

Communicative Turn of IR in Analyzing the Arab Spring

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(Work in Progress)

The self immolation of a young Tunisian to protest the police on 17 December 2010 in the city Sidi Bouzid has achieved legendary significance as the symbolic start of dramatic events in the Arab world. When a few hundreds of angered Tunisians gathered in that small city on 18 December no one would have thought it was going to trigger a movement in which millions of people included and alter the region irreversibly. International Relations (hereafter IR) failed not only in predicting but also analyzing these developments. The concepts such as “dramatic change” or “unexpected rebellion”, which imply to be caught off-guard by the events, have since begun to appear in many analyses of the region, mostly as a sign of failure to go beyond an essentialist approach subsumed under the primacy of inconsistency between Islam and democracy in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries.¹ Yet, more than a failure, this unpreparedness can be seen as a chance to rethink the ontology of IR from a different perspective, the one which is more sensible to “change” in highly dynamic new world. The central role of the nation-states has long been criticized since globalization as a concept was being spelled, but it has been mainly about the powerful transnational companies or organizations which are potent enough to challenge the dominance of governments in world politics. Globalizing world has brought many differences to IR, but it was may be the Arab uprisings that the most unexpected one, ordinary person, became the prominent figure in changing the fate of a region and the world, profoundly. The new communication techniques make this ordinary person a new type of cyber society effective in world politics which is hard to comprehend and theorize with well known IR tools. Any IR theory would go no further than highlighting the importance of communication, if not ignoring at all. The old enough problem of sensibility of IR to “change” may find its answer in a new direction to communication theory.

¹ Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?”, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, Summer 1993; Eva Bellin, “Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons From the Arab Spring”, *Comparative Politics*, January 2012; Gabriel Ben-Dor, “Political Culture Approach to Middle East Politics”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.8, No.1, 1977; Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978

Instead of state centric and static formulations of world politics, IR would start to analyze the speedy world of relations, as it promises in its name, by integrating new apparatus of communication theory.

Following the speed of communication technologies and their deep impact on societies, communication theory might give the necessary increase of velocity to IR as Der Derian once underlines in terms of its being “slow” to grasp the change. He foresees the shift in IR from the realm defined by sovereign places, impermeable boundaries and inflexible geopolitics, to an environment of accelerating flows, challenged boundaries and fluid chronopolitics. In short, pace is displacing the space. IR scientists are too slow to understand the “immaterial” change according to him and “(t)hey/we have lost the alacrity and celerity to keep up with events engendered by a rapidly moving aesthetics of information”.²

Arab Spring, if not yet turned into a winter for some³, is one of the great cases to give an idea of the incompetence of IR in, let alone predicting, understanding the changing effect of social movements. Although the movement can be defined by the socio-economic discomfort within the societies motivates people to march on the streets, the way of masses organization on social media in hours or even minutes, the real time watching of the millions from their TVs all around the world and the snowball effect encompassing many protestors all around the world make this uprising worth a new way of inquiry. To this end, this paper claims that there is a new kind of transnational movement engendered by the new empowering communication ways that has risen in the Arab region and in order to understand its creation and impacts for the world politics, IR needs to “update” itself by using communication theory.

From 1 to 5,100, 500, 10.000, 200.000 and Millions: Arab Uprisings

It is for sure that protest movement was not a new phenomenon either for the masses of the world in general or Arab people in specific. Many examples from old or contemporary times can be given in this context. But it was after 2000s that new communication techniques gave a different power to masses protest to topple governments. New information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as the internet and mobile phones, have had eminent roles in triggering and entrenching new

² James Der Derian, *Antidiplomacy: Spies, Terror, Speed and War*, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992, pp.129-130 and 135

³ See Hussain Abdul-Hussain. “Arab Spring or Islamist Winter”, *World Affairs*, January/February 2012 (<http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/arab-spring-or-islamist-winter-1>); Lee Brody, “Is Arab Spring Turning Into Arab Winter?”, *CNBC*, 11 September 2012 (http://www.cnbc.com/id/48992646/Is_Arab_Spring_Turning_Into_Arab_Winter)

mass movements in many countries.⁴ Its real potential lies in its support for the flourish of civil society and the public sphere.

The examples for ICTs motivated activisms can be various. One of the first ones would be Indonesia in 1998. The activists used their mobile phones to mobilize to topple Suharto.⁵ On January 17, 2001, during the impeachment trial of Philippine President Joseph Estrada, loyalists of the Congress voted to set aside key evidence against him. Only two hours after the decision about the president was announced, thousands of Filipinos gathered on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue in the Manila who were angry that their corrupt president might left off the hook. The protest was arranged by forwarded text messages reading “Go 2 EDSA. Wear blk.” The crowd quickly swelled and in the next few days, over a million people arrived to Manila stopping the traffic. Estrada was gone by January 20 and even he himself blamed “the text-messaging generation” for his downfall.⁶ Kyrgyzstan’s Tulip Revolution of March 2005 was another important case that mobile phones were used to organize activists to join the protests at key moments of the president.⁷

With regard to contentious political action, there is a strong correlation to be made that this new information community empowered social activism in a different format. Years 2000s witnessed massive popular mobilizations across the Arab region. After Israel’s reoccupation of the West Bank in 2002 and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, many protests were seen demanding reform and freedom in the region.⁸ In 2005, Kuwait’s women’s suffrage movement was much more successful than it had been in 2000, because they could call many activists out of school by using text messages and they gathered in huge masses to claim their suffrage.⁹ Egypt had its own experience with such social movements, as well. The *Kefaya* Movement, active from 2004 to 2007, was able to hold protests against the brutality of the Mubarak regime. They were eager to use the internet. The April 6 Movement was able to organize an impressive strike in the spinning

⁴ Philip Howard, *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Information Technology and Political Islam*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, p.3

⁵ Philip Howard, *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Information Technology and Political Islam*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, p.3

⁶ Clay Shirky, “The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, The Public Sphere, and Political Change”, *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2011, p.1

⁷ Philip Howard, *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Information Technology and Political Islam*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, p.4

⁸ Marc Lynch, “After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State”, *Reflections*, June 2011, Vol.9, No.2, p. 303

⁹ Philip Howard, *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Information Technology and Political Islam*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, p.4

town of Mahalla al-Kubra in April 2008, but it reached a limited success after all.¹⁰ However, all these examples had shown that a young generation witnessed how powerful a protest can be in domestic and external environments.

