Are established democracies less vulnerable to Internet censorship than authoritarian regimes? The social media test

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Abstract

David Cameron's announcement during the 2011 riots across cities in the United Kingdom to consider shutting down social media shocked the international information community. It raises questions of how far below the surface of the world's established democracies censorship lies, and how freedom of access to information and freedom of expression (FAIFE) bodies should respond. Social media are used in this article to test how firmly entrenched intellectual freedom is in established democracies through a comparison with countries with an authoritarian track record. The method is to evaluate the use of social media in recent protests in a sample of established democracies and authoritarian regimes, and to compare differences and similarities in government responses. The article concludes with recommendations for IFLA's FAIFE Committee.

1. Introduction

On Thursday 11 August 2011, the United Kingdom's (UK) prime minister David Cameron shocked the international community with a call for a clampdown on social media . He told parliament that Facebook, Twitter and Blackberry's Research in Motion (Rim) should take greater responsibility for the content posted on their networks. He went on to warn that the government would ban people from social networks who were suspected of inciting violence (Halliday & Garside, 2011). A spokesperson for Facebook quickly responded by assuring the government that they had already taken measures to remove credible threats, and that millions of people across the UK used Facebook positively to let friends and family know that they were safe. More combatively, a London law firm information technology specialist argued that government emergency measures to stop protestors from communicating on social media would require legislation, and worse still that they would threaten free speech. Cameron's proposed measures would, he claimed, tilt the balance between free speech and state security toward the latter. More critically, they would render hypocritical any request by the UK to authoritarian regimes not to turn off their own networks (Halliday & Garside, 2011).

This flashpoint in the UK riots raises several questions related to issues of freedom of access to information and freedom of expression (FAIFE) more generally, and to the role of social media more specifically. Was Cameron's outburst the emotional response of an embattled leader trying to restore law and order? Was it an attempt to demonstrate the united resolve of a newly-elected coalition government to deal decisively with social upheaval? Did this sentiment represent just a section of parliament? The latter question is quickly answered by the support of the parliamentary opposition to rein in the social media. The shadow culture secretary was quoted as saying: "Free speech is central to our democracy but so is public safety and security. We support the government's decision to undertake a review of whether measures are necessary to prevent the abuse of social media by those who organise and participate in criminal activities" (Halliday & Garside 2011: 2). Quite apart from the failure to separate criminal activities from genuine protest in this statement is the indication of solid and undivided support across party lines in the UK to curb social media (Clayton, 2011; Coursey, 2011). Even more worrying is that the technology to shut down social media already exists in the jamming devices that can block wireless transmissions, and they are being used in some cases (Howard, Agarwal & Hussain, 2011; O'Doherty, 2012).

It becomes necessary then to question the fragility of intellectual freedom in established democracies, and their vulnerability to censorship. Without a firmly-entrenched culture of intellectual freedom, how can an established democracy claim the moral high ground when it tries to convince an authoritarian state about the perils of censorship? The widespread use of social media in protest across the world has disturbed the simple distinctions between "free" and "unfree" labels, and they are testing the strength and tenacity of intellectual freedom in established democracies just as earlier forms of communication have in the past (Howard, Agarwal & Hussain, 2011). On the other hand, the social media test can help to shore up and consolidate intellectual freedom by identifying new forms of vigilance that are necessary to guard against new patterns of censorship. One of the ways of achieving this is to test the vulnerability of intellectual freedom by asking how similarly or differently established democracies and authoritarian states respond to social media activism.

2. Democratic states

Democracy is widely regarded by political philosophers as an essentially contested term. Definitions vary depending on social, moral or political agenda, and in this article democracy will be limited to its application in a political regime (Lane & Ersson, 2003). According to Schmitter and Karl (1991), democracies depend upon the presence of rulers who occupy specialized authority roles and who give legitimate commands to others. What distinguish democratic rulers from non-democratic ones are the norms that condition how the former come to power, and the practices that hold them accountable for their actions. In a narrower sense, democratic rule encompasses the making of collective norms and choices that are binding on the society and backed by state coercion.

Robert Dahl (1990) has offered the most generally accepted "procedural minimal" conditions for modern political democracy, namely: citizens have a right to express themselves without the danger of severe punishment on political matters broadly defined; citizens have a right to seek out alternative sources of information, and; alternative sources of information should exist and be protected by law. Citizens are the most distinctive element of democracies. A citizen's right to participate actively in public life and affairs of the state is one of the marks of democracy. All regimes have rulers and a public realm, but only to the extent that they are democratic do they have citizens.

Modern democracy offers a variety of competitive processes and channels for the expression of interests and values collectively or individually. It is important to recognize that these do not define points along a single continuum of improving performance, but a matrix of potential combinations that are differently democratic. Governments or organizations will claim that they democratic, but democracy does not possess the quality of absoluteness. It should rather be understood as a way of social compromise, with the aim of guaranteeing a relatively fair political life (Han & Dong, 2006). The key elements of a democratic state are consensus, participation, and access.

