which have huge implications for Egypt's political and cultural

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landscape. Thus, the analysis explores the potential uses, limitations and possibilities; so as to shed much-needed light on how social media is transforming public discourse in Egypt.

The current study supports the literature in revealing the significant role that social media plays in public opinion and discourse, transforming the cultural and political landscape. One important point to consider is that social media is constantly evolving, and its impact on the public sphere is constantly changing. Therefore, the current study is serving as a guide for future research on this topic.

In addition, the in-depth CLA is essential because it helps inform governance actors, policymakers, and different stakeholders on how to better understand the transformative power of social media and how to adapt to the changing landscape of social media, and how to utilize it effectively for public good and social change, while minimizing its negative effects.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1) Conducting meta-Analysis to the titles, themes, and categories of local, regional, and international Journalism and Media Conferences in the last decade. This would reveal the academic discourse regarding communication, democracy, individuals and society freedom of expression, in general, and Journalism, social networking sites, and user-generated and professional content, in particular. As well as, it is recommended to conduct comparative studies between and among these conferences and its papers, presentations, and discussions. This allow for addressing the difference the future is bringing; as the standards and the divisions would go beyond the traditional stakeholder categorization; based on specialization, position, political ideologies, sociopolitical and geographical characteristics, toward the shared values, meanings, and visions.

2) Focusing more on critical methods and theoretical frameworks in studying the Internet and social media/networking sites. Studying social media platforms needs in-depth horizontal /vertical analysis that can cope up with the constant non-stop narrow and out of context research production. This huge amount of results need to be critically analyzed so as to reach a deeper understanding of the reasons behind this contradiction in literature related to varied crucial points, such as: definition, structure, the impact, the effect, governance, policies, production, technology and culture, power; center and peripherals.

3) Internet and social networking sites research has to follow, adopt, and apply multidisciplinary approaches, concepts, and models so as to reach fruitful and meaningful results that not necessarily short-term answers, but more importantly shifting the mindset within its national context and internationally, and opening new avenues related to the basics. This would achieve a homogenous atmosphere that is creatively welcoming diversities without sacrificing its foundations.

4) The call for 'media literacy' is vital for the future of the public sphere. This, however, should not be represented only via academic curricula; but mainly through integration of critical thinking within the public spaces and pop culture in Egypt. To evaluate the feedback and influence of such programs, it is recommended to conduct in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with the younger generations.

'We believe in democracy as a path, a future, and a way of life; in political multiplicity; and in the peaceful transfer of power. We affirm the right of the people to make their future. They, alone, are the source of authority. Freedom, human dignity, and social justice are a right of every citizen. Sovereignty in a sovereign homeland belongs to us and future generations.' [Excerpt Preamble, Egypt's Constitution, 2014)

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https://www.facebook.com/notes/mark-zuckerberg/a-privacy-focused-vision-for-social-networking/10156700570096634/

APPENDIX
LIST OF CORPUS

Year	2008
Title	هل هناك رأي عام عربي حقًّا؟
Author	Borhan Shawi
Source	https://elaph.com/Web/Archive/1066803409400302300.htm
Language	Arabic

Year	2009
Title	Review Essay: Adrift on the Nile: The Limits of the Opposition in Egypt.
Author	Steven A. Cook
Source	https://www.jstor.org
Language	English
Title	الديمقراطية الرقمية
Author	Jamal Muhammad Ghetas.
Source	General Egyptian Book Organization.
Language	Arabic
Title	شبكات التواصل الإعلامي من أجل الفهم والتفاهم.
Author	Omar Abdullah Mahrous.
Source	Omani National Commission for Education, Culture, and Science.
Language	Arabic

Year	2011
Title	Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People is Greater than the People in Power: A Memoir.
Author	Wael Ghonim
Title	New study Quantifies Use of Social Media in Arab Spring.
Author	Catherine O'Donnell
Source	http://www.washingtonpost.com
Language	English
Title	6 Ways Social Media is Like Ironman.
Author	Eric Harr
Source	https://www.socialmediatoday.com
Language	English
Title	From Dictatorship to Democracy.
Author	The Cairo Review of Global Affairs Interview with Amr Hamzawy.