Iranian 2009 presidential elections have a special importance at this point. “Green Revolution” of the Iranian young and enthusiastic generation, who were all armed with mobile phones and wireless internet.¹¹ Actually Facebook was blocked by the Iranian authorities soon after it went live in 2004 because of its danger for the regime. In a move, they probably regret, however, Iran’s Council for Determining Instances of Filtering allowed the access to Facebook early in 2009 and it was not a surprise to see that the young Iranians took it swiftly. These internet applications allow these young Iranians to get messages out as never before and thereby organize much bigger campaign rallies. During the elections of 7-26 June 2009, the smart phones and social media were amazing. SMS traffic rushed on the eve of the election, but in the early morning hours before the poles opened, Iranian government decided to turn off the text messaging system and block the key opposition websites on the internet. After the officials declared the victory of Ahmadinejad against Mousavi, there was a growing movement among the people about the fairness of the results, or just the unhappiness of it. To support network communication, the activist Iranians organized a supply proxy servers which was unknown by the state censor. Hence, despite the heavy interference of the government with digital devices, SMS, Twitter and other social media, they were all used to coordinate massive turnout at protests across the country on June 15. When the mobile phone videos of blood pooling dead of a young Iranian woman Neda Agha-Soltan who was shot during the demonstrations were uploaded to You Tube on June 20, it became one of the iconic global images of the protests. The huge numbers of social media users are impressive. Between 7-26 June, an estimated 480,000 Twitter users exchanged over 2 million tweets. On the election Day, it was over 200,000 per hour. One of the Twitter user persiankiwi had 24,000 followers by the sixth day of the protests. Mousavill388 had 7,000 followers. The Twitter service itself was registering 30 new posts a minute with the

¹⁰ Jon B. Alterman, “The Revolution will not be Twitted”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Fall 2011, p. 107

¹¹ Marc Lynch, “After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State”, *Reflections*, June 2011, Vol.9, No.2, p. 303

#IranElection user. #StopAhmadi kept more than 6,000 followers alert to photos streaming up to Flickr.¹²

As it was December 2010, the peoples of the Arab region were ready to ignite the flame of a growing social movement. The region, which has a high youth population, was at the outset of a big change when the young Tunisian self-immolated himself on 17 December 2010. People were protesting not only the death of a young Tunisian but also the maltreatment of the police, state forces and government in general. Protest demonstrations erupted so soon and spread to neighboring cities, leading to repression but still a slow response from the Tunisian state. Popular mobilization was spontaneous but increasing day by day. Police forces were harsh in repression at first but then receded by 10 January 2011, as the army signaled that it was not going to take any action against the protestors. As a general strike unfolded on 14 January, the Tunisian president Ziyen-el Abidin Ben Ali was flying to Saudi Arabia. The overthrow of Ben Ali galvanized the already loaded popular political action in Egypt.¹³ Nearly everything were all recorded and published on the social media, TV channels began to give the news from Tunisia as the breaking news all around the world. Soon, the flame jumped into the other countries of the region.

When Tunisia had been having these protests, the biggest and closes echo came from Egypt, which presented a similar dark picture of socio-economic conditions as in Tunisia. By January 2011, Egypt's youth unemployment rate was 25 % and many young Egyptians have to wait for years after they finish their education to get a job. Annual inflation in 2010 was running approximately 10 %, which was the highest of any country in the world. The economic unhappiness united with political corruption in the country. The government steered the November 2010 parliamentary elections mostly toward the ruling party, boosting National Democratic Party representation from 318 to 420, while Muslim Brotherhood supporters in parliament dropped from 88 seats to one. Egypt was a tinderbox by January 2011.¹⁴ The outrage of Egypt was stoked by many factors, but the Facebook page dedicated to an Alexandrian internet activist who was beaten to death by the police has a separate importance. The page, "We are all Khaled Said" was created by one of the Google regional executives Wael Ghoneim. The support to the page was

¹² Philip Howard, *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Information Technology and Political Islam*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp.5-8

¹³ Katerina Dalacoura, "The 2011 Uprisings in the Arab Middle East: Political Change and Geopolitical Implications", *International Affairs*, 88: 1, 2012, p. 64

¹⁴ Jon B. Alterman, "The Revolution will not be Twitted", *The Washington Quarterly*, Fall 2011, pp.108-109

enormous. In few hours, few hundreds turned into thousands and then into millions. On the main protest day of January 25, the group had almost a half-million members.

Social media became the arena for the Egyptian activists to protest their governments. In part as a consequence of the news coverage, a growing number of Egyptians began to create their own content and post it online to share with the world. They filmed events with their mobile phones, they made short movies, they created photo montages, they swapped songs and they combined and recombined them in many different ways. Perhaps even more important of all, is the way social media helped activists to find an audience, yet, audience could turn into activists as the social media prompt them to cast their lot with protestors in the streets.¹⁵ The interesting results of a poll which was conducted by the Dubai School of Government suggests that 56 % of Egyptian respondents said that when the Egyptian government's blocking the Internet and Facebook had a positive effect on the protestors because oppression made people more determined and pushed undecided people to be more active and find creative ways to organize and communicate¹⁶. In other words, social media's power is not only coming from its expanding the audience online but also from its capacity to turn them into activists. As Alterman puts "(S)ocial media is enabling people to *send* content, transforming them from observers of activism to activists themselves with a greater stake as leaders, not just followers, of unfolding events."¹⁷