2.1 Consensus

Deliberative democracy stresses the good quality of communication in reaching consensus (Porta, 2009; Dahlberg, 2011). Consensus plays a key role as decisions are reached by convincing others of one's argument, and all citizens may not agree on the substantive goals of political action or on the role of the state. In the social media landscape, the Internet offers fast and complete circulation of information in order to allow for the construction of processes based upon consensus, giving everyone the chance to intervene and express their views and opinions. The consensus model has been used and preferred by many global justice movements (Porta, 2009).

2.2 Participation

Participation refers to involvement in the public sphere. For Habermas (1989), participation in the public sphere is necessary to foster and sustain democracy. All citizens may not take an active and equal part in politics but it must be legally possible for them to do so. The Internet offers citizens the opportunity to encounter and engage with a huge diversity of positions, thus extending the public sphere. In other words, the arenas of public discourse have become global and virtual (Dahlberg, 2011). The public sphere is now more challenging to both authoritarian and democratic states. The social media are fuelling a fast-spreading dissent culture of the digital publics, which are seen as a fundamental component of social movements (Drache & Froese, 2008; Dahlberg, 2011).

2.3 Access

According to Brants (1996), freedom from state interference means two things. First, that there should be no government action to prohibit a publication before it appears. Second, that it includes the individual's right of freedom expression. This creates an obligation for

democratic states to enable freedom of expression and diversity of ideas as prerequisites for democratic discourse (Dahlberg, 2011). This involves the right of access to channels of communication (Brants, 1996; Dahlberg, 2011). The fundamental conditions for effective access are: freedom and opportunity to speak out; autonomy over media access opportunities; access to the Internet for all on equal terms; and and a guarantee of continuity of the universal service performed by the telecommunications operators. Easy global access to email and social media allows politically alienated groups to communicate with like-minded or sympathetic audiences, and promotes alternative media for dissenting voices.

The elements of consensus, participation, and access are present in established democracies and are either absent or severely diminished in authoritarian states. *Additionally, and more important for the purposes of this article, established democracies have acquired these elements over a long period of struggle and have been stable environments for their entrenchment*. These factors also distinguish established democracies from young or new democracies.

3. Authoritarian states

Authoritarian states can be based on simple repression or be legitimised by religion, secular ideology, or tradition (Brouwer, 2008). The ruler dominates the government and the state without having to share powers (Jackson & Rosberg, 1982). Civil liberties like freedom of expression, organization, and demonstration, are usually absent in authoritarian states. Electoral rights and other human rights are often abused, and in many uprisings these constitute some of the significant demands of protesters (Joseph, 2011; Shirky, 2011).

Autocracy is a form of authoritarianism. At its extreme, it as the ability of the ruler to impose his will upon his state and society. At its minimum, autocracy is above the law and a law unto itself, making specific laws but not controlled by them (Fairbank & Goldman, 2006).

In China, for example, autocratic rulers have displayed the following characteristics:

- Pervasiveness of authority (the Chinese emperor had the final word in every aspect of life);
- Politicization of all aspects of life from dress to manners to books, etc.; and
- Monopoly of power through refusal to allow rival authorities to emerge (Andrew & Rapp, 2000)**.**

Autocratic rulers establish their supremacy by whatever means possible to protect their power. The past few years were characterised by popular revolts aimed at overthrowing autocratic regimes. Thousands of citizens in various countries used Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other social media to demand political change, as these examples show.

Under the authoritarian rule of President Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijani youth activists and opposition politicians turned to the Internet and social media as new tools for democratization. They used social media networks to evade government control and crackdowns, and to employ the benefits of new technologies to bring much-needed change to the country. However, Azerbaijani experience shows that reality is more complex than simply equating social media with political revolution (Pearce & Kendzior, 2012). Bloggers have been tracked down and arrested to serve as deterrent to others.

Social media have also been used to expose political scandals in authoritarian regimes. In Russia, the social media challenged the long-held view that scandals only occur in liberal democracies (Markovits & Silverstein, 1988). In 2009 and 2010 videos of two separate cases were uploaded on YouTube to show corruption in the police force. Although both cases dealt with the very sensitive topic of police misconduct and corruption, the whistle blower later refused to cooperate (Toepfl, 2011). Exposing political scandals can be paradoxical. On the one hand, this can improve democratic accountability by generating large amounts of information. On the other hand, it may cause political alienation and rarely provide definitive resolutions.

3.1 Social media and dissent in authoritarian states

For civil society actors around the world, digital media and online social networking applications have changed the way in which dissent is organized. Social movement leaders use social media to organize collective action in a global setting (Deibert, 2008). In the past, authoritarian states easily controlled broadcast media during political crises by destroying newsprint supplies, seizing radio and television stations, and blocking phone calls. It is more difficult to control digital media, but there have been occasions in which states have disabled significant portions of their national information infrastructure (Howard, Agarwal & Hussain, 2011).The rise of online political activism raises awareness and the interest of those already participating in off-line civic movements (Norris, 2001). Rahimi argues that much online political activism, especially the mobilization of dissent under authoritarian regimes, is

dynamic and porous (Rahimi, 2011). Through spontaneous and creative interaction, individuals can carve out new domains of communication through which dissent can be articulated and enacted in diverse ways (Gibson, Lusoli & Ward, 2005; Rahimi, 2011). Some examples show how new domains of communication circumvent blocked social media.

