The Role of social media in the Armenian Velvet Revolution and the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity (Maidan): A Comparative Study

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article type: Research Article **Article History:** Received 02 May 2023 Revised 28 November 2024 Accepted 26 December 2024 Published Online 16 February 2025 **Keywords:** Social media, Political efficacy, Political knowledge, Political participation, Political behavior, Ukrainian revolution, Armenian revolution.	Through the recent decades of social media's widespread accessibility, historical evidence indicates its significant impacts on various occasions, including decision-making processes within states, public objections, and specific activities during elections or campaigns aimed at representing official requests. Consistent with this trend, the present article investigates the role of social media in the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity (2014) and the Armenian Velvet Revolution (2018) to examine the mechanisms of their potential impacts. The main question in this study regards the application of social media in social upheavals, specifically the two mentioned velvet revolutions. The hypothesis proposes that the main impact of social media was targeted toward people's actions through the attitude formation process, as one significantly affected area by social media in both societies was public awareness. The current article explores and maps out the process that formed a political behavior through social media that affected these two velvet revolutions. While the qualitative research method collects information related to the roots of revolution and the role of social media, the systematic study assists in analyzing the similarities and differences. It was found that although social media acted as a strong tool to bridge awareness and activism, they couldn't initiate the revolution process in any of the countries. Social media could only speed up the process of revolution in Armenia by connecting people with the leader, while it could form the primary social unification core in Ukraine through organizing protests and demands.

1. Introduction

The modern technological revolution dismantled the barriers that had previously restricted contact. Social networks allow you to connect with a great number of people who share your interests. This phenomenon has the power to affect a wide range of contexts. One example is Arab Spring in 2011, which represents a model of social media's impact on participation during an uprising (Boulianne, 2015: 534; Clarke & Kocak, 2020: 7). Social networks can be differentiated from newspapers, television and radio from several aspects. One is that news spread there faster than other tools in various forms, and can impact on increasing social and political awareness (Karamat & Farooq, 2020: 387). It is argued that as access to the Internet grows, so does the number of people interested in political activities (Krueger, 2002: 478).

It should be considered that every single person has a chance to express his ideas and share it with others via social networks, not just inside his country, but rather worldwide. Also, as an opportunity for people, it could campaign and form movements against some policies or events and support some others. This could be considered as a shift from traditional activism to digital activism (Leong et al., 2019: 4). Scholars have developed a number of hypotheses regarding the relationship between the political variables and the social media due to the rise of online political information exchange. Users of social media are able to interact with each other and exchange wide range of information including political. These interactions cause multi-directional flow of information (Quandt, 2008: 721). It is also reported that these degrees of information exchange may affect offline individuals and their political participation and behaviors (Himelboim et al., 2012: 95).

The concept of political efficacy, evolving around the belief of possibility of political knowledge and making the authorities responsive, along with related knowledge and participation, are considered as significant parts of political movement. (Kenski & Stroud, 2006:187). We've seen a global series of opposition campaigns during recent decade, many of which seemed to be fueled by the use of various social media platforms. But the role of social media is much more complicated (Tsatsou, 2018:2).

The aim of this article is to examine the role of social media in both the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity (2014) and the Armenian Velvet Revolution (2018). In addition, this article aims to explore how social media influenced these two revolutions and to identify the processes through which social media made a difference. The study examines the extent of social media usage, investigating whether these platforms served as effective tools to catalyze the revolutionary process or if they were merely ordinary tools among others.

Concerning the above-mentioned issues and the reported role of social media in these two revolutions (Jost, et al 2018: 90; Kolarzik, 2020: 29), the key question in this article is how has social media affected the Ukrainian (2014) and Armenian (2018) revolutions? In order to provide concise response this question, there is need to inspect various aspects of each revolution, so the main question is divided into three independent and complementary questions as follow:

1. What is the application of social media in social upheavals?
2. What were the roots of revolution in Ukraine and what was the role of social media in it?
3. What were the roots of revolution in Armenia and what was the role of social media in it?