The protesters talked, communicate and planned everything on the internet via their Twitter or Facebook accounts. The Police Day, January 25 was agreed as the big protest day on Tahrir Square. When the day came, it was maybe not half a million people on the square but there were more than 20000 eager and angry Egyptians shouting "Change, Freedom, and Social Justice". Mass protests are always telegenic, but Tahrir was especially so. From the colorful images of attackers on camels charging crowds to rows of people praying in harmony, the Tahrir Square protests were like one of the biggest stories that TV channels had been waiting for. Social media supplied the rolling coverage of the television networks with cell phone images, sounds and posted messages. In fact, there are many writers and analysts who think that it was the television, al Jazeera, CNN or BBC, which drove events, framed, legitimized and broadcast them to a wide

¹⁵ Jon B. Alterman, "The Revolution will not be Twitted", *The Washington Quarterly*, Fall 2011, p.111

¹⁶ Dubai School of Government, "Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter", *Arab Social Media Report*, May 2011, p.8 (<http://www.dsg.ae/portals/0/ASMR2.pdf>)

¹⁷ Jon B. Alterman, "The Revolution will not be Twitted", *The Washington Quarterly*, Fall 2011, p.104

audience.¹⁸ Although this idea has a very strong ground, the changing role of social media in organizing and speeding up the events, encouraging people to be an activist and turning a local protest into a global activity cannot be ignored. Yet this role of social media spotlights a significant new empirical reality that will affect the understanding within IR from now on. Because, there were not the governments, not the institutions or the international system that changed the region and give word to masses, but it was the society itself. New kinds of communication techniques equipped the ordinary people with new powers and the politics is not out of their reach anymore.

Social media offers powerful tools by reducing transaction costs for protest organizers and presenting rapid and well functioning channels for the dissemination of Facebook messages, tweets, pictures or frames.¹⁹ Secure and cheap tools of communication diminish transaction costs for organizing social movements, with social media in particular supporting like-minded members to find each other and to make their true beliefs known in a semi-public setting. This kind of facility helps to overcome the atomization and isolation policy of dictatorships grounded on political conformity and silence. In addition, the informational cascades can break the wall of fear as long as people witness the raising sound of protests on the squares.²⁰

The internet savvy youth generation is more active on the social media and maybe that is why this kind of extraordinary transnational movement was ignited on these lands. The statistics of internet usage in the Arab world show that Arabic is the fastest growing language on both Facebook and Twitter, which is being followed by English. The total number of Facebook users in the Arab world stands at more than 45 millions as of June 2012, which was 16 millions in June 2010. 70 % of the users are between the ages 15-29. Egypt still constitutes about a quarter of total Facebook users in the Arab region, and has added more users in the past year more than any Arab country, at over 1.6 million new Facebook users between January and June 2012. The approximate number of active Twitter users was more than 2 million, as end of June 2012. The estimated number of tweets generated in the Arab region in March 2012 by “active users” was 172,511,590 tweets. There were 5,750,386 tweets posted per day and 3993 tweets per minute, or roughly 67 tweets per every second. Another social media address LinkedIn has about 4

¹⁸ Jon B. Alterman, “The Revolution will not be Twitted”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Fall 2011, p.112-114

¹⁹ Marc Lynch, “After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State”, *Reflections*, June 2011, Vol.9, No.2, p. 302

²⁰ Marc Lynch, “After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State”, *Reflections*, June 2011, Vol.9, No.2, p. 304

million Arab users in June 2012, which has grown 20% between February and June 2012. As on Facebook, 70 % of the Arab LinkedIn users are young people, between the ages 18-34.²¹

Although Facebook and Twitter did not *cause* revolutions, it would be implausible to ignore the fact that the careful and strategic uses of the tools of digital media to social networks, along with international support networks, have empowered activists in new ways. Social media had a fundamental role in the Arab Spring in the sense that it provided the very infrastructure there created well functioning communication ties and organizational capacity in groups of activists before the big protests on the squares took place or during the street protests were being evolved into ordered demonstrations. Yet, these networks allow the social media figures taking in charge of protest leaders and successfully activated large numbers of people to protest. Social media is the reason we have such reachable and detailed documentation of events. Moreover, “it is the reason that Egyptians had such live coverage of what was going on in Tunisia, and also the reason that Moroccans, Jordanians, and Yemenis had coverage of what was going on in Egypt, just as Libyans and Syrians had coverage of what was going on in those countries, and so on. In other words, it was social media that brought the narrative of successful social protest across multiple, previously closed, media regimes.”²²

New social media networks deeply challenge and transform the exercise of power by the sovereign nation state via undermining its capability to legitimate its rule. The confident, energetic youth of Tahrir Square symbolize this vision of new competences aggregating into political change. By becoming producers and distributors of information, and by overcoming the editorial control of state censorship, these individuals would become new kind of citizens, better able to resist to the instruments of state manipulation. The rise of new citizenship and the transformation of public sphere²³ would possibly enlighten what lies beyond the nation-state soon.

Yet, it is also possible to say that it was not the social media which brought the leaders of Egypt or Tunisia, but hundred thousands of people on the squares ready to fight for their believes no matter what it takes. The socio-economic conditions matter for all those people when going to squares for protesting their governments, as they mattered

²¹ Arab Social Media Report, (<http://www.arabsocialmediareport.com>)

²² Muzammil M. Hussain and Philip N. Howard, “Democracy’s Fourth Wave? Information Technologies and the Fuzzy Causes of the Arab Spring”, Paper Prepared for Presentation at the International Studies Association, April 1-4 2012, San Diego, p.14

²³ Marc Lynch, “After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State”, *Reflections*, June 2011, Vol.9, No.2, p. 307

for the previous social protests in 19th century. But, the way of organization, speed of movement and its transnational conceptualization of democracy or social justice are far beyond the previous ones. Social media and its new breath in communication would deserve a separate interest for a deep research by the social scientists, here by the IR scholars.

Communication and IR: A New Turn?