Source	https://www.thecairoreview.com
Title	الفرافير.. مهنة الموت المهذب.
Source	https://www.alittihad.ae
Language	Arabic

Year	**2012**
Title	الإعلام الجديد: النظام والفوضى.
Author	Abdullah Al Zain Haidari.
Source	Sahar Publication.
Language	Arabic

Year	**2013**
Title	From Tribe to Facebook: The Transformational Role of Social Networks.
Author	Jamal Sanad Al-Suwaidi.
Source	https://www.archive.org
Language	Arabic.
Title	'Take him off the *Minbar'* – Religion and the Battle over Public Space.
Author	Amr Ezzat – The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights.
Source	https://www.facebook.com/events/299812566825621/
Title	Future of Democracy in Egypt after the 25th of January Revolution: Elites' Sociological Content Analysis.
Author	Osama Ismael.
Source	Faculty of Arts, Ain Shams University Annals, Vol. 45. pp. 13-60.
Language	Arabic.
Title	شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي والتحول الديمقراطي في مصر.
Author	Fathy Shams El-Dein.
Source	Al-Nahda Al-Arabia Publishing.
Language	Arabic
Title	الطاغية في المجال العام: ندوة الخطاب الإسلامي وإعادة تأسيس المجال العام.
Author	Muhammad Suffar.
Source	https://www.mominoun.com
Language	Arabic
Title	"فيس بوك" و"تويتر"... جمهورية الواقع "الملخبط."
Author	Rehab Loai.
Source	https://www.elwatannews.com
Language	Arabic
Title	"تنظيم الاتصالات": لا صحة لما تردد عن فرض قيود على شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي.

Author	Anadolu Agency.
Source	https://www.almasryalyoum.com
Title	قراءة في تاريخ تقنيات التواصل الاجتماعي ومستقبلها. :الوعي بالأفكار ماذا بعد تويتر وفيس بوك
Author	Khaled Bin Muahmmad Al-Ammari.
Language	Arabic
Title	وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ودورها في التحولات المستقبلية من القبيلة إلى الفيسبوك.
Author	Jamal Sanad Al-Swaidi.
Language	Arabic

Year	**2014**
Title	Netropolitan: Facebook for Rich People
Source	https://www.npr.org
Language	English
Title	View From Practice: Egypt's Ongoing Uprising and the Role of Social Media: Is there Development?
Author	Sherif H. Kamel
Source	https://www.researchgate.net
Language	English
Title	أفول افتراضي: مستقبل شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في الحراك العربي.
Author	Amro Abd-Alaty.
Source	https://www.adengad.net
Language	Arabic
Title	جدل حول مراقبة شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في مصر.
Author	Tamer Ezz El-Deen.
Source	https://www. france24.com
Language	Arabic
Title	هل تراجع تأثير شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في مصر؟
Author	Bassem Rashed.
Source	https://www. rsgleb.org
Language	Arabic
Title	نية وزارة الداخلية فرض الرقابة على شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي: أي حرمة للمراسلات الإلكترونية، وأي مساحة لحرية التعبير؟
Author	Menna Omar.
Source	https://www. legal-agenda.com
Language	Arabic
Title	شبكة اجتماعية تحطم قيود مستخدمي الإنترنت.
Source	https://www. jo24.ne
Language	Arabic

Title	شبكة تواصل اجتماعي جديدة بدون قيود.GlobAllShare
Source	https://www. alfajertv.com
Language	Arabic

Title	ظهور شبكات تواصل اجتماعي جديدة تروّج لنفسها بمزايا وخدمات مختلفة.
Source	https://www. alghad.com
Language	Arabic

Year	2015
Title	بين غسل الأدمغة وتجريد المواطن من الطاقة الإيجابية.
Author	Amr Hamzawy
Source	https://www. shorouknews.com
Language	Arabic

Title	Egypt Telecommunication Regulation Law.
Author	Association of Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE)
Source	https://www. afteeegypt.org
Language	English

Title	شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي بين الإقناع والتضليل.:استخدامات متناقضة
Source	https://www.futureuae.com
Language	Arabic.