During the last week of January 2011, Hosni Mubarak's attempt to shut down the Internet in Egypt failed dismally when a small group of tech-savvy students and the civil dissidents organized satellite phone and dial-up links to Israel and Europe to link them with the rest of the world (Howard, Agarwal & Hussain, 2011). Following a rigged election June 2009, the Iranian government shut down the internet to curb communication among the protesters. The citizens used social media via their mobile phones to coordinate movements and get images and news to the international community (Christensen, 2011). After the post-election violence in Kenya in 2008, the Minister for Internal Security, John Michuki, ordered a ban on all live broadcasts. During the news black-out, many Kenyans turned to the use of Short Message Services (SMS) and mobile phones to communicate and circumvent the black-out. Social media, especially blogging, were used by the citizens as a way to get involved (Mäkinen & Kuira, 2008).

These examples raise the wider issue of Internet censorship and Internet freedom in democratic and authoritarian states as a context for understanding social media activism.

4. The State, Internet Censorship, and Internet Freedom

Censorship can be defined as the act or system of practice suppressing, limiting, or deleting objectionable or any other form of speech (Deibert, 2008). Although all political regimes exercise some form of censorship, established democracies have distinguished themselves from authoritarian states by limiting censorship and expanding freedom of expression. The Internet is seen as a technological fortification of free speech, and many governments have established Internet governance as a counter-measure to free speech through the Internet. Internet governance generally refers to policy and technical coordination issues related to the exchange of information over the Internet. There are many options for creating taxonomies of Internet governance functions (Deibert, 2008). They include Internet protocol design, and the coordination of critical Internet resources, which historically have not been the exclusive purview of governments but of new transnational institutional forms (DeNardis, 2010). Government control of the Internet cuts out the very heart of its democratic ambitions. If the

government can filter information that is posted and read on the Internet, it can effectively stifle online organization and criticism (Howard, Agarwal & Hussain, 2011). It is especially disturbing that while the governments that maintain Internet censorship operations are mostly authoritarian, democratic states like South Korea have not been exempt (Fish, 2009; Howard, Agarwal & Hussain, 2011).

There are two forces that influence access, circulation and expression. One is the democratization of knowledge and the multiplication of sources and voices offered by the internet (social media). Another is the deliberate and outrageous instances of falsified national intelligence shielded from scrutiny (Green, 2000). Examples are found even in established democracies such as the USA and UK. In the USA, it was reported that there is media control of photographs of returning military coffins as well as controlled press briefings of the same (Boler, 2008). There is also legislation such as the 'Patriot Act' to silence the dissent. Censorship clearly includes established democracies.

On 15th February 2011, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton gave a speech entitled "Internet Rights and Wrongs: Choices & Challenges in a Networked World". She reaffirmed America's commitment to "Internet freedom" as an increasingly vital element of its foreign policy (Clinton, 2011). In her words, Internet freedom is "about ensuring that the Internet remains a space where activities of all kinds can take place, from grand, ground-breaking, historic campaigns to the small, ordinary acts that people engage in every day." Simply put, the Internet is essential to the exercise of free speech and civil liberties in a networked society (Sinnreich, Graham & Trammell, 2011). Recent political developments around the world support this argument. Although the Internet has been a platform for political speech and social action virtually since its inception, digital communications platforms have become an increasingly central component of resistance movements and other organized social action over the past five years. Consequently, it is an increasingly popular target for repression, censorship, and surveillance (Davis, 2010; Freelon, 2010; Hanson, *et al*., 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Sen, *et al*., 2010; Talbot, 2010; Christensen, 2011; Makdisi & Elbadawi, 2011; Obar, Zube & Lampe, 2011).

As Clinton herself observed, social and mobile media were important tools for both organizing and publicizing the massive anti-regime protests in Iran in 2009 and Egypt in 2011, which led to government-imposed Internet shutdowns in both cases, and contributed to

the ousting of Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak. The list of examples is long and includes countries ranging from China to Tunisia to Myanmar, where political resistance and repression have moved from streets and cafés to mobile phones and laptops. Governments have devoted ever-increasing resources to controlling and policing the flow of digital communications within and outside of their borders (Sinnreich, Graham & Trammell, 2011).

Progressive uses of the Internet include the dissemination of documents, software that can be downloaded, and information about potential resources, events, and problems pertaining to action. Countless groups use the social media landscape for their own political interests and agendas. For activists in the developing world, the Internet allows affordable access to sympathetic counterparts abroad without the need to obtain a visa. The Internet has transformed from a system that is primarily oriented towards information provision into one that is more oriented towards communication, user-generated content, data sharing, and community building (Fuchs, 2011). It has replaced the 20th century media model of few producers speaking to the masses with a user-generated model of many producers speaking to each other (Fish, 2009).

In this way, it connects people, easily provides information on social issues, and generates personalized and more detailed news. These features have given citizens the capacity to initiate national debates. Some governments are wary of the sheer quantity of content generated by the American infotainment machine. They argue that freedom of expression is an unaffordable luxury. Singapore, for example, imposed strict restraints on Internet sites with political, religious, or pornographic content (Rodan, 1998). It also requires all local Internet access providers to be registered and to screen out 'objectionable' content. As the country's Minister of Information and Threats, George Yeo defended censorship as a symbolic way to maintain awareness of what is socially acceptable (Rodan, 1998).