All social systems and orders of exchange, including international relations, are communicatively constituted. Communication is everywhere and everything seems to be communication. However, despite the catch-phrase usage of communication in IR, the very concept of “communication” marks a “blank space” in contemporary theories of IR. It is not to assert that communication is not taking a part in IR theorizing. Quite the contrary, communicative practices of flow of information among the actors and the inter(!)-national realm of the discipline puts communication the cement of international relations. Units are always communicatively coded in the international system since they have a social meaning in and for it. However, perhaps there is no prominent theory of IR which takes communication as the central conceptual notion on the ground which theory is ascending. Instead, this relegation of communication within the discipline puts the concept to the margins of most IR theories.²⁴ Karl W. Deutsch was one of the few theorists who put communication at the centre of his IR theory which is worth to mention here. According to Deutsch sees social systems as cybernetic, communicatively constituted systems and political systems as the advanced versions of social systems, are all capable of achieving operational autonomy and learning how to change themselves for their own sakes.²⁵ Jürgen Habermas’ “communicative action” notion is another frequently pointed theory by many IR theorists to restructure universally applicable conditions for the prospect of a reasoned consensus which is grounded on the basis of “universal pragmatism”. However, instead of communication itself, it was the “action” which has been at the focal point. Because, communication is seen as a consensus-creator between the negotiating parts and as soon as the consent is reached, the communication would terminate in the

²⁴ Mathias Albert, Oliver Kessler and Stephan Stetter, “On Order and Conflict: International Relations and the ‘communicative turn’”, *Review of International Studies*, No. 34, 2008, pp. 43-44

²⁵ Karl W. Deutsch, *The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control*, New York: The Free Press, 3rd ed., 1969

“communicative action” of Habermas.²⁶ Actually, IR has originally has been doing the same thing when it is dealing with communication. Instead of examining the development of the process, role of the partners or evolution of the relations during communication, the main result of the communication is on the table. In other words, communication is seen as a taken for granted process in international relations which does not need any deep analysis about how do the ways of communication, the sender/receiver relationship or the means of communication influence the nature of the politics in essence.

Production, dissemination and use of new communication techniques and information technology change the nature of social and political relationships among states, between government and governed, or the style of making politics. As we all live in this “global information age”²⁷ no such theory about politics, societies or simply, social facts cannot be think separate from the evolution of communication and its new frontiers.

In 1998 Bradbury and Vehrencamp defined communication as follows: “The process of communication involves two individuals, a sender and a receiver. The sender produces a signal which conveys information. The signal is transmitted through the environment and is detected by the receiver. The receiver uses the information to help make a decision about how it should respond”²⁸ This is a general definition of communication which includes the sender, the receiver and the transfer of information. Communication theory, which has been grounded on information theory in the early 1920s, is a discipline of information and mathematics studying this information exchange between the sender and receiver, the input and output of communication process and the development of communication techniques. There has been developed many different models by communication theorists to grasp a better analysis. Claude Elwood Shannon and Weaver prompted their research on communication from psychology and sociology, which carried the communication theory into a more social science identity.²⁹ David Kenneth Berlo’s³⁰ sender-message-channel-receiver model, which was popular in 1960s,

²⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, Vol. 1, Cambridge: Polity, 1986

²⁷ Beth A. Simmons, “International Studies in the Global Information Age”, *International Studies Quarterly*, 55, 2011, pp.589

²⁸ Jack W. Bradbury and Sandra L. Vehrencamp, *Principles of Animal Communication*, Sinauer Associates, 2nd Ed., 2001 (1998)

²⁹ Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*, Urbana, Illinois, 1949

³⁰ David Kenneth Berlo, *The Process of Communication: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, Holt: Rinehart and Winston, 1960

was developed by Robert T. Craig's³¹ eight basic elements of communication: Source, Sender, Channel, Receiver, Destination, Message, Feedback, and Positive and Negative Entropic Elements. Although the communication theory has been evolving during its century old history, the very nature of sender-receiver model has always been the bone of communication in general.

In fact the studies about the means of communication have for a long time depended on this very sender-receiver model. Technological change has always been a powerful driver of change in means of communication. As the print technology started with the Gutenberg's Bible in 1453, mass media had been through various phases. The first printed newspaper was published in 1605 as a massive step in print media. It was probably the invention of telegraph in 1844 which had a deep impact in binding continents and erasing the distances. It created rapid transcontinental news reporting which was essential for the development of modern world, as we know. Telegraph linked countries, continents and peoples. The vital connection of European countries to their colonies were all done by telegraph technology and its existence meant a lot for the run of world politics.³² The telephone (1875), phonograph (1877), radio (1906), broadcast TV (1926), basic internet protocol – TCP/IP (1978) and personal computer (1981) are all landmarks of not only communication but also the human history. As communication develops the relations between peoples evolve.

One of the first media theorists, Innis, developed a relationship between social change and communication technologies. According to him all media have bias and they affect the perception of time and space.³³ McLuhan, the famous electronic media theorist, continued Innis' work about cultural dynamics and claimed that technological mediation of societies is a state of culture. According to him, new communication techniques are not only connecting people as a simple way of connection, but they also accelerate and enlarge the scale of human functions, create new societies and shape the history.³⁴ His popular statement "the medium is the message" means that importance of new medium of communication lies on its potential capacity to change the patterns of social affairs in total.

³¹ Robert T. Craig, "Communication Theory as a Field", *Communication Theory*, 9:2, 1999

³² Ariane Knuesel, "British Diplomacy and the Telegraph in Nineteenth-Century China", *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 18:3, 2007

³³ Harold Innis, *The Bias of Communication*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951

³⁴ Marshall McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*, New York: The Vanguard Press, 1951

Therefore, the medium is more important than the text, which shapes and controls humanity.³⁵

McLuhan's well articulated and simplified into a one short sentence theory has been the milestones of communication and media theories. However, the change of neither technology nor society is slowing down and when Tim Berners-Lee links hypertext to TCP/IP, which means the internet of the World Wide Web, globalization was ready to become the driving force of the world. In fact, it was the years of when globalization was changing the nature of not only Communication Theory but also IR theory. More information transfer with social computing alters the world we search. More information can be transmitted in less time between many people. Yet, with the rise of social computing the communication technology carries the world into a new understanding of time and space.