Title	أيام اختلال المعايير.
Author	Amr Hamzawy
Source	https://www.shorouknews.com
Language	Arabic

Title	المجال العام في مصر وتحديات المستقبل.
Author	Shimaa ElSharkawy.
Source	https://www.academia.edu
Language	Arabic

Title	Stifling the Public Sphere: Media and Civil Society in Egypt.
Author	Sherif Mansour.
Source	https://www.ned.org
Language	English

Title	لماذا يتعين علينا أن نبدأ بقبول الرأى الآخر؟
Author	Amr Hamzawy
Source	https://www.shorouknews.com
Language	Arabic

Title	How New Social Networks Plan To Shrink The Internet To One Meaningful Story Per Day.
Author	Sarah Kessler
Source	https://www.fastcompany.com
Language	English

Title	حاكمة: دراسات الرأي العام العربي بعد الثورات العربية. عوامل تطور دراسات الرأي العام العربي بعد الثورات العربية.
Source	https://www. futureuae.com
Language	Arabic

Title	Is Globallshare a Scam or is it Legit?
Author	Richard Crowhurst
Source	http://www. quora.com
Language	English

Title	عن الفاشية التى بداخلنا.. مرة أخرى.
Author	Amr Hamzawy
Source	https://www.shorouknews.com
Language	Arabic

Title	الكتابة ضد التطرف كبديل للنقاش حول الديمقراطية.
Author	Amr Hamzawy
Source	https://www.shorouknews.com
Language	Arabic

Title	The Deceptions that Plague the Public Sphere in Egypt.
Author	Amr Hamzawy
Source	https://www.atlanticcouncil.org
Language	English

Title	"المعادلة الحرجة: كيف يمكن التوازن بين سياسات الأمن وقيم الحرية في الواقع المصري؟"
Author	Bassem Rashed.
Source	https://www.academia.edu
Language	Arabic.

Title	Egypt—The Death of the Public Sphere.
Author	Denver University (DU) Center for Middle East Studies
Source	https://www.youtube.com
Language	English

Title	إشكاليات الرقابة: الضوابط الأخلاقية والتشريعية لشبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في الدول العربية (2)
Author	Sherief Darwish Allabban.
Source	https://www.acrseg.org
Language	Arabic

Title	The Struggle over the Egyptian Public Sphere.

Author	Azzurra Meringolo.
Source	https://www.resetdoc.org
Language	English
Title	أجهزة الأمن ... الشركات الخاصة والسيطرة على شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في مصر.
Author	Waleed Abbas.
Source	https://www. mc-doualiya.com
Language	Arabic.
Title	السيد والفرفور.
Author	Azza Ahmad Haikal.
Source	https://alwafd.news
Language	Arabic

Year	**2016**
Title	Egypt Leads the Pack in Internet Censorship Across the Middle East.
Author	Elissa Miller.
Source	https://www.atlanticcouncil.org
Language	English
Title	الإعلام الشعبي بين إعلام الدولة ودولة الإعلام.
Author	Noha Atef Al-Abd.
Source	Al-Arabi Publishing and Distributing.
Language	Arabic
Title	The Egyptian Media, the Conflict of Agencies, and the President.
Author	Maged Atef.
Source	https://www.washingtoninstitute.org
Language	English
Title	شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي انهيار المجال العام وصعود الفضاء الافتراضي.
Author	Bukhabza Muhammad.
Source	https://www.asjp.cerist.dz
Language	Arabic
Title	Why Social Media Made but Couldn't Save the Arab Spring?
Source	https://www.demdigest.org
Language	English
Title	علم ثورة العقول واللاعنف.
Author	Amr Hamzawy.
Source	https://www.shorouknews.com
Language	Arabic