This article aims to investigate how social networks similarly or differently contributed to the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution and the 2018 Armenian Revolution. It collects prior studies that qualitatively examined both revolutions and the role of social media in these events, utilizing their discussions to formulate a path toward answering the research question. The researcher then classifies these studies and attempts to draw novel conclusions to optimally enhance existing theories.

2. Review of literature

To perceive the total situation in Ukraine and Armenia during protests and to figure out how social media were used by people, some of the most related articles and books were analyzed. These articles explained why the named revolutions were famous by the effects of social media on the process of the uprising and the way they had been successful on achieving their purposes.

1. One part of the mentioned works discuss about the widely used and popular social media in each country, and differentiating the specific features of social media like Facebook and Twitter with other internet-based communication tools such as websites, forums, and email. These researches also analyzed the most viral hashtags and trends and significant published contents like symbols, arts, slogans and even jokes by people inside and outside the countries during the protests in both Ukraine and Armenia (Dickinson, 2014: 76; Metzger & Tucker, 2017: 172; Odabashian et al., 2018: 2).

2. Another part of the researches worked on how social media had a significant role on spreading information about the political status and the required social actions among the vast range of citizens. These works described how ordinary people from different ages and social classes managed to use social media as a tool in order to organize and mobilize protests against their governments and the policies they were dissatisfied with. The mentioned analyzed contents on social media also showed that how the use of various forms of contents and livestreams from the protests in streets, can spread more awareness and engage more citizens. (Abrahamian & Shagoyan, 2018: 513; Bohdanova, 2014: 135; Onuch, 2015: 223; Khurshudyan, 2019: 19).

Using all the data, descriptions, analyses, and discussions from these works, the current research aims to explore and map out the process which formed a political behavior through social media that affected these two revolutions. In fact, the process is going to be investigated based on theories explaining how social media impact the way individuals and the whole society can increase their political and social awareness, and get engaged in political movements or even create a revolution. Thus, a model presented in theories can be verified and some details can be added to clarify the process, the start, and the outcome.

3. Conceptual Framework

Regarding the impact of social media on political and social interactions and behavior in societies, the concept of political efficacy investigates two dimensions of how people can make significant social and political changes. One aspect of political efficacy concerns the belief of people in influential collective activities in order to make social and political demands and expect responses from authorities, which is called "External Political Efficacy", while the other aspect, "Internal Political Efficacy" argues about the belief of individuals in possibility of raising their political knowledge and involvement (Kenski & Stroud, 2006: 175).

In line with political efficacy, political knowledge and political participation are two other important indicators which count as effective parts of a political protest and revolution. In fact, both dimensions of political efficacy make the proper ground for citizens to pursue essential related knowledge and participate in an active way to make a change. These three variables together, like a chain, complete each other as independent and correlated steps (Kenski & Stroud, 2006: 176).

K. Kenski and K. G. Stroud (2006: 189), in their analytical research, state that internet use has an overall positive impact on three variables namely political efficacy, knowledge, and participation; however, this impact is not a significant one. They also argue that other scholars, who are sceptic to internet use, do not need to worry about the negative effects of internet on three aforementioned variables. The idea of Kenski and Stroud is the main

inspiration of the present work, to investigate the role of social media in the revolutions of Ukraine and Armenia by analyzing the effects of social media on three remarkable concepts of political efficacy, knowledge, and participation.