McLuhan's famous dictum "the power of media" has shifted into "power of people", which expresses the raising importance of media content generated by people.³⁶ User generated content has the capacity to change the sender-receiver model of communication into a different aspect, where the taken for granted "receivers" of the broadcast media turn into the producers, distributors and senders of information. According to Mark Poster, one of the first digital media theorists, the "new media" is different from the old broadcast media, mainly because while the old one was "passive, the new one is highly "active". Yet, he makes direct connections between the broadcast media with modernism, in the sense that it was part of the development of modern industrial capitalism and the nation-state. In that respect, the structure of broadcast media reflected its role in the modern understanding of nation state. In nation-states there is a small group of elites who are the producers of information because of their their wealth and privilege. They have the easy access and ability to shape the public sphere of broadcasting, and thereby send one-way communication to the much larger mass of receivers. The communication has a hierarchical nature, or at least represent the general interest of those in power since it creates hegemony through the ownership and distribution of popular culture favorable to the status quo.³⁷ This kind of passive audience is also one of the critiques of Frankfurt School of modern media and popular

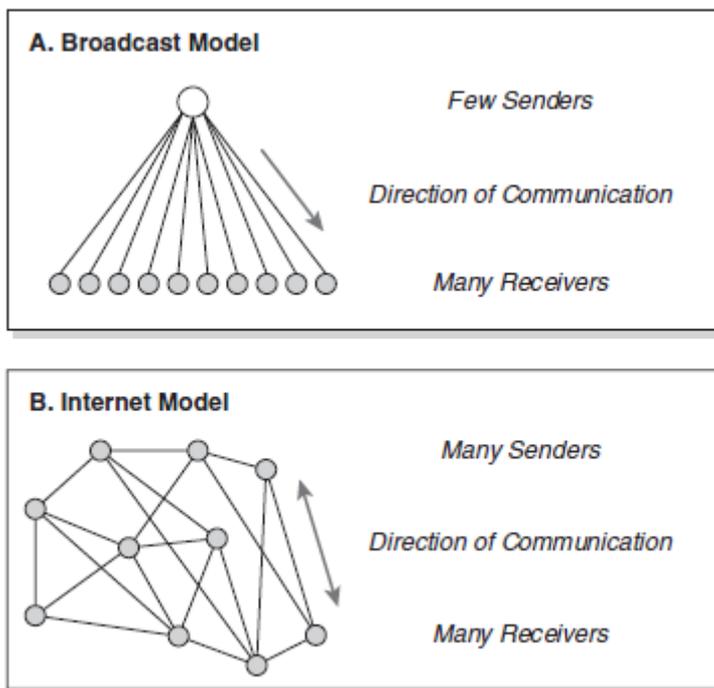
³⁵ Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message" in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964

³⁶ Özlem Dalkılıç, "When People are the Message...Public Participation in new Media: User Generated Content", *Jpurnal of Yaşar University*, 3 (10), p. 1354

³⁷ Vincent Miller, *Understanding Digital Culture*, London: Sage Publications, 2011

culture, especially in writings of Adorno and Horkheimer.³⁸ By contrast, new internet model of media engenders a more active and critical subject. Its interactive, two-way communication model suggests a collapse of the distinction between consumers and producers of information. The more decentralised and less hierarchical network can allow the audience the affordances of increased choice and the ability to ‘answer back’ or produce their own media.³⁹ The old broadcast and new internet model of communication can be understood in the following figures.

Broadcast and Internet Communication Models



(source: V .Miller, Understanding Digital Culture, p.13)

Denis McQuail explains the new computer based digital media in four ways. First, they have enormous capacity of carrying, storing and delivering information at high speed. Secondly, the same channel can carry all know media forms in combinations and at the same time. Thirdly, the new technologies are essentially point-to-point rather than centre-peripheral. Lastly, they have much higher interactive capability, which has the possibility

³⁸ Theodor Adorno, “How to Look at Television”, in J. M. Bernstein (Ed.), *The Culture Industry*, New York: Routledge, 2001, pp.158-177; Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1972

³⁹ Quoted by Vincent Miller, *Understanding Digital Culture*, London: Sage Publications, 2011, pp.12-13

of creating new kind of social collectivity or “virtual community”.⁴⁰ In other words, the user generated new media empowers the individual to produce and distribute his/her ideas and influence the society as never before. Social media turns the traditional understanding of sender-receiver model upside down.

The social media is a wide term which includes such social networking applications like Facebook and Google, microblogging services like Twitter, media sharing sites like YouTube and Flickr, and blogs, wikis or many other interactive media softwares. Social media is considered to be a part of the Web 2.0 movement, which is based on user-generated content, online identity creation and relational networking. It has the potential for e-participation.⁴¹ In general, social media has four major potential strengths: participation, collaboration, empowerment, and time. Since social interaction is the basis of social media, it is collaborative and participatory. The users have the ability to connect to each other easily and form communities to socialize, share information, or to achieve a common goal or interest. It is empowering as the social media users find platforms to speak, anyone with access to the Internet has the ability to inexpensively publish or broadcast information, effectively democratizing media. In terms of time, social media technologies allow its users publish information in near-real time.⁴²

IR has not fully taken stock of the way in which user-generated usage of internet or social media is reshaping the roles of political actors and the rules of politics. According to Carpenter and Drezner, the service, teaching and making IR as a profession has changed with the new media.⁴³ New communication techniques are challenging the main subject-matter of IR, nation-state, and its unquestioned authority over the people. Politics has been given as a secluded area of the governments and international/domestic differentiation has been grounded on this idea of power distribution. However, the rules of the game has been deeply changing with technological developments in communication and the ordinary people are now equipped with this power of sharing, producing and distributing information which means the essence of power in reality. Information societies create a new linkage between government and the ordinary people. This is not to claim

⁴⁰ Denis McQuail, “New Horizons of Communication Theory in the New Media Age” in Angharad N. Valdivia (ed.), *A Companion to Media Studies*, Oxford: Blackwell publ’s’ng, 2007, p.44

⁴¹ Michael J. Magro, “A Review of Social Media Use in E-Government”, *Administrative Sciences*, 2012, No. 2, p. 149

⁴² J. C. Bertot, P. T. Jaeger, J.M. Grimes, “Using ICTs to Create a Culture of Transparency: E-government and Social Media as Openness and Anti-corruption Tools for Societies”, *Government Information Quarterly*, 2010, No. 27, pp. 264–271.