Title	Rewriting the Arab Social Contract: Toward Inclusive Politics.
Source	https://www.demdigest.org
Language	English
Title	Review Work(s): Egypt in the Future Tense: Hope, Frustration, and Ambivalence Before and After 2011.
Author	Emanuel Schaeublin
Source	https://www. jstor.org
Language	English
Title	إماتة العقل في بر مصر.
Author	Amr Hamzawy
Source	https://www.shorouknews.com
Language	Arabic
Title	إماتة النقاش العام.
Author	Amr Hamzawy
Source	https://www.shorouknews.com
Language	Arabic.
Title	Social Media Explained in Metaphors.
Author	Steven Saars.
Source	https://www. parallelinteractive.com
Language	English
Title	4 توقعات تحيط بمستقبل الشبكات الاجتماعية.
Author	Mostafa Mahmoud.
Source	https://lusailnews.net/
Language	Arabic
Title	الأخبار الكاذبة بفيسبوك هل توجه الرأي العام؟
Source	https://1-a1072.azureedge.net
Language	Arabic
Title	Snapchat: The End to Being Social on Social Media?
Author	Khaled Albaih
Source	https://www. newarab.com
Language	English
Title	أخطار تقليص المجال العام فى مصر.
Author	Mostafa Kamel Al-Sayed.
Source	https://www. shorouknews.com
Language	Arabic

Year	**2017**

Title	Social Media Platforms Can Be Built Around Quality, Not Scale .
Author	Lydia Laurenson
Source	https://www. hbr.org
Language	English

Title	جريمة ٢٥ يناير .. والذين شاركوا فيها.
Author	Ayman Al-Sayyad.
Source	https://www. shorouknews.com
Language	Arabic

Title	Intimidation in Public Life: A Review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.
Author	Committee on Standards in Public Life.
Source	https://www. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk

Title	أزمة الرأي العام العربي.
Author	Muhammad Kerat.
Source	https://al-sharq.com
Language	Arabic

Title	'Social Media Logic' Meets Professional Norms: Twitter Hashtags Usage by Journalists and Politicians.
Author	Gunn Enli & Chris-Adrian Simonsen.
Source	https://www.researchgate.net

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Source	https://1-a1072.azureedge.net
Language	Arabic

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Author	Emad Eldeen Mahmoud Abd Elaziz.
Source	https://sjsj.journals.ekb.eg
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Title	Book Excerpt: Online Activism in the Middle East: Political Power and Authoritarian Governments.
Author	Jon Nordenson
Source	https://www.arabmediasociety.com

Title	تيران وصنافير.. مشكلات العقل الحاكم للجدل العام في مصر.
Author	Said Okasha.
Source	https://acpss.ahram.org.eg/News/16325.aspx
Language	Arabic

Title	جدل عالمي: آليات وضوابط "مراقبة" مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي.
Author	Fatema Al Zahraa Abdel Fattah.
Source	https://www.futureuae.com
Language	Arabic

Title	President Al-Sisi Addresses the United Nations.
Source	https://egyptianstreets.com

Year	2018
Title	Egypt: 2018 Law on the Organization of Press, Media and the Supreme Council of Media.
Source	https://www.article19.org
Title	Egypt's New Cybercrime Law Legalizes Internet Censorship.
Author	**The Research Unit of the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE)**
Source	https://afteegypt.org
Title	An Interview with Amr Hamzawy: Reflections on the Future of Democracy in Egypt and Beyond.
Author	Amr Hamzawy and Sumaya Almajdoub
Source	https://www.jadaliyya.com
Title	Social Media's Junkies and Dealers.
Author	Roger McNamee.
Source	http://www.project-syndicate.org
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Author	Amr Hamzawy
Source	https://carnegie-mec.org/2018/12/17/ar-pub-77998
Language	Arabic
Title	Sisi's Full Speech at UN General Assembly.
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Author	Zahraa Bassam.
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Language	Arabic
Title	Review: 'Conspiracy in Modern Egyptian Literature.'
Author	Tugrul Mende
Source	https://arablit.org
Title	دراسة عالمية: أغلب المستخدمين لا يثقون بمواقع التواصل.
Source	https://www.alarabiya.net/
Language	Arabic
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Author	Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
Source	https://mfaegypt.org