Based on the importance of social media's role in revolutions of Ukraine and Armenia, and Kenski and Stroud's research that political efficacy determines on the political behavior, the present work aims to interpret the relation between social media and both aspects of political efficacy along with political knowledge and political participation. This is to figure how social media could affect these three indicators, and whether through this impact social media was able to form a unique political behavior for revolutions in Ukraine and Armenia.
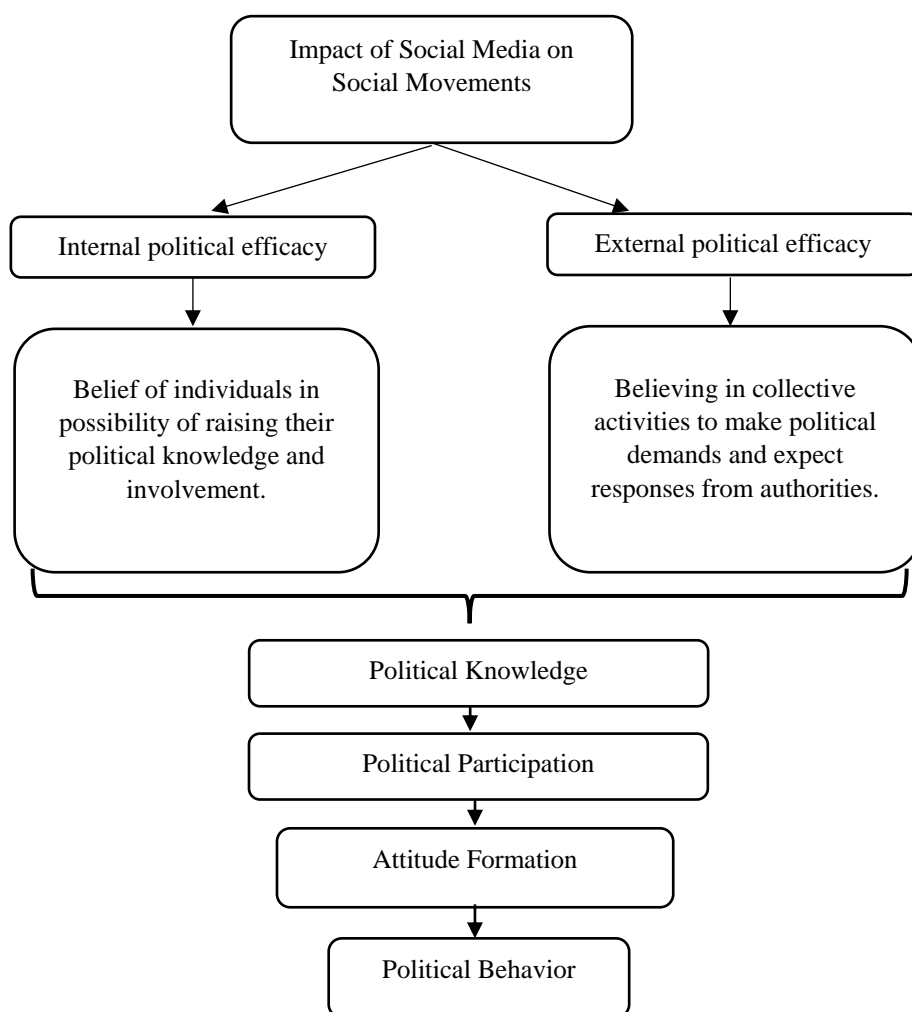
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            ┌─────────────────────────┐
            │  Impact of Social Media │
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│ Belief of individuals│      │ Believing in         │
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│ raising their        │      │ to make political    │
│ political knowledge  │      │ demands and expect   │
│ and involvement.     │      │ responses from       │
│                      │      │ authorities.         │
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Political Knowledge

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Political Participation

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Attitude Formation

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Political Behavior

Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework: Political Behavior Formation
(Source: Kenski & Stroud, 2006)

Based on internal political efficacy, when the access to social media makes individuals to believe in their ability to achieve political knowledge, they may try to understand more. In addition to people's regular and quick access to political information, public's general knowledge of social and political circumstances is likely to enhance; thus, their willingness to participate in political-related issues might be positively affected. According to the external political efficacy, given people's confidence in the effectiveness of their political involvement is fulfilled, they are likely to be motivated to move and make possible changes. Public can use social media as an influential and quicker way to interact with political officials and authorities in the form of collective activities such as political campaigns (Kenski & Stroud, 2006: 187).

When online and virtual interactions occur, citizen's social and information-seeking needs are suggested to be met in online political discussion forums, and this can impact their attitudes and behaviors due to their increased political involvement. Indeed, increased interaction between users and content and also among users, which is significantly associated with social media, has been argued to result in habit and behavior formation. Individual characteristics such as interpersonal trust on exchanged information or openness, can cause forming or changing attitudes toward virtual political activities (Gerbaudo & Treré, 2015: 5).