⁴³ Charli Carpenter and Daniel W. Drezner, “International Relations 2.0: The Implications of new Media for and Old Profession”, *International Studies Perspectives*, 11, 2010, pp.255-272

that the society is the most important actor in politics, but there are new non-state actors other than huge companies or organizations: ordinary people. In 2006 Time magazine's "Person of the Year" would be a departure of this new actor estimation, because it was saying "You" framed in a computer screen, meaning that all of the people who contribute to user generated media are the most effective for world politics. When Clay Shirky entitles his book as "Here Comes Everybody", it is the ordinary person who is living in the middle of a remarkable increase in their ability to share, to cooperate with one another and to take collective action, all outside of the framework traditional institutions and organizations. When the way of communicate changes, the society changes according to Shirky.⁴⁴

IR as a discipline mainly grounded upon the relations between states is not immune from this change and its ontology needs to be questioned according to the new environment of the world politics. "The world as is known was over"⁴⁵ and the new world needs a more flexible, interdisciplinary and fast way of theorizing. The foreign policy is no longer the sole province of governments. Yet, according to Joseph Nye, "the old images of sovereign states balancing and bouncing off each other like billiard balls will blind us to the new complexity of world politics."⁴⁶

IR has mainly built around few central claims reinforcing one another. Instead of describing the world, *constituting* the features about it, is one of the important powers of IR –which in turn pulls it down. As a way of early-modern spatio-temporal solution to the problem of "particularity versus universality", IR comes up with the principle of "state sovereignty".⁴⁷ Within this practical way of analysis, the concepts that considered universal, such as power, interest or war are being examined according to particular units of sovereign states. These actors are assumed to be rational and interacting with each other in the world affairs. Actually, the spatio-temporal formulation of sovereign state trapped into its self-fulfilling-prophecy. In other words, the assumption of sovereign state actors is stuck into its ahistoric and artificially constructed units. Theories depending on these claims are mutually confirming each other in its cycle of well developed literature. However, sublimating the nation-state as spaceless and timeless structure of societies

⁴⁴ Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody*, London: Allen Lane , Penguin Books, 2008, pp. 17 and 20-21

⁴⁵ Meltem Müftüleri-BAC, "Information Societies, New Terrorism: Its Impact on International Politics", *Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika*, Issue 3, No.9, 2007, p.132

⁴⁶ Joseph Nye, "The Information Revolution and the American Soft Power", *Asia-Pacific Review*, 9:1, 2002, p. 62

⁴⁷ Rob B.J. Walker, *Inside / Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.27-28

would be an implicit chronofetishism and tempocentrism⁴⁸ in terms of its narrow perspective. Hence, the concrete shell of nation-states seems to be tight and restrictive for making any further analysis about globalizing and transforming world issues, e.g., transnational social movements.

As one of the biggest transnational movement, Arab spring has been affecting societies since its breakout and it has considered no national boundaries. Any political theory bounded within the world of nation-states would doom to failure because of the transnational character of this movement. Surely, new ways of communication and digital media are the prominent contributors of this transnationality. Smart phones, social networks or satellite TV channels connect the people to each other regardless of their citizenship. Developing techniques of communication makes it a necessity for IR theories to reassess the taken-for-granted boundaries of sovereign states. Instead of evaluating world politics according to the given states as the main actors; opening the gates of political theory to flexible, transitional and variable multiplayers would enhance the vision of IR.

Related with the idea of sovereign states as the units of analysis, deification of the role of states in shaping the societies is another problematic issue in IR. State is empowered with the ability to govern, inform and shape societies because of its direct access to means of production and communication. Although many people write frequently about indisputable rise of other actors in international system next to the states, it is still not yet realized that the new form of communication can dethrone the state and create new epicenters of control. These new epicenters can be various, but the most intriguing is the most unexpected one: the ordinary individual.

This ordinary individual is actually the very “subaltern” whose “words are weak, rough, illiterate, and inaudible”⁴⁹ and who invented the new means of influence in society that orthodox IR misses: social media. The practice of communication transformed with this new phenomenon. It is no more just about transmitting and receiving information but about the production of meaning and constitution of political, social and economic

⁴⁸ Chronofetishism: ‘sealing off’ of the present such that it appears as an autonomous, natural, spontaneous and immutable entity. Tempocentrism: Reconstructing all historical systems so as to conform to a reified and naturalised present, tarnishing all systems as homologous or ‘isomorphic’. These terms are taken from John M. Hobson, “What’s at stake in ‘bringing historical sociology back into international relations’? Transcending ‘chronofetishism’ and ‘tempocentrism’ in international relations”, in *Historical Sociology of International Relations*, eds. Stephen Hobden and John M. Hobson, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 8-9

⁴⁹ Costas M. Constantinou, Oliver P. Richmond and Alison M. Watson, “International Relations and the Challenges of Global Communication”, *Review of International Studies*, No.34, 2008, p.10

subjectivities. In this sense, communication is not limited with transmission and reception of messages. It is the ability to participate the transformation of society via producing, manipulating, delivering and using information.⁵⁰ The subaltern is equipped with the ability to reach millions of people, produce information and distribute it in seconds. This kind of transforming impact of communication challenges the control mechanism of state over society. State is no longer in command of informing and orienting the people on its own, because the people are not the mere receivers of the given, they become senders as well. However we should not forget about state's surveillance capability over the means of communication, its easy access to intelligence and competence in blocking the flow of information. What we should do is to see the new picture without overestimating the role of communication and without underestimating the role of the state ongoing capacity. It might be the missing link of IR in understanding the new nature of world politics.