Language	English
Title	شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في مصر: أخلاقيات الاستخدام وتأثيراتها ما بعد ثورة 25 يناير.
Author	Wedad Hamdy.
Source	https://ajo-ar.org/
Language	Arabic
Title	قانون جرائم الإنترنت في مصر ـ كبت جديد للحريات؟
Source	https://www.dw.com
Language	Arabic
Title	المجال العام من الواقع الفعلي إلى العالم الافتراضي: معايير التشكل والمعوقات.
Author	Amani Al-Mahdi.
Source	https://democraticac.de/
Language	Arabic
Title	من تضييق إلى إغلاق المجال العام: حصاد 2017 في مصر مع الباحث خالد فهمي.
Source	https://ar.qantara.de
Language	Arabic
Title	فيسبوك ومخاوف المستقبل.
Author	Hosny Nasr
Source	https://www.omandaily.om/
Language	Arabic

Year	**2019**
Title	A New Phenomenon in the Public Sphere?
Author	Ziad A. Akl.
Source	https://english.ahram.org.eg
Title	Social Networks: A Counter-Public Sphere or a Source of Fake News -Zahraa Badr.
Author	Amelia Arsenault.
Source	https://www. miltonwolfseminarofmediaanddiplomacy.wordpress.com
Title	مصر في 2019م: كيف تمكنت مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي من إحداث تأثير على أرض الواقع؟
Author	Abd Al-Baseer Hassan.
Source	https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-50917502
Language	Arabic
Title	How to defend against fake news?
Author	Democracy Digest
Source	https://www.demdigest.org
Title	The struggle for inclusive citizenship in Arab countries: A preview of Arab Human Development Report.

Author	Atlantic Council.
Source	https://www.atlanticcouncil.org
Title	The Arab Region After the Uprisings: Struggling to Define Inclusive Social Contract.
Author	Democracy Digest
Source	https://www.demdigest.org
Title	مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي: فضاء عمومي وانعكاس قيمي.
Author	Bumadian Karima.
Source	https://www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/article/98913
Language	Arabic
Title	شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي.. آلية دعائية بلا قيود!
Author	Mohammad Elwany.
Source	https://www.rowadalaamal.com/
Language	Arabic
Title	Trolls use a little-known Twitter Feature to Swarm others with Abuse.
Author	Lauren Feiner.
Source	https://www.cnbc.com
Language	English
Title	"إنسانيتي أكبر من وظيفتي".. السيسي يحذر من استخدام شبكات التواصل لإيذاء الدول.
Source	https://almalnews.com
Language	Arabic
Title	Reviewed Work: *Conspiracy in Modern Egyptian Literature* by Benjamin Koerber.
Author	Chip Rossetti.
Source	https://www. jstor.org
Title	الحكومة ترصد 9 شائعات خلال الأسبوع المنقضى (فيديو) خلال الفترة (من 11 حتى 18 يوليو 2019)
Source	https://almalnews.com
Language	Arabic
Title	شائعات رصدها مجلس الوزراء في 9 أيام: تعرف عليها (فيديو) خلال الفترة من 26 سبتمبر حتى 4 أكتوبر 2019م.
Source	https://almalnews.com
Language	Arabic
Title	Social media user-generated content.
Author	Hossam Badrawi @HossamBadrawi
Source	Twitter.
Language	Arabic
Link	https://twitter.com/HossamBadrawi/status/1118098196692119553

