

**EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION PROVES THE POWER OF THE INTERNET**—The world slowed to watch history unfold. The protests started on January 25, the Day of Wrath, when thousands of Egyptians took to the streets to protest poverty, unemployment, government corruption and the autocratic governance of President Hosni Mubarak, who ruled the country for thirty years. Two-thirds of Egypt's 79 million citizens have never known another ruler. The government responded by blocking Twitter, which was being used by organizers to coordinate the protests.

Blocking Twitter only enraged Egyptian citizens and brought increased national attention to the uprising. Officials blocked Facebook while riot police took to the streets, arresting and injuring hundreds with batons, tear gas and water cannons. Protests occurred not only in Cairo, the nation's capital, but also in Alexandria and Suez, two other major cities.

Two days later, Nobel Laureate and former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency Mohamed ElBaradei returned to Egypt from Vienna, ready to lead the protests. ElBaradei is considered a potential Egyptian successor to Mubarak.

The Muslim Brotherhood, long a fierce opponent of the Mubarak regime and officially banned from Egypt, threw their support behind the protestors, many of whom were young, tech-savvy Egyptians.

With protests growing, the government blocked all Internet services in the country. With Twitter and Facebook already down, email and other social networking outlets also fell, including text messaging. Yet protestors and journalists found alternate means of providing information online.

All of which leaves one to conclude that knowledge is indeed power.

Mitch Albom, a syndicated columnist and Detroit talk show host, once ranted against Facebook in the aftermath of a teen suicide tied to Facebook, saying, "Nothing good can come from social networks."

Really? Not even the downfall of a corrupt government?

Wael Ghonim, Google's Middle East and North Africa marketing manager, ignited the protest with his Facebook page, "We Are all Khaled Said," memorializing an Egyptian businessman who had been beaten to death by police after threatening to expose corruption. Ghonim was arrested three days after the protests started but released 12 days later.

Yet the events that led to the downfall of Mubarak are not unprecedented. In December 2010, a revolution led to longtime President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fleeing to Saudi Arabia in January 2011, after holding office for 23 years.

The Tunisian government also was unable to censor information from reaching Tunisian citizens, even as they reportedly carried out phishing operations to confiscate user passwords and monitor online criticism.

All of which leads one to consider whether the Internet has revolutionized the modern revolution.

Will we see more similar government overthrows in the future? Only time will tell.

Corruption in government it seems is becoming increasingly more difficult to hide from prying eyes.

Case in point: WikiLeaks, an international non-profit organization that publishes private, secret, and classified media from anonymous news sources.

In July 2007, WikiLeaks released "Afghan War Diary," a compilation of nearly 77,000 documents about the War in Afghanistan previously unavailable to the public. While in November 2010, WikiLeaks began releasing U.S. State department diplomatic cables.

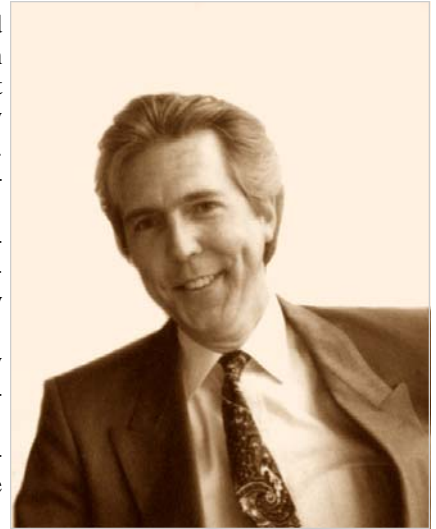
WikiLeaks has revolutionized news. Supporters in the media and academia have commended WikiLeaks for exposing state and corporate secrets, increasing transparency, supporting freedom of the press, and enhancing democratic discourse while challenging powerful institutions.

While our own government has criticized WikiLeaks for exposing classified information and claimed that the leaks can harm national security and compromise international diplomacy.

I understand the need for state secrets; yet a fear of transparency leads me to wonder what our own government is hiding from us.

No government is benign, and sometimes the greatest evil is one that masquerades as good.

Can you imagine a revolution similar to those in Egypt and Tunisia taking place in this country?



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