In order to free IR from its tight suit of "sovereign state" and bring it back to sociality, a communicative turn might give an appropriate basis for development. It can enlarge the scope of analysis via looking into the process of interaction and the changing ways of social connection. Considering the evolution of the flow of information, communicative turn might give new tools to IR to understand the changing character of social movements and political outcomes.

It is definitely not something new in IR to criticize the main actor role of nation-states in world politics, since from "interdependence" or "globalization" became the important mind provoking concepts in world politics. The rise of new non-state actors, such as Multinational Corporations, International Organizations or Private Companies, is seen as the new era of IR discipline. Liberal tradition underlines the importance of individual as a consequence of technological change, but a profound theory going behind the reasons of this change can never be elucidated. In fact, these reasons are mainly exogenous factors that project its influence from outside to the international system.⁵¹ Social constructivists' skepticism about the "real aim" of technology seems to hinder them to construct an analysis about how new technologies in communication empower the individual as a potential policy maker. This paper claims that the new (old) individual is the rising actor in international relations as the user-generated internet empowers him/her as the producer and distributor of information as we all live in information age. The nation-

⁵⁰ Costas M. Constantinou, Oliver P. Richmond and Alison M. Watson, "International Relations and the Challenges of Global Communication", *Review of International Studies*, No.34, 2008, p.12 and 14

⁵¹ Stefan Fritsch, "Technology and Global Affairs", *International Studies Perspectives*, 12, 2011, p.38

state is being challenged by this new citizen, as we saw in the Arab region. Since the basic assumptions of IR are state-centric and static to a large extent, theory of communication is bring in the necessary tools to understand and analyze the evolution of this new actor and the new source of power. The Arab Spring is a good case for IR studies that it shows how the ordinary people, who have nothing but social media, are able to overthrow their governments as the new transnational movement changes the states, regions and the world.

The New Citizen and the New Transnationalism

Change in information and communication, from the birth of printing through digital media, has always been closely linked to social change. Three modern information revolutions transformed the structure of society, in this sense. The first revolution came with the invention of telegraph, telephone and radio, as the booster of the industrialization. Television, early generated computers and satellites are the messenger of the second flow of communication revolution, which includes the vision transmission next to the sound. Newspapers, telephone systems, radio and television services were helpful tools for nation-states to connect the subnational local identities under the national framework. National identity and citizenship were constructed by the means of new communication techniques by states. The third revolution came with the information age. The so-called new media, notably mobile phones, cable and satellite television, cheaper and more powerful computers and most importantly, the internet, are by their nature transnational operate regardless of borders. This, in turn, has facilitated the growth of transnationalism which reduced the capacity of states to control what their citizens see, hear and know.⁵² Society has acquired a global dimension which is named in many different ways, such as as “world society”⁵³, “network society”⁵⁴ or “global civil society”.⁵⁵ According to Zigmunt Bauman, the combination of widening and thinning of social connectedness has changed every aspect of human condition. Society has moved away from being “heavy” or “solid within the hardware-based modernity to a “light” or “liquid” form of software-base modernity. The new remoteness and un-reachability of global processes coupling with the unstructured and under-defined, fluid state of people’s everyday lives is “liquid society” for

⁵² Andrew Heywood, *Global Politics*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, pp.138-140

⁵³ John W. Burton, *World Society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1972

⁵⁴ Manuel Castells, *The Rise of Network Society, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol. 1, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996

⁵⁵ Andrew Heywood, *Global Politics*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, pp.138-140

Zigmunt.⁵⁶ The term liquid is pointing out the flexible, changing and borderless structure of society, for which David Harvey associated the phenomenon of “time/space compression”, meaning that social interaction can now take place out of the limitations of space and time.⁵⁷

This new transnationalism has a direct link with rise of the new empowered ordinary people in the sense that the new means of communication, especially the user-generated social media. The local and transnational link is strong and there is an easy access between the modular activities of individuals all around the world. In fact, it is because of the new conditions of communication world that enables the individual reach to the transnational more than ever. Arab uprisings’ diffusion across boundaries and its local-transnational permeability can be given as a proper example here. The social movement ignited on the local/national level rapidly echoed on a transnational level and the slogans became around the similar universal notions, such as justice, democracy or equality. The way and speed of organization of the crowds were immense, thanks to social media, and the impact of events cascaded in many different cities, such as New York, Madrid, London or Paris. People were crying out their ideas in different cities of the world, but except for the language, they say, they look and they want the same things from their states with the same soul of civil society. Yet, more than the previous social movements in history, the activists were more related with the reaction of the other people and encouraged by the international support. In this sense, social media was the place to share the ideas of different people all around the world and gather around the same universal ideas.

This new transnational movement has a different and wide public sphere in terms of its organization type mostly done on internet, real time broadcasting to the world and diffusion capacity to millions. The internet technology allows for immediate mobilization across the globe and may also serve as a tool to provide information that tends to be suppressed by the more established media. It affects the internal structure of social movement organizations, above all the density and direction of their links.⁵⁸ Therefore it can be clearly put that the new communication techniques is the *raison d’etat* of new transnational movement and public sphere.

⁵⁶ Quoted from Andrew Heywood, *Global Politics*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, p.143

⁵⁷ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1996

⁵⁸ Wim van de Donk, Brian D. Loader, Paul G. Nixon and Dieter Rucht, “Introduction: Social Movements and ICTs” in *Cyberprotest: New Media, Citizens and Social Movements*, (eds.) Wim van de Donk, Brian D. Loader, Paul G. Nixon and Dieter Rucht, London and New York: Routledge, 2004, p.18-19

In general, public sphere is the arena of communication and the mediation of information, knowledge and interpretation.⁵⁹ It is noteworthy to say that the transnational public sphere is different than the “public sphere” of Habermas. His public sphere theory has been implicitly grounded on Westphalian political imaginary bounded with political communities within territorial states. Sovereign power, national citizenship, national economy, national media and national language are the pillars of the Habermasian public sphere which is actually a reflection of the 18th and 19th century England, France or Germany.⁶⁰ For sure, the disparity in political voice within this bourgeois public sphere is not fitting with the globalizing world where boundaries begin to blur. The ordinary man, who has mostly “forgotten” by Habermas, is taking the advantage of being in the centre of the new transnational public sphere. Hence, the notion of public sphere has gained a far-reaching meaning within the transnationalisation of the individual.