Year	2020
Title	Freedom in the World 2021: Egypt.
Author	Freedom House Annual Report.
Source	https://freedomhouse.org
Title	الرأي العام العربي.. تغييرات كبيرة.
Author	James Zogby.
Source	https://www.alarabiya.net
Language	Arabic
Title	Arab Spring 2.0? Five lessons from 2011.
Source	https://www.demdigest.org
Title	شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي .. بين الإخفاقات والنجاحات في 2019م.
Author	Ahmad Bayouni
Source	https://www.aleqt.com/
Language	Arabic
Title	Ten Years after the Arab Spring: Why Democracy Failed?
Source	https://www.demdigest.org
Title	قضايا بناء الدولة في الخطاب الرئاسي وعلاقتها بأجندة وسائل الإعلام وأجندة الشباب.
Author	Alaa Fawzy Al-Sayed
Source	Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Cairo University.
Language	Arabic
Title	"المجال العام": ما حدث في مصر، وتدقيقٌ في التعريفات.
Author	Ali Al-Rajjal.
Source	https://assafirarabi.com/ar/
Language	Arabic
Title	Facebook Is a Doomsday Machine. The architecture of the modern web poses grave threats to humanity.
Author	Adrienne LaFrance
Source	https://www.theatlantic.com
Title	الرأي العام في الواقع الافتراضي وقوة التعبئة الافتراضية.
Author	Mohammad Mostafa Refaat.
Source	Al Arabi Publishing and Distrbuting.
Language	Arabic
Title	Social media user-generated content.
Author	Amr Salah
Source	Facebook
Language	Arabic
Link	https://www.facebook.com/amr.salah.3110/posts/pfbid02izjsCD8C6kLB1jTf5GTiYccHAtiP8csj445PCTEMXkyU8bcUHSz4WD4NFDjz2BhRl

Title	Social media user-generated content.
Author	Mohamed Elbaradei @ElBaradei
Source	Twitter.
Link	https://twitter.com/ElBaradei/status/1302578762320695296

Year	2021
Title	The Internet and the Law in Egypt Series. First Part: Centralization of Telecommunications. Second Part: Digital Media. Third Part: Digital Privacy.
Author	**The Research Unit of the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE).**
Source	https://afteegypt.org

Title	معركة فرافير يوسف إدريس!
Author	Rashad Kamel
Source	https://daily.rosaelyoussef.com
Language	Arabic

Title	Freedom on the Net 2021: Egypt.
Author	Freedom House
Source	https://freedomhouse.org/country/egypt/freedom-net/2021

Title	Beyond Mainstream Media and Communication Perspectives of the Arab Uprisings.
Author	Hanan Badr & Lena-Maria Moller.
Source	https://www.cogitatiopress.com

Title	الدولة الذكية ومستقبل شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي.
Author	Fathy Shams El-Deen.
Source	https://idsc.gov.eg/
Language	Arabic

Title	The Future We Want: A Series of Research Papers: How the Internet became centralized and what that means? How Internet centralization affects us? What do we mean by Free Internet?
Source	https://masaar.net

Title	شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي ودورها في تعزيز قيم المواطنة لدى الشباب السيناوي "دراسة ميدانية."
Author	Khaled Sabry Abd Al Hadi.
Source	https://jsb.journals.ekb.eg/article_167987.html
Language	Arabic

Title	The Arab Spring at 10: Kings or People?