4. Methodology
In order to investigate the reasons and root causes of the revolutions in Armenia (2018) and Ukraine (2014), detect the similarities and differences of the two processes, and analysis of the role of the social media in these revolutions qualitative research method was applied. Using this method allows the researcher to rely on the theoretical framework and collect related information, find themes and interpret the process of the two named revolutions in a systematic way. In addition to systematic study of the revolutions, qualitative study makes it possible to provide more explanations for the existing theoretical framework by casting light on details embedded in phenomenon under the study (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012: 3).

The present study reviewed analytical articles discussed the social situations leading the countries toward the revolution and also the articles that reported the exchanged context in social media and how they could manipulate the process of revolution in both countries. These reviewed works also included reports of journalists and direct quotations from protesters and social and political figures. Having reviewed all the information, an inclusive view of the revolution process was presented; it provided grounds for interpreting the processes and investigating the role of social media in a clear view without any piece of information being ignored.

5. Roots of Revolution
5.1. Ukraine
The Ukrainian events of 2013-2014 were characterized by several names that highlighted distinct symbolic aspects, such as the Revolution of Dignity or Maidan, which refers to Maidan Nezalezhnosti, the center of the protest movement. In fact, the movement was driven by the need for further European integration, known as Euromaidan. However, Shveda and Ho Park (2016: 87) argue that Euromaidan was just the first step in a long-term Maidan campaign that lasted from November 21, 2013, to February 21, 2014, encompassing initial demands for association with the EU and evolving requests for partnership.

As President Viktor Yanukovych refused to sign the political association and free trade agreement with the European Union on November 21st, demonstrations erupted. The Free Trade Agreement was intended to include all trade-related sectors, including services, intellectual property rights, tariffs, public procurement, energy-related matters, competition, etc., according to the European Commission website. The EU-Ukraine free trade area aimed to improve Ukraine's access to the European market and promote more European investment in the country (Mihali, 2014: 7). Thus, disagreement between the Ukrainian government and citizens on attending the Trade Agreement can be known the key initiator of social upheavals in Ukraine.

For many Ukrainians, the process of European integration outlined not only the geostrategic direction of their country's growth, but also the hope for a shift in the "laws of the game" that would result in the modernization of economic and political life. The fall of that idea, which acted as the catalyst that sparked the Ukrainian revolution, coincided with the country's withdrawal from the European integration process (Shveda & Ho Park, 2016: 86).

Public responded to this withdrawal almost immediately. Hundreds of demonstrators assembled at Independence Square (the largest metropolitan area) the same day when the term

"Euromaidan" spread on social media. As city officials, competing party activists, and Ukrainian nationalistic organizations joined in during the night, the demonstration grew in scale. Yuriy Lutsenko, a well-known Ukrainian oppositionist, recalls, "...people did not come to the politicians today, but the politicians came to the people." Throughout the Maidan's initial process, and there wasn't a single political party banner to be seen (Zurcher, 2013).

The reaction of Ukrainian state forces to peaceful demonstrations was the second cause. The Ukrainian government has begun to take aggressive measures. To put opponents down, riot police, security guards, and military forces descended swiftly on demonstration sites across Ukraine. Dispute between the two sides rapidly grew, with viral footage showing demonstrators hurling Molotov cocktails at protest police and security guards torturing opposition detainees. As the number of casualties began to rise in mid-February, it seemed that a settlement between the opposition and President Yanukovych was impossible (Curran, 2014).

The protesters from Ukraine combined the old movements with the latest ones. These demonstrations lasted three months and many protested that passive opposition was not sufficient. A decade ago, many believed that the mostly futile velvet revolution was too nonviolent to make meaningful progress. The social media mobilization was not enough to be a revolt without leaders (Åslund, 2014: 67; Lutsevych 2013: 2; Wilson, 2014: 97).

Much has been made about how the Ukrainian demonstrations started with a tweet from Ukranska Pravda journalist Mustafa Naim. But Naim was thinking along the same lines as the original Maidan model of nonviolent, carnival-like protest. Just a few hundred people were present at the start, mostly his supporters and relatives. The intelligentsia and students led the protests for the next two days. However, they stayed small-scale throughout the first week, prior to the EU's final failure at the Vilnius Summit. Parliamentary figures like Arseniy Yatsenyuk jumped in late with belated tweets, but they didn't set the tone. However, the first Sunday protest, dubbed "For a European Ukraine!" on November 24, drew over 100,000 participants (Wilson, 2014: 68).

