

Rauf Arif, **Movements for Change: How Individuals, Social Media and Al Jazeera Are Changing Pakistan, Egypt and Tunisia**, New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2020, 276 pp., \$81.22 (hardcover).

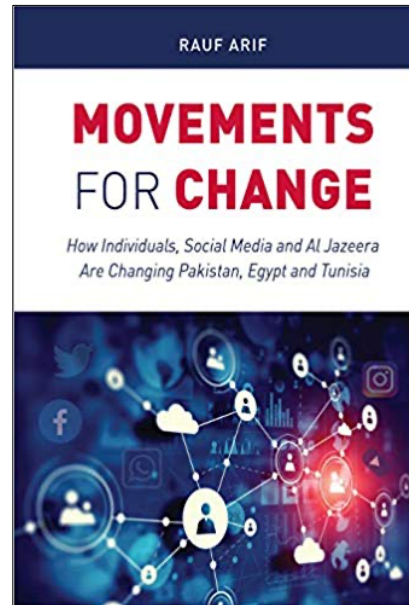
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At the time of his book's publication, Rauf Arif, author of *Movements for Change: How Individuals, Social Media and Al Jazeera Are Changing Pakistan, Egypt and Tunisia*, was a faculty member at Texas Tech University. I volunteered to review this book because of my interest in the ongoing academic debate on the role of individuals and social media, and how traditional media such as *Al Jazeera TV* became an active player in these three Muslim-majority countries, particularly during their respective political uprisings.

I started reading *Movements for Change: How Individuals, Social Media and Al Jazeera Are Changing Pakistan, Egypt and Tunisia* in an inclusive mood. In other words, while reading this book, I was open to incorporate academic literature related to mass communication and political science in connection to social media and social movements. The author lays a groundwork for communication scholars and political scientists to revisit the role of mediated communication in social movements by comparing three Global Southern countries that share sociopolitical, cultural, and religious context.

The text unfolds that the three case studies—Pakistan's 2007 lawyers' movement and online activism; 2010 Tunisian protests and political activism, and 2010–2011 Egypt's political uprisings—share striking commonalities. Arif argues that these commonalities must be acknowledged in the scholarship to better understand the role of social media and human communication via these digital platforms. Also, such an understanding will set the stage for further research and academic discussion in the areas of global collective memories and global social movements.

By revisiting the historical context of the countries, the author shows how Pakistan's 2007 lawyers' movement was a starting point for the new era of online social movements in the Muslim world, and how the 2010–2011 Tunisian and Egyptian political uprisings were the climax of that series. However, most of the literature in this scholarship notes that the Egyptian and Tunisian social movements marked the beginning of social media use for online activism and ignore the fact that social media played a significant part in Pakistan's 2007 lawyer's movement. In other words, Arif suggests that Western academic scholarship should acknowledge Pakistan's political uprising of 2007 as the beginning of a new era of virtual social movements in Muslim-majority countries while studying the so-called Arab Spring of 2010–2011. For instance, Kidd and McIntosh's (2016) study noted that social media is an important component in social revolutions in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Iceland, and Spain. However, their study overlooked Pakistan, where social media played a critical role in the 2007 lawyers' movement. Similarly, Wolfsfeld, Segev, and Sheafer (2013) argue that to understand the



importance of social networking sites in collective action, it is pertinent to contextualize the political environment in which they operate. Rauf states that one of the reasons that might have led scholars to overlook Pakistan as a predecessor of online social activism is that the events in Pakistan were not of a higher magnitude compared to the Arab Spring (Ahmad, Alvi, & Ittefaq, 2019).

Furthermore, Arif aims to clarify that these three case studies demonstrate that despite the government's use of the traditional media as components of their architectures of repression, *Al Jazeera TV* and social media platforms provided cascades of information and alternative avenues for the creative expression of discontent. Also, the author corrects the notion that Pakistan's 2007 lawyers' movement against Pervez Musharraf (then president of Pakistan) to release the supreme court chief justice should be considered the beginning of online activism in Pakistan via social media, while Egypt and Tunisia represented the climax of this new phenomenon of mass political uprisings. These online protests will serve as models for future generations who are striving to rise against authoritarian regimes in other Muslim and non-Muslim countries such as 2019's ongoing Algerian Spring.