Author	Tarek Masoud.
Source	https://www.journalofdemocracy.org
Title	Facebook Tried to Make Its Platform a Healthier Place. It Got Angrier Instead.
Author	Keach Hagey and Jeff Horwitz.
Source	https://www.wsj.com
Title	مسرح يوسف إدريس.. بين تمرد الفرافير وبهلوانية الإعلام.
Author	Ali Abu Humaila.
Source	https://2-m7483.azureedge.net
Language	Arabic
Title	Cairo Media Conference 3: The Reconstruction of Journalism in the Age of Entertainment & Uncertainty.
6-7 December 2021. The American University in Cairo, Tahrir Campus. (In person attendance).	
Title	Recommendations On Regulating Disinformation and Other Harmful Content on Social Media.
Author	Caroline Atkinson, Dipayan Ghosh, Michael Posner, et al.
Source	https://www.hks.harvard.edu
Title	إنترنت بلا مراقبة.. كيف يمكن للحكومة المصرية إنهاء سياسة المراقبة الجماعية.
Source	https://afteegypt.org/research/policy-papers/2021/06/03/22759-afteegypt.html
Language	Arabic
Title	Recommendations: On Regulating Disinformation and Other Harmful Content on Social Media
Author	Caroline Atkinson, Dipayan Ghosh, Michael Posner, Paul Barrett, John Haigh, Vivian Schiller, et al.
Source	https://www.hks.harvard.edu
Title	الرئيس السيسي وفتح المجال العام في مصر.
Author	Ahmad Abd Alaal Omar.
Source	https://www.masrawy.com
Language	Arabic
Title	الدردشات الصوتية.. قد تصبح مستقبل شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي.
Source	https://www.hashtagarabi.com/
Language	Arabic
Title	هل تمثل التسجيلات الصوتية مستقبل شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي؟
Author	Tania Baso.
Source	https://technologyreview.ae
Language	Arabic
Title	الميتافيرس.. مستقبل شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي الذي سيغير العالم.
Author	Fathy Shams El-Deen
Source	https://www.cairo24.com/1402950
Language	Arabic

Title	Social media user-generated content.
Author	Heba Raouf Ezzat
Source	Facebook
Language	Arabic
Link	https://www.facebook.com/groups/darstalat

Year	2022
Title	Democracy Fades in the Arab Spring's Success Story.
Author	Simon Speakman Cordall.
Source	https://foreignpolicy.com
Title	Metaverse, future of the internet or simply a buzz?
Source	https://www.headmind.com
Title	تويتر بعد إيلون ماسك: هل ستكون نهاية الشبكات الاجتماعية كما يعرفها جيل الطيبين؟
Author	Foaad Al Farhan.
Source	https://alfarhan.ws/twitter-with-elon-musk/
Language	Arabic
Title	The Public Sphere: A Talk given at the first meeting of the shared digital European Public Space Group.
Author	Bill Thompson.
Source	https://astickadogandaboxwithsomethinginit.com
Title	قبل أن يصبح الحوار الوطني فرصة أخيرة مهدرة.
Author	Hossam Mones.
Source	https://masr360.net
Language	Arabic
Title	Social media is polluting society. Moderation alone won't fix the problem.
Author	Nathaniel Lubin & Thomas Krendl Gilbert.
Source	https://www.technologyreview.com
Title	عوالم ممزقة: كيف يجرى إجلاء المصريين من المجال العام؟
Author	Hesham Gafaar
Source	https://masr360.net/
Title	Digital 2022: Egypt.
Author	Simon Kemp.
Source	https://datareportal.com
Title	Exclusive: Twitter is Losing its Most Active Users, Internal Documents Show.
Author	Sheila Dang.
Source	https://www.reuters.com

Title	مقدمة في إحياء الإرادة العامة.
Author	Anwar Al-Hawary.
Source	https://masr360.net
Language	Arabic
Title	Twitter Users Flock to Other Platforms as the Elon Era Begins.
Author	Amanda Hoover.
Source	https://www.wired.com
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Author	Naji Shohoud.
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Language	Arabic
Title	Facebook Has a Super-User Supremacy Problem.
Author	Matthew Hindman, Nathaniel Lubin, and Trevor Davis.
Source	https://www.theatlantic.com
Title	مؤشرات شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي عالميًا ومحليًا..وتأثيرها على الأمن القومي.
Source	https://draya-eg.org
Language	Arabic
Title	Shaping the Future of Social Networks: HELIOS.
Source	https://cordis.europa.eu
Title	Egyptians and Digital: 2022 Report.
Source	https://naos-solutions.com
Title	6 Metaphors to Describe Social Media.
Source	https://www.mcnuttpartners.com
Title	My Name is the Internet.
Author	Konstantinos Komaitis.
Source	https://techpolicy.press
Title	هل كل منصات التواصل الاجتماعي في طريقها للفشل؟
Source	https://enterprise.press/ar/stories/2022/11/10
Language	Arabic
Title	The Decentralized Web and the Future of Section 230.
Author	Andrea O'Sullivan.
Source	https://www.thecgo.org
Title	Wrecking the Public Sphere: The New Authoritarians' Digital Attack on Pluralism and Truth.