Since Russia and Ukraine signed a grand "Action Plan" on December 17, 2013, Maidan activists had much more to be concerned about. This was a double blow for Maidan activists: it signaled the end of the European alternative while still appearing to provide the Yanukovych government with the money it needed to succeed and even prosper. The protest context has changed from stronger relations with the European Union to a broader domestic context on the ground and in the social media pages, attracting greater support. The Ukrainian police special unit, Berkut, was given the order of "cleaning up" independence square in the night of November 30th to December 1st. The nonviolent, unarmed demonstrators were exposed, according to witnesses, to brutal physical strength. The social media pages were filled quickly with photos and reports on Berkut's violence (Yatsenyuk, 2013 as cited in Surzhko-Harned & Zahuranec, 2017: 767).

The largest protest ever was a 'Last Chance' march on 8 December with the objective of 1 million participants (though nobody could, of course, accurately count the numbers). Its popularity prompted protesters to extend their base by occupying sections of the district. The statue of Lenin was overthrown at the other end of Maidan's main street. The next move was to occupy government offices, mostly by demonstrators from the Common Cause party, from 24th to 29th January. The authorities were removed and briefly confiscated by three ministerial buildings (Wilson, 2014: 75). An agreement was officially concluded on 21 February as a result of demonstrations and opposition. On 22 February Yanukovych was expelled from the Building. The constitution states that the dismissal was a lengthy procedure involving several challenges and there was a strong final hurdle: three-quarters voting in parliament, or 338 of 450. 328 backed the vote against him (Åslund, 2014: 69; Wilson, 2014: 93).

Although the commentary of the European Union was frequent at the beginning of the campaign, the conversation was distinctly changed in December. There has been a precipitous decrease in references in protests to the European Union or European integration. From December until February, social media pages dominated anti-Yanukovych and anti-Berkut. Public discontent with Yanukovych increased during these months. The government did not respond to popular demands for those responsible for the December repression to be brought to justice (Surzhko-Harned & Zahuranec, 2017: 768).

> Most Ukrainians perceive Euromaidan as a significant national policy concern. The analysis indicates that President Yanukovych's actions were motivated by factors beyond mere European Union expansion. The populace expressed widespread dissatisfaction with the government's approach, particularly in response to the refusal to sign the EU Association Agreement. Social media channels played a crucial role in enabling protesters to organize and articulate their identities, reflecting these sentiments. The Internet has emerged as an unparalleled source of news and a vital organizational tool for civic engagement (Zelinska, 2015: 385).

Armenia was scored among the seven worst issues of corruption out of 42 European and Central Asian countries surveyed by Transparency International. Nearly a quarter of those who worked with eight traditional public institutions in the past year (transport police, teachers, public medical facilities, etc.) charged a bribe (Pring, 2016). It is stated in Feldman and Alibašić (2019: 422) that 67 percent reported wrongdoing, mostly out of fear of revenge, when they saw this. Almost 70 percent of the sample surveyed in 2010 thought it was the best way to satisfy their desires to justify their own role in corruption.

In a referendum on 8 December 2015 Armenia's presidential rule has been changed to a true parliamentary republic by means of a Constitutional transformation. The transformation has shifted much of the authority to the prime minister from the presidential office, who now has the actual leadership of the republic. The Opposition cautioned, however, that it was nothing more than the Republican Party of Armenia's (RPA) effort to create "a single party state". (Feldman & Alibašić, 2019: 423). Nonetheless Armenia had a relatively peaceful political scene where the opposition was unable to gain enough support to oppose the RPA with the exception of the violent protests after the presidential elections of 1 March 2008. There was continuous popular dissatisfaction with the systemic corruption, joblessness and social dismay that led to emigration etc., but there was no clear and persistent resistance to the ruling elite. In April 2018, this changed considerably. After Sargsyan had been nominated (April 7) and elected as the new PM (April 17) amid earlier promises that he was not continuing as Prime Minister after his term in office expired in April 2018, the RPA triggered a protest of the people that would have left Sargyan in a week (April 23). On 9 May, Nikol Pashinyan, who was a former journalist and now leading the demonstrations, was elected Prime Minister (Avedian, 2018: 2).