While internet has a positive affect on individuals’ empowerment as active citizens and accelerate the progress to civil society, there are several flaws of internet which might cause negative consequences on the development of the new public sphere. Firstly, it is not only the people, but also the state using the new communication techniques. As the communication develops, the ways of control, censor and surveillance of states develop as well. In other words, internet can be the tool of new authoritarian techniques.⁶¹ Yet, access to the internet does not guarantee political activity or a “democratic” political discourse. Clicking the “like” button might not always mean solidarity but only a “keypad activism”.⁶² Besides, Jones skeptically suggests that although internet allows us to shout more loudly, whether other fellows listen to us is questionable.⁶³ Yet, to claim that there is an information access equality among everybody would be a fatal mistake. To have a personal computer and a continuous access to the internet needs a certain amount of

⁵⁹ Wilma de Jong, Martin Shaw and Neil Stammers, *Global Activism, Global Media*, London: Pluto Press, 2005, p.9

⁶⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991

⁶¹ Elisabeth Chaves, “The Internet as Global Platform? Grounding the Magically Levitating Public Sphere”, *New Political Science*, 32:1, 2010, p. 23; Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*, New York: Public Affairs, 2011

⁶² Zizi Papacharissi, “The Virtual Sphere: the Internet as a Public Sphere”, *New Media and Society*, 4:9, 2002

⁶³ S. G. Jones, “The Internet and its Social Landscape”, in S.G. Jones (ed.) *Virtual Culture: Identity and Communication in Cybersociety*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997, p.30

money, which would make it hard for the poor. That is why Zizi Papacharissi defines the virtual sphere as a bourgeois computer holders' domination space.⁶⁴

These critics of internet as a tool to boost an active and transnational civil society can be easily extended with various new ones. The authority/capacity of states or the misuse/underuse of internet has a strong ground to claim against. The state will censor critics or propaganda taking place in the cyber world by using its authority, but those actions have higher costs than simply not having any critics. Yet, any internet shut down would risk radicalizing pro-regime citizens or harming the national economy, what we call the "dictator dilemma".⁶⁵ Moreover any type of repression may ultimately cost the state more in international outrage than it gained in intimidation⁶⁶. Therefore, states are not that "able" to control the internet as they wish. Both the internal and external factors limit this desire.

The main suspicion about the potential of the new communication techniques is mainly because of the massive volume of change it suggests but not sufficient evidence to prove so far. But "social institutions change more slowly than technology"⁶⁷ and it needs time. The potential of internet cannot be witnessed in days or weeks, but years and decades. It is a generational change. The children of internet got their lessons from their brothers and sisters how to ask what they want. They will be more active, fast and effective in the future. The access to internet is getting cheap everyday and the user profile getting proliferated in time, which would mean more mobilization of large masses. The transnationalism will combine with the power of the new citizen who has more tools and organization capacity to learn more, to see more and to share more. Speed of communication will hasten the speed of change.

CONCLUSION

We are witnessing the beginning of a rapid societal transformation which will change the world we know so far. History is full of change, for sure, but this time it got speed with the new communication techniques. The virtual space is weakening the limits

⁶⁴ Zizi Papacharissi, "The Virtual Sphere: the Internet as a Public Sphere", *New Media and Society*, 4:9, 2002, p.21

⁶⁵ Clay Shirky, "The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, The Public Sphere, and Political Change", *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2011, p.8

⁶⁶ Marc Lynch, "After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State", *Reflections*, June 2011, Vol.9, No.2, p. 305

⁶⁷ Joseph Nye, "The Information Revolution and the American Soft Power", *Asia-Pacific Review*, 9:1, 2002, p. 60

of national boundaries and the traditional power notion of states. The new citizens of the world are not only the receivers of information anymore. They are not only watching TV, reading newspaper or listening to the radio. The information flow is no longer from the state or industrial broadcasting media, but also from the receivers this time. The receivers became the senders of information in a world where information means power. The new citizen, who has been the “audience” of world politics, is now able to cascade the states, continents and the world. The local and global permeability is intensifying with the transnationalization of this new public spheres.

Arab spring is a good case to study as it shows how the ordinary people are able to start a local movement, organize nation-wide demonstrations and attract the attention of the international audience in a very short time. The vertical access between local-national-international has risen through the means of new communication tools, especially the social media. Same slogans echoed on many different squares of western cities just after the one in Tahrir. Demonstrations were against their national states but the language of their protest was universal. They were all connected to each other on the level of motivation, which has been organized, shaped and accelerated within a hyper mediated new public sphere.

This pace is so fast that neither taken-for-granted social theory can explain all at once. Interconnectedness, hyper-mediation and speed shape contemporary societies and polities. These dynamics produce a highly different and multilayered world which makes it necessary to have updated and also up-to-date approaches. Facing all these new challenges, it is time to rethink the sensitivity of IR to this speed of change. Following the questioning of Der Derian, we need to understand the reasons why we lost the “alacrity and celerity”⁶⁸ to keep up with the rapidly moving world. Cyberspace and its revolutionary structure is beyond the mainstream IR theory and this paper claims that, in order to analyze the “brand new world”, to catch up with the speed and to theorize the new circumstances, IR needs to enrich its theory by using the communicative studies approach. Yet, the main reason of this change can be found in the communication itself and understanding it would give new horizons to IR.

⁶⁸ Der Derian, J., *Antidiplomacy: Spies, Terror, Speed and War*, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992, p. 135

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