Author	Simone Chambers and Jeffrey Kopstein.
Source	https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com

Title	الحروب النفسية علي شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في مصر!
Author	Muhammad Saad Abdullateef.
Source	https://www.unlimited-news.com
Language	Arabic.

Title	تنظيم المجال العام.
Author	Amr El-Shobaki.
Source	https://www.almasryalyoum.com/

Title	خالد داوود: نطالب بفتح المجال العام والحريات السياسية.. والحوار الوطنى عظيم.
Source	https://www.youm7.com/
Language	Arabic

Title	مصر:21 منظمة حقوقية تطالب الوزراء الألمان بالضغط من أجل فتح المجال العام وإطلاق سراح سجناء الرأي في مصر قبل قمة المناخ.
Source	https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/5878/2022/am/
Language	Arabic

Title	توقيع من منظمات وبرلمانيين وشخصيات من أكثر من 80 دولة حول العالم يطالبون مصر بفتح المجال العام وإطلاق السجناء السياسيين.
Source	https://eipr.org
Language	Arabic

Title	"فرافير" يوسف إدريس مسرح شعبي مصري متجذر أم بريختية مقنعة؟
Author	Ibrahim Al Arees.
Source	https://www.independentarabia.com
Language	Arabic

Title	Social media user-generated content.
Author	Mamoun Fandy @mamoun1234
Source	Twitter.
Language	Arabic
Link	https://twitter.com/mamoun1234/status/1593683172943798272

Title	Social media user-generated content.
Author	Mamoun Fandy @mamoun1234
Source	Twitter.
Language	Arabic
Link	https://twitter.com/mamoun1234/status/1591856978078437378

Title	Social media user-generated content.
Author	Amal Alharithi @amal_alharithi
Source	Twitter.
Language	Arabic

Link	https://twitter.com/amal_alharithi
Title	Social media user-generated content.
Author	@Sultan_1
Source	Twitter.
Language	Arabic
Link	https://twitter.com/Sultan_1
Title	Social media user-generated content.
Author	@xgypt
Source	Twitter.
Language	Arabic
Link	https://twitter.com/xgypt
Title	Social media user-generated content.
Author	Awni Belal @awni_inwa
Source	Twitter.
Language	Arabic
Link	https://twitter.com/awni_inwa/status/1565045788400558082
Title	Social media user-generated content.
Author	Mohamed Dhia Hammami @MedDhiaH
Source	Twitter.
Link	https://twitter.com/MedDhiaH
Title	Social media user-generated content.
Author	Wael Eskandar @weskandar
Source	Twitter.
Language	Enlgish
Link	https://twitter.com/weskandar/status/1591389482728710145
Title	Social media user-generated content.
Author	Nanjala Nyabola @Nanjala1
Source	Twitter.
Language	Enlgish
Link	https://twitter.com/Nanjala1/status/1590005005133656066
Title	Social media user-generated content.
Author	Faten Salah @fatenali
Source	Twitter.
Link	https://twitter.com/fatenali
Title	Social media user-generated content.
Author	Farah-Silvana Kanaan @farahkanaan
Source	Twitter.

Link	https://twitter.com/farahkanaan
Title	Social media user-generated content.
Author	Mohamed Elbaradei @ElBaradei
Source	Twitter.
Link	https://twitter.com/ElBaradei/status/1486713148048429068

Year	**2023**
Title	How dangerous is TikTok?
Author	Janosch Delcker.
Source	https://www.dw.com
Title	Beyond Section 230: Three paths to making the big tech platforms more transparent and accountable.
Author	Rober Kozinets and Jon Pfeiffer.
Source	https://www.niemanlab.org
Title	عام يُحدد ملامح ما بعده.
Author	Hossam Mones.
Source	https://masr360.net/
Language	Arabic
Title	Digital 2023: Egypt.
Author	Simon Kemp.
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