The slogan "Reject Serzh" manifested that the public demand focused on refusing Sargsyan. Pashinyan and his "Civil Contract" faction began their 13-day march from Gyumri to Yerevan on March 31. The slogan for this initiative was "Take a step". The two slogans were fused into "Take a step and reject Serzh" at a mass meeting in Yerevan on April 13. (Abrahamian & Shagoyan, 2018: 519). Since Serzh Sargsyan had made a public pledge not to run for office and then broken it, the slogan had a good chance of gaining traction. Nikol Pashinyan and his supporters started a march from Gyumri, Armenia's northern capital, to Yerevan on March 31, 2018, to oppose Serzh Sargsyan's upcoming election as Prime Minister. "Take a step, reject Serzh," was their rallying cry (Lanskoy & Suthers, 2019: 92).

From the start of this movement, Pashinyan made an effective online connection with protesters through his official Facebook account, mostly by live streams, as one of the most accessible ways to spread awareness. The increase in his followers during the movement is an

indication of the effectiveness of his attempts on social media. Also, ordinary people shared information and media related to the demonstration on social media, while broadcasts under the government's observation tried to appear indifferent toward the social movement. This drew the public's attention from all around the country, thus many citizens moved to Yerevan in order to participate in the protests (Grigoryan, 2018: 350).

On April 17, after the parliament elected Sargsyan Prime Minister, the demonstrations grew in size and intensity, attracting citizens of all ages and social classes. It spread to other cities, towns, and villages, paralyzing traffic throughout the world with human roadblocks (Iskandaryan, 2018: 479). Locally, new politicians and organizers appeared, and involvement grew in tandem with authoritarian policies. Serzh Sargsyan agreed to meet with Nikol Pashinyan in public and with the media present to talk on his terms, but stormed out after Pashinyan stated that he was only interested in discussing the timeframe for Sargsyan's resignation. Pashinyan and a few members of his team were detained, but it was too late: the demonstrations in Yerevan alone drew over a hundred thousand protesters (Kolarzik, 2020: 33).

Sargsyan's decision to resign is unsurprising. With hundreds of thousands marching in unison, the commemoration march may have easily devolved into a massive anti-government demonstration. Sargsyan's resignation was unexpectedly declared on April 23. The Republican Party managed to hold on to power for a while because Pashinyan wanted to follow the legalistic route to avoid disbanding parliament. The Republican majority in parliament opposed Pashinyan's nomination for Prime Minister after Sargsyan resigned (Iskandaryan, 2018: 480).

Pashinyan was attempting to create a connection between demonstrators and lawmakers. He was negotiating votes in parliament through his party "Civil Contract," but still demonstrating the strength of the people by mass demonstrations and securing their vote for the election (Grigoryan 2019: 171). The revolution was made possible by the collaboration of national and civil powers. This use of marches and elections to bring about a democratic transition exemplifies the use of an electoral paradigm that has already been popular in other post-communist revolutions (Kolarzik, 2020: 8).

Prosperous Armenia, the second-largest political party in Armenia, led by prominent businessman Gagik Tsarukyan, expressed its support for the protest movement and called for a boycott of the parliament. On May 8, the parliament voted to elect Nikol Pashinyan as Prime Minister (Iskandaryan, 2018: 480). In the short term, the initial objective of the revolt was achieved with the resignation of Serzh Sargsyan, followed by the election of Pashinyan as Prime Minister by the parliament. This sequence of events signified the culmination of the movement as a whole (Grigoryan, 2019: 171).