The Internet and social media have offered almost instantaneous transmission of news, reports, and video footage (Green, 2000). As a result, the Chinese government, starting with the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, has been wary about the use of the Internet by dissident groups both inside and outside of China. During the events of June 1989, the Communist leadership were particularly stung by students' use of emails and faxes and by the China Net newsgroup based at Stanford University in the USA. Conservatives in the Communist Party feared that the Internet represented a technology that was simply a weapon of US domination (Green, 2000).

Another example is the impeachment trial of Philippine President Joseph Estrada on 17 January 2001 when loyalists in the Philippine Congress voted to set aside key evidence against him. Less than two hours after the decision was announced, thousands of Filipinos, angry that their corrupt president might be let off the hook, converged on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, a major crossroads in Manila. The protest was arranged, in part, by forwarded text messages reading "Go 2 EDSA. Wear blk." The crowd swelled quickly, and in the next few days, more than a million people arrived, choking traffic in downtown Manila (Shirky, 2011).

Internet censorship raises special problems for democracies that have not developed mature traditions to protect political expression. In established democracies such as the USA, the protections originally afforded to print journalism and more basic forms of expression have been extended to the Internet, although there are still restrictions. The Council of Europe has banned online hate speech, but subversive and political expression are vigorously protected (Fish, 2009). The Internet's democratizing potential has been lauded for its impact upon social movements and the public sphere (Zhao, 2006; Stachura, 2010). The 'Battle of Seattle' in 1999 (Shah, 2001) and the Arab uprisings in 2011 (Sadiki, 2000; Casilli & Tubaro, 2011; Cottle, 2011; Joseph, 2011) are two examples that illustrate how the Internet shapes social movements, and organizes them. The Arab uprisings have since been referred to as the Twitter and Facebook revolutions resulting from social media activism.

5. Social Media Activism

The social media landscape is a form of citizens' democracy involving the political right of freedom of access to information and the exchange of information. The social media landscape entails platforms such as microblogs, Livecasts, and other variants of social networks. Recent events in Iran, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen, and in other locations such as Moldova, Georgia, Palestine, and China have stimulated discussions on the uses of social media for the purposes of political dissent and activist organization, as well as their effects on democratic and authoritarian states (Christensen, 2011).

Social media such as Twitter and Facebook, operating with user-created content, have become dominant and popular (Shippert, 2009; Ho, 2010; Forrestal, 2011; Fuchs, 2011). Ordinary citizens can direct public debate by putting text or video on any of the social media

platforms hoping that their contribution catches the attention of the Internet masses. The social media are used in many social movements across the globe. Authoritarian states can no longer guarantee a 'safe' environment by controlling the newspapers, radio and television stations because the social media are beyond their control and manipulation (Abbott, 2001). Even in countries with extreme control measures such as Iran and China, citizens have managed to use social media to highlight important issues and events.

5.1 Social media in democratic and authoritarian states

Democracy in social media is apparent through Tactical Media (TM). TM is defined as critical usage and theorisation of media practices that draw on all forms of media for achieving specific goals and promoting potentially subversive issues. TM is about diverse responses to changing contexts (Meikle, 2002; Coyer, Dowmunt & Fountain, 2007; Renzi, 2008). It emerged in 1992 and emphasizes the use of new technologies (Meikle, 2002). TM manifests in social media platforms including microblogs such Twitter and Facebook, and YouTube (video microblog).

5.1.1 Microblogs

Microblogs are social networking platforms that focus on data sharing, communication, community, and co-production (Drache & Froese, 2008; Aharony, 2010). Recent trends in microblogs indicate that a blog is created every minute. Bloggers are referred to as 'citizen journalists' (Allan & Thorsen, 2009; Levinson, 2009; Greer & McLaughlin, 2010). This points to the idea of collective productivity, where information is produced and shared through microblogs such as Facebook and Twitter (Aharony, 2010).

Citizens in both democratic and authoritarian states use microblogs. In authoritarian states, microblogs link activist communities engaging in public debates in global settings. Hence, 'global citizens' can be found on Twitter or Facebook, using the Internet as the tool with which to communicate (Drache & Froese, 2008). For some, global citizenship is a state of mind, but for others it is about the political and social activism of loose-knit coalitions representing global participatory democracy (Schattle, 2008). Joining public activism is easy since there is no membership requirement other than to lend your voice to what you believe in. Democratic states rely on dissent to encourage understanding and productive disagreement in order to renew and strengthen democratic values (Drache & Froese, 2008).

5.1.2 Twitter

Twitter, which is the most popular microblogging service, was launched on 13 July 2006 and has grown significantly since its launch (Java, *et al*., 2007). One in five Internet users now uses Twitter. According to the Pew Internet Report (2012), thirteen percent of online adults use Twitter, and half of Twitter's users access the service on a cell phone. Twitter allows its users to disseminate whatever information they please to the whole world through instant publication (Han, 2011). Twitter users can post short updates online (up to 140 characters for each post, including spaces). To use Twitter, one opens an account free-of-charge. Other people may follow your content to see your posts. Twitter posts are known as tweets. Accounts can be made public or private (Fox, Zickuhr & Smith, 2009; Zhao & Rosson, 2009; Forrestal, 2011).