This book consists of five parts, the first of which discusses how communication should be looked at as the central reason for the organization and sustainability of social movements. Arif argues that scholars need to redefine what social movements are and how they are relevant to the field of communication. Part II highlights the importance and contribution of arts and creative means, not only to sustain an ongoing social movement, but also to spread the message of dissent to potential sympathizers. This part of the book notes that these three countries have notable icons who had creative ideas to encourage people to protest against their respective regimes. The sociopolitical movements in these three countries were utilized to spur outrage through sharing and resharing images of iconic importance on social media. For instance, on the one hand, Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry from Pakistan, Khaled Saed from Egypt, and Mohamed Bouazizi from Tunisia were three iconic personalities whose online political activists in the three countries used outrageous images on social media platforms as a tool to revolt against their respective regimes. On the other hand, the Qatar-based *Al Jazeera TV* network was silently playing its role to inform the masses in the three countries, particularly when local TV channels were banned from airing the news about political uprisings.

Parts II, III, and IV are dedicated to each country under discussion. These parts go into further depth to highlight similarities and contrasts among icons of each country, as well as their respective previous and current social movements, and provide a detailed discussion about the political and cultural contexts, political systems, and constitutions of Pakistan, Egypt, and Tunisia. Moving forward, the author further contextualizes why Pakistan and Egypt are not bigger beneficiaries of the postrevolutionary era, when compared to Tunisia. Each part begins with a quick synopsis about each country, along with details about its education rate and economic conditions as a reference for the reader to understand this debate in a wider context.

Part V of the book, "What Happens Now?" leads the discussion forward by highlighting the uprisings of 2019 in the non-Western setting. It showcases current developments of protest series in Algeria, Pakistan, Morocco, and Sudan. Part V also discusses women's active political role in the recent political uprisings of the Muslim-majority countries. Arif argues that the icon of outrage in these new social movements is tied back to the Arab Spring, as discussed in Part IV.

The author observes in Part V that any social movement that originates from social media platforms involving human communication generates a new collective memory for global audiences. Thus, the whole debate about collective memory being culture specific is challenged, as these new aspects of collective memory that are created and shared on social media platforms have a global outreach and thus can be deployed by future political uprisings, regardless of geographical boundaries. Whenever there is a new social movement on a social media platform, it starts creating another global memory, and that new global memory can become a reference for a future social movement in any part of the world. For example, the image of Mohamed Bouazizi, which was seen globally on social media platforms during the Arab Spring of 2010, has added to the archive of global memory. Members of any new social movement in Pakistan, Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, or elsewhere can utilize this image to promote and sustain their struggle against tyrannical regimes, since it is an element of their own global memory. The author concludes that the Internet made it possible for individuals to become part of global memories and social movements of the 21st century.

In terms of scholarly contribution in communication and social movement literature, this book extends our understanding of how iconic personalities, social media platforms, and *Al Jazeera TV* played an active role in social movements in Pakistan, Egypt, and Tunisia. We should acknowledge these factors that were essential in making these movements successful in the virtual realm. The author's theoretical concept of "flash social movements" to study political uprisings that originate on virtual platforms of communication is another significant contribution. Flash social movements are referred to as movements containing certain elements (e.g., hashtags and groups) for a collective action to take place on social media platforms. These movements quickly appear and disappear on the Internet, specifically on social media platforms.

Historically speaking, social movements have not typically occurred as overnight phenomena. However, since the inception of ICTs, many countries have witnessed that political collective actions and new social movements emerged overnight through social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. Recent examples include #MeToo and #IStandWithAhmed (Killham & Chandler, 2016). The sudden appearance and disappearance of social movements on social media should be studied by using the approach of flash social movements rather than just relying on traditional approaches to collective actions and social movements. More research and discussions are needed to explore this new theoretical paradigm of flash social movements in the field.

References

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