In terms of the approach used in the revolutionary movement, it is noteworthy that the effectiveness of this nonviolence tool was not achieved by chance. This type of technology would never be able to have complete backward compatibility. The entire arsenal of passive disobedience technologies can be seen, with the shortcomings of aggression serving as Achilles' heel (Kolarzik, 2020: 35). According to the findings, Armenia's revolt was sparked by a variety of factors, and the uprising was aided by social media. In fact, it is argued that it is a mistake to attempt to understand the role of any media in any political process without thinking about the surrounding political environment and making logical connections between them (Mattoni, 2017: 5).

6. Discussion: The Role of Social Media in the Revolutions

Given social networks are reported to be increasingly important with significant impacts on all aspects of life, particularly on social life (Boulianne, 2015: 534), the present article aims at scrutinizing the role social media played in different social and political situations to form

movements or revolutions. To do so, the article planned for a comparative study about the role of social media in Ukrainian revolution in 2014, and Armenian Velvet revolution in 2018. Both mentioned revolutions have been successful to make significant changes in governing authorities by benefiting from the power of social media (Jost, et al 2018: 92; Kolarzik, 2020: 29); thus, the present work analyzes functions of social media in these two revolutions to examine the path through which social media made an impression.

In Armenia, people had been dealing with social and political issues for a while. Dominance of specific political parties, their corruption, unfair elections and improper domestic and international policies that government implemented to cope with Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and their international relations made Armenian citizens dissatisfied with the performance of political authorities. Given the social grounds, Nichole Pashinyan, a journalist, played the role of a leader to attract citizen's attention to corrupt actions occurred in the governing system that they had never knew about due to governmental, systematic censorship. Pashinyan used social media as a tool to tell the public what can be done against such levels of corruption in the governing system. He had a wide range of audience in social media and could encourage the public to join protests across the country (Avedian, 2018: 5; Lanskoy & Suthers, 2019: 85).

Through his online speeches, Pashinyan tried to educate the public how to express their opposition and tried to establish an attitude among his followers. He asked them not to use violence in response to government's decisions and actions and stay non-violent. This type of attitude led to creation of velvet revolution in which opponents were following specific rules and conventions to be non-violent. This attitude could easily be disseminated among the public by using social media to emphasize on the proper behavior in protests and share posts about non-violent protests in different places that could be a role model for preceding ones. Hence the very shape of the protests has been affected not by the social media itself, but how Nikole Pashiniyan as the leader of the uprising managed to influence people's behavior by using the widespread and fast tool, being social media (Abrahamian and Shagoyan, 2018: 525; Lanskoy & Suthers, 2019: 94).

To recapitulate, social and political grounds in Armenia and presence of Pashinyan as a leader could predict movements and revolutions in the country. When social media were included in the process, ordinary citizens could be more educated and their political knowledge and information grew; so, could quickly be involved in political activities due to their increased awareness. Thus, social media sped up attitude formation among the opposition group while they were trying to represent their political demands and ask for authorities' attention and response. This facility allowed them to learn how to express themselves in a unified way that their leader asked, and provided grounds to encourage larger number of people to participate in protests. In fact, social media could boost both aspects of political efficacy and enhanced political knowledge and participation and as a result, acted as a catalyst tool in Armenian revolution. But in Ukraine, people have been disapproved of the government's policies to deal with international affair. In fact, the way in which the governing system dealt with European countries was not favorable by the public, but the system was not concerned with the public worries and did not try to consider their opinion and interest in his decision makings (Mihali, 2014: 10). Therefore, political dissatisfaction grew in the society and journalists as well as social and political activists began to express their opposition. Concurrently, the government did not cover the news about oppositions properly and censored the news on national media as much as possible (Curran, 2014; Shveda & Ho Park, 2016: 90).

Since information exchange is reported to be a need of modern societies, in response to systematic censorship, the opposition circles and groups decided to use social media to be

able to be heard. Social media platforms were effectively used in Ukraine to make the oppositions more serious and attract more public attention to misconducts in the government (Szostek, 2014: 6). As a result of raising awareness among ordinary people, scattered opposition groups could be unified, create a core for oppositions and start to plan for actions. Since collective awareness expresses itself in collective actions, people began to be more active in protests. As a result, social media facilitated people's political participation in activities and protests and helped them be more active. Thus, the protests attracted more people, increasing the likelihood that substantial changes in governmental authority would be made (Metzger & Tucker, 2017: 179).