Twitter's potential value for any community is that it acts as a starting point for wider conversation because it sparks interaction. In the social media landscape, Twitter has been used to highlight and track important events in authoritarian states. In the the case of Iran's fraudulent presidential elections in June 2009, the 'supreme leader' blacked out media reporting, and all cell phones and other communication channels were blocked. The Iranian authorities used Twitter to propagate misleading information, forgetting that every tweet is checked for accuracy. The misleading information was discovered and denounced by Twitter (Levinson, 2009). American presidential candidates John Edwards and Barack Obama integrated Twitter into their campaigns in 2008 (Aharony, 2010). Both used the platform to keep their Twitter followers abreast of their upcoming appearances. News organizations such as the BBC and CNN also use Twitter to share breaking stories.

Overall, Twitter is a great way to remind people about events as well as to share information. Twitter is invaluable for creating social networks in authoritarian states, but it has also been responsible for reporting events and breaking news for the purposes of dissent in democratic states (Han, 2011).

5.1.3 Facebook

Facebook allows global citizens to broadcast to all their friends that they support a certain political idea or social cause. Most cell phone users connect to Facebook at their own

discretion. According to Levinson (2009), Facebook friends are real-time knowledge resources and offer valuable information.

The power of Facebook campaigns is evident in the street protests that rocked Yemen, Jordan, Algeria, Bahrain, Libya, and many Arab countries. In Egypt, it was a Facebook-driven protest on 25 January 2011 that grew into a massive mobilization of protesters and that forced President Hosni Mubarak from office (Christensen, 2011; Lynch, 2011). The Arab uprisings have overturned established views of authoritarian tenacity and the resilience of Arab authoritarian states.

5.1.4 YouTube

The power of YouTube manifests in both established democracies and authoritarian states. YouTube relies on millions of video clips in real-time about otherwise untold stories. Amateur video clips are able to depict the power of individuals. 'Global citizens' have used mobile technology to upload pictures/images of undemocratic events onto YouTube. The public has become aware of YouTube as a resource for democracy. In some instances, YouTube has usurped television's role as a herald of public news through real-time and instant updates of events as they unfold. Television cannot capture many significant events that happen, but 'global citizens' have made it possible for such events to be viewed on YouTube. YouTube is not only continuously accessible and free to users, but it is also free to producers.

In spite of government efforts to silence dissent, some YouTube images have evoked mixed reactions from 'global citizens'. Examples of images include:

- The Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse in Iraq 2004, showing photographs taken by a US Army reservist. He was among eleven military officers court-marshalled;
- Saddam Hussein's execution which was not supposed to be a public event; and
- A video clip of George Allen (a US senator who lost his re-election bid in 2008) calling a questioner at a public event "macaca", which is a racial nickname (Levinson, 2009).

More positively, in June 2007 YouTube was used to popularize the American presidential candidate Barack Obama through the video "Obama Girl". It received more than 2.3 million

viewers in its premier month, and Obama later won the US presidential elections (Levinson, 2009).

It is apparent from all the examples listed so far in this article that ordinary citizens have used the social media to become more directly involved in fighting Internet censorship, and have tested their effects in established democracies and authoritarian regimes. There is a compelling reason to delve more deeply into the track records of these states to ascertain how well-insulated against Internet censorship and how firmly entrenched intellectual freedom are in established democracies. In other words, the social media test requires a more rigorous application in established democracies. This can be achieved through a comparison with authoritarian regimes.

6. Methodology

Twelve countries, representing all five continents and distributed across the democratic-authoritarian continuum, are profiled in individual templates in respect of:

- the type of government, and rank in the 2011 Democracy Index;
- population size in 2011;
- the estimated number of social media users in 2011;
- Internet penetration in 2011;
- social media activism using Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube;
- incidents of social media activism and censorship;
- technical and legislative controls; and
- recent trends.

The countries are located in Africa (Libya and South Africa), Asia (Australia, China, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Singapore), Europe (Finland, Turkey, and the UK), South America (Chile) and North America (the USA). They represent both established democracies and authoritarian regimes but because there are differences within these two broad categories, the identification of the type of government and ranking is drawn from *The Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy 2011*.

This index identifies four categories, namely: full democracies; flawed democracies; hybrid regimes; and authoritarian regimes. **Full democracies** are countries with basic political freedoms and civil liberties that are underpinned by a democratic political culture.

In full democracies, the media are independent and diverse, and there is an effective system of checks and balances with an independent judiciary. **Flawed democracies** have free and fair elections, and basic civil liberties are respected despite infringements on media. Weaknesses include problems in governance, an underdeveloped political culture, and low levels of political participation.

In **hybrid regimes**, irregularities prevent elections from being both free and fair. There is government pressure on opposition parties and candidates, and the weaknesses in flawed democracies are more serious in hybrid regimes. Civil society is weak, and there is harassment of and pressure on journalists, while the judiciary is not independent. **Authoritarian regimes** have no political pluralism. Many countries in this category are dictatorships. Elections, if they do occur, are not free and fair and the media are either state-owned or controlled by groups connected to the ruling regime. Criticism of the government is repressed and censorship is pervasive.