To recapitulate, in Ukraine social media were used to strengthen scattered, leaderless opposition groups and unify them in first place. To do so, first individuals' awareness raised toward wrong decision making in government and then, public were motivated and encouraged to be active in protests (Bohdanova, 2014: 134). Thus, both aspects of political efficacy, knowledge, and participation manipulated by social media, worked together to exert positive impact on the process of Ukrainian revolution. However, social media did not initiate the revolution process by themselves; they rather helped to form an organization and taught the public how to be unified. Social media in the process of Ukrainian revolution acted as a tool to establish a type of attitude among the public to make others aware of social and political events and stay unified. As a result, social media only coordinated the process to happen more efficiently.

The use of social media affects some factors in society like political efficacy, political knowledge, and political participation that can impact involvement of individuals in protests (Grant, 2017: 53). Political knowledge is a component of political participation that engages people who have awareness about subjects such as policy, political concerns, and communication. Information is important to coordinate protest activities including transport, attendance, police intervention, violence, medical assistance, and legal services by social media platforms swiftly and efficiently (Jost et al., 2018: 93).

It is notable that when conventional aspects of political engagement and social media activity are integrated, social media have a certain amount of impact. Technology is simply a time-scale instrument incorporated in political values, emancipation, and sovereignty aspects. In distributing information for the public, the importance of social media may be expanded to form a type of culture and attitude. In this regard, protesters might begin the fight for social reform using social media as a tool. Then, when revolutions and movements are publicly revealed through the social media platforms, they are more likely to gain public interest and accomplish their aims by the community and lawmakers (Molaei, 2015: 104). However, social media tcannot be claimed as the initiator of revolutions. In fact, the development of collective measures calling for political reform and change in the governing authorities can be known based on unfavorable social, political and economic factors. The accomplishment of goals in revolutions is mostly contingent on wider geopolitical variables instead of the means such as social media used for collective action. Rather, the social media ability to assist the spread of ideas, educating citizens, and forming attitudes to speed up revolutions can be particularly important in the context of studied revolutions (Jost et al., 2018: 91; Martirosyan, 2018).

7. Conclusion

According to an in-depth investigation of Ukrainian and Armenian revolutions, positive impact of social media on ordinary citizens' political efficacy, knowledge, participation and specifically forming a type of attitude was revealed. Also, social media were effective in people's interaction with each other and provided opportunities for people to address higher-level authorities that otherwise could not be possible. All these impacts have been tracked in

both Ukrainian and Armenian velvet revolutions that were successful in changing government authorities and making significant political changes. However, the revolutions under the study were not exactly similar. The quality of impact that social media had on three mentioned indicators during these two velvet revolutions was roughly different. In Ukraine there was no single leader or a leading association; thus, social media platforms provided opportunity for opposition groups to unite with each other, attract public's attention, encourage and invite them to join the protesters in the streets to express their opposition (Bohdanova, 2014: 135). As a result, in Ukraine, social media helped the revolution core to be unified and start working, but the story was a bit different in Armenia. In Armenia, there was a single leader who had already attracted people's attention due to his effort to reveal the truth about the governing political system. Armenian people benefited from the direct connection with Pasginyan through his Facebook page. Social media also sped up the process of events by providing information for more people, and allowing them to address authorities. (Abrahamian and Shagoyan, 2018: 525).

Therefore, consistent with conceptual framework, social media were used to expand both internal and external political efficacy along with political knowledge and political participation in order to express their demands. Social media were used to establish a type of political behavior and then, through this certain behavior the oppositions were able to make significant changes in the political authorities. Finally, it is notable that although social media can significantly impact these two velvet revolutions by means of three mentioned variables, they cannot initiate revolutionary processes on their own. Rather, there should be social and political potentials in the society to form the initial opposition core. Thus, using social media in societies without social or political dissatisfactions as the basic grounds is less likely to cause remarkable changes.

"The authors declare that they have fully observed all ethical issues including plagiarism, double publication and/or submission, redundancy, data fabrication and/or falsification, informed consent, misconduct, etc."

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