Each country is described in terms of population size in 2011, the estimated number of social media users in 2011, and Internet penetration in 2011 to show the most recent use of social media by ordinary citizens. Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube were selected because of their widespread use by political activists during protests and social unrest, and because they have been the main targets for government clampdowns on the social media. Incidents of social media activism are listed for each country, and have been drawn primarily (but not exclusively) from the following sources:

- Reporters Without Borders;
- Open Net Initiative;
- Freedom of Connection, Freedom of Expression;
- Global Voices Online; and
- The Guardian.

Only the years (over the past five years) when there was significant use of the social media in activism and protest, and acts of government censorship, have been identified for each country. The incidents are listed in chronological order to track patterns of action and reaction implicating social media use by activists and governments. The list of incidents is not comprehensive, but provides an overview of tendencies within the specific countries. The

section on technical and legislative controls evinces attempts by government officials to use sophisticated technological mechanisms and oppressive laws to increase censorship, as well as the counter-efforts by activists to defend and expand freedom of access to information and freedom of expression. The recent trends section summarizes the directions in which countries have moved towards either rising levels of Internet censorship or towards greater intellectual freedom. These categories of data will be used to analyse and assess differences and similarities between established democracies and authoritarian regimes.

Country profile	2011/2012
Name	Australia
Political Type	Full Democracy (Rank 6)
Population	21,766,711
Estimated number of Social Media users	9,800,000
Internet penetration	89.8%
Internet users	19,554,832
Facebook	10,721,020
Twitter	1,800,000
YouTube	11,000,000 UAVs
Social media activism	Government officials have become wary of social media activists and, in one instance, the Australian Federal Police and the federal Attorney-General's Department contracted a private intelligence company to monitor activist websites, blogs, Facebook and Twitter and to provide warning and analysis of protest activity. http://www.dareoutloud.com/2012/02/magnetic-force-of-social-media-narcissism-vs-activism/
Incidents of social media activism/censorship	
2007	
	June 6, Flickr image servers were blocked.
	December 31, the Australian Government announced the mandatory filtering of inappropriate material at ISP level with an opt-out option. http://www.abc.net.au/news/2007-12-31/conroy-announces-mandatory-internet-filters-to/999946
2009	
	February 12, Internet filtering trial with 6 ISPs began.
	March, the whistle-blowing site Wikileaks was added to a blacklist of banned URLs. http://www.zeropaid.com/news/10002/australia_internet_filtering_trial_to_begin_with_6_isps/
	March 19, Australia's Web blacklist leaked. The secretive Internet filter blacklist is held by the communications watchdog ACMA, revealing that the government has understated the amount of banned Web pages by more than 1,000.

	http://www.networkworld.com/news/2009/031909-australias-web-blacklist.html?hpg1=bn
	April 24, the government and a number of German ISPs signed an agreement to maintain and enforce a 'blacklist' of banned web sites. http://www.zeropaid.com/news/86047/germany-forces-isps-to-agree-to-web-filtering/
2010	
	January 20, Australian citizens turn their websites black including Twitter and Facebook in a protest against the government's proposed Internet filter. http://www.news.com.au/technology/internet-filter-protesters-set-to-fade-websites-to-black-on-australia-day/story-e6frfro0-1225821477370
2011	
	July, voluntary blocking commenced although official plans for monitoring and blocking are still on hold.
Technical and legislative controls	
	Besides ISP-level content filtering, the government has sought approval for its mandatory national Web filtering system and has persuaded Internet service providers to create a voluntary system. Domain names and URLs are blocked by identifying and collating online content for censoring. In this way, ISPs are compelled to remove the content concerned.
	Those opposing the voluntary programme suggest that site access, while blocked directly, can be accessed through URL changes, aggregation websites and/or peer-to-peer sites, such as Forums or blogs. http://enterprisefeatures.com/2011/09/australian-internet-censorship-where-does-it-currently-stand/
Recent trends	Internet censorship efforts cost 2.7 million dollars per year, but so far have produced minimal positive outcomes. Filtering software has proved ineffective, and much time is spent dealing with complaints filed by websites 'wrongfully removed'. There is still uncertainty about what will be officially mandated for Internet content seen in the country.

Country profile	2011/2012
Name	Chile
Political Type	Flawed Democracy (Rank 35)
Population	16,888,760
Estimated number of Social Media users	25,900,000
Estimated internet penetration	59.2%
Internet users	10,000,000
Facebook	7,695,680
Twitter	871,022
YouTube	N/A
Social media activism	
Twitter	In Chile, students have protested against the privatisation of the education system, and the activist Camilla Vallejo has led more than 300,000 Twitter users to quickly initiate a *cacerolazos* (a form of dictatorship-era protest where people walk the streets banging on pots and pans). http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/29/opinion/sunday/student-protests-rile-chile.html?pagewanted=all http://www.theecosocialist.com/1/post/2011/8/no-more-shock-doctrine-in-chile-millions-protestgeneral-strike-looms-and-student-leader-emerges.html
Incidents of social media activism/censorship	
2010	
	January 27, more than 90 earthquakes resulted in tsunamis around the Pacific Ocean, hitting several Chilean seaports and towns. Internet users communicated with their cell phones and computers, and news agencies around the world relied on social networks to collect information from victims. Twitter was the most valuable and popular tool. http://carlosqc.blogspot.com/2010/03/role-of-social-media-and-internet.html
	August, citizens used social media to help in demonstrations against HydroAysén in Santiago, and to learn the details of the project and where the dams were to be built. http://en.rsf.org/chile-citizen-activism-challenges-17-08-2011,40799.html
2011	November, there were cyber-attacks on three news websites, impacting dialogue between the government and the student-

	led protest movement. The news websites, *La Otra Voz* and *Puro Periodismo*, were hacked at around the same time. http://en.rsf.org/chile-three-news-websites-hacked-10-11-2011,41375.html
Technical and legislative controls	
	There is a bill proposing to punish individuals who use the Internet to disseminate contents that are offensive to morals, public order or 'proper customs'. This bill gives wide discretionary powers to a judge to decide if a given behaviour is against what is understood to be 'morally correct', and if it belongs to the realm of the private or in the public interest or what is against 'proper customs'. But one way to circumvent this is that the law only applies if the server that hosts given content is in the territory of Chile. A fine example is 'The Black Book of Chilean Justice', which was banned. But everyone soon read everything in the book when it was made available on the Internet, in a server physically located abroad. The domain name of this server was a '.com' and not a '.cl', which removed the jurisdiction of Chilean law. http://www.isoc.org/inet2000/cdproceedings/8k/8k_4.htm#types
Recent trends	
	Students have scored some political victories, thanks in part to their use of social media. The government's 2012 budget has a $350 million increase for higher education, and promises scholarships for qualifying students from families up to the 60th percentile in household income. The trend is therefore towards more effective resistance to government policies that fail to recognise social inequalities.

Country Profile	2011/2012
Name	China
Political Type	Authoritarian (Rank 141)
Population	1,336,718,015
Estimated number of Social Media users	307,500,000
Internet penetration	38.4%
Internet users	513,100,000
Facebook	447,460
Twitter (SinaWeibo)	300,000,000
YouTube	Unknown
Social media activism	The Beijing-based scholar, Michel Bonnin, says that Weibo (Twitter - with about 300 million registered users) plays a bigger role in China than Twitter does in the west, because of the level of censorship that the regime imposes on the other media. Weibo is censored, but it is still where the greatest exchange of information occurs. The traditional and official media are forced to go through it to have a real impact on the public, and yet this is where millions share their thoughts on political controls, commercial interests, and official scandals.
Incidents of social media activism/censorship	
2008	
	Facebook (banned since 2004)
	Google App Engine blocked, but unblocked on November 27, 2011.
	July 2, Technorati (www.technorati.com) blocked.
2009	
	April 23, Plurk (www.plurk.com) blocked.
	April 25, Wretch (The largest Taiwanese blog and image hoster) blocked.
	May 15, Both Blogspot blogs and Blogger blocked.
	June 2, Twitter, Flickr, MSN spaces blocked in preparation of the 20th Anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre.
	July 4, Blogspot blogs blocked
	July 5, Residents of Urümqi city protested the death of two factory worker using internet, blogs, sms - Scores dead.

	July 6, China shuts down Internet in Xinjiang region after riots. http://opennet.net/blog/2009/07/china-shuts-down-internet-xinjiang-region-after-riots
	July 22, Following a corruption scandal between a Chinese company and the Namibian government, China blocks all keywords searches for "Namibia". http://opennet.net/blog/2009/07/no-more-namibia-china-blocks-search-results-entire-country
	July, Picasa Web Albums site blocked.
	October 1, China strengthens Great Firewall ahead of the 60th anniversary of communist rule. http://www.theregister.co.uk/2009/09/29/china_tor/
	December 18, China ramps up control again. Under the new measures China has shut down 700 Web sites, prohibited anyone but officially registered businesses from obtaining a .cn domain and limited third parties from providing content over China's largest mobile network. http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/idblog/2009/12/18/china-ramps-up-internet-controls-again/
2010	
	January 13, Chinese search engine Baidu blocks Google's official blog after the company announces it will reconsider operations in the country. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/14/world/asia/14beijing.html?_r=1
	February 25, China steps up policing of new websites by requiring individuals to verify their identities with regulators and have their photographs taken before they can set up a personal website.
	Li Gang case - Bloggers uproar online, when suspect in hit-and-run case was tried and imprisoned for 6 years.
2011	
	January 19, PBworks blocked.
	May 31, Internet crackdown on the Inner Mongolia demonstrations about the death of a Mongol herdsman. http://en.rsf.org/china-internet-is-collateral-victim-of-31-05-2011,40379.html
	September 19, Chinese microblogging service Weibo implemented

	stricter self-censorship practices after the government accused the company of facilitating rumors about Chinese officials on the Internet. http://in.reuters.com/article/2011/09/19/idININdia-59420220110919
	October 20, many Mongolian websites called for protests against the government's attempts to impose a news blackout on the event
	October 27, access to several sites such as Boljoo11, Mongolian BBS12 and Medege13 were blocked. http://en.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/rapport-internet2012_ang.pdf
	In July 2011, the Propaganda Department ordered "all media including newspapers, magazines and websites to give priority to reports from the authorities on the positive aftermath of the train disaster" in Wenzhou on 23 July 2011 that left about 40 people dead. In response, critics rushed onto the Web and millions of comments on Weibo demanded explanations about train safety in China.
	Three months later, officials announced compulsory real-name registration for microblogs in Beijing, Shenzhen, and several other cities. http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2012/apr/16/internet-china-censorship-weibo-microblogs
	Wordpress - All Wordpress-powered blogs blocked, November 2011.
2012	
	January, a communications blackout was imposed to prevent media coverage of the authorities quashing protest movements in Tibet.
	February 3, websites of Tibetan exile media organizations could not be accessed and discussion forums and blogs in the Tibetan language, such as Sangdhor.com and Rangdrol.net, were blocked.
	March 3, Tumblr blocked, but unblocked later
	April 2012, a crackdown on unfounded rumours of a coup led to at least six detentions. http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2012/apr/16/internet-china-censorship-weibo-microblogs
Technical and legislative controls	
	China is able to restrict the number of IP addresses that can connect to the international network at the same time. http://en.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/rapport-internet2012_ang.pdf The regime also required public Wi-Fi access providers to install extremely expensive Internet user tracking software. In addition to

	reinforcing their control of Internet traffic, the authorities are now imposing a form of economic censorship by forcing cybercafés to stop offering Wi-Fi access if they cannot afford the software.
	The Chinese Army has set up an elite unit responsible for thwarting cyber-attacks. In August 2011, McAfee security experts exposed a series of large-scale cyber-attacks, and it is thought to be behind attacks against Google. http://en.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/rapport-internet2012_ang.pdf
	Under government pressure, Chinese micro-blogging websites such as SinaWeibo have had to hire thousands of moderators and now require users to register under their real name. http://en.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/rapport-internet2012_ang.pdf Other official measures include pre-publication moderation of posts by blacklisted users or those with more than 100,000 followers. There is 24/7 monitoring and rapid deletion of "illegal or harmful" posts, and requirements to store user data and supply it to police. http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2012/apr/16/internet-china-censorship-weibo-microblogs)
Recent trends	
	China still uses the well-tested tactic of suspending communications in cities or provinces when it loses control of the situation, as happened recently in Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia. http://en.rsf.org/chine-tibet-cut-off-from-the-rest-of-the-23-02-2012,41930.html
	Despite China's censorship apparatus, thousands of citizens continue protesting in the streets and using social networks against the expropriations of farmlands in the small city of Wukan. The villagers managed to make their grievances heard and rallied public support, thanks to the social media, and Beijing and local officials had to agree to negotiate with them.
	The government continues to block Twitter and Facebook because it is afraid of free discussion, and it still deletes information. But there is enough evidence to show that the government is not having it all their own way as social media activists resist and undermine censorship. While censorship may be pervasive, the pervasiveness of social media activism is growing equally.

Country profile	2011/2012
Name	Finland
Regime Type	Full Democracy (Rank 9)
Population	5,529,888
Estimated number of Social Media users	Unknown
Internet penetration	88.6%
Internet users	4,661,265
Facebook	2,078,880
Twitter	Unknown
YouTube	Unknown
Social media activism	Unknown
Incidents of social media activism/censorship	
2007	
	January 3, Wikileaks publishes Finland's blocked child pornography sites (some sites are determined not to be child pornography).
2008	
	September, inaccuracy problems led briefly to websites of main international standards organization for World Wide Web being blacklisted as child pornography by mistake.
2009	
	January 5, Wikileaks publishes Finland's blocked sites. There were 797 domains that featured on a Finnish Internet censorship domain list, including the critical anti-censorship site lapsiporno.info.
2011	
	July 27, in response to a bombing and mass shooting in Norway, Finnish law enforcement increased Internet surveillance in the hope of picking up 'weak signals' that could possibly indicate a terrorist threat. http://www.techdirt.com/articles/20110726/1919051527 3/finnish-police-respond-to-norwegian-tragedy-increasing-internet-surveillance.shtml
2012	
	10 January, customers of Internet operators, Elisa and Saunalahti were not allowed to access The Pirate Bay

	website because the District Court of Helsinki ruled in favour of the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, IFPI Finland in October 2011. But the court ruling did not address the other two major Internet service providers in Finland, TeliaSonera and DNA, whose customers were still free to access The Pirate Bay.
Technical and legislative controls	
	There is little evidence of technical and legislative controls, but courts apply special legislation when issuing orders to block access to websites.
Recent trends	
	Finland still remains remarkably free of Internet censorship by comparison with other countries, but it is clear that in response to the recent bombing and mass shooting in Norway, there appears to be a change in mood about the future.

Country Profile	2011/2012
Name	Libya
Political Type	Authoritarian (Rank 125)
Population	6,597,960
Internet users	391,880
Internet penetration	5.9%
Facebook	464,700
Twitter	63,919
YouTube	Unknown
Social media activism	
Facebook	During the uprising, calls for demonstrations were launched on Facebook. Libyan citizens acted as journalists, and used mobile phones and cameras to record the demonstrations and crackdowns. These amateur video recordings were the only images available for several days. Mohamed "Mo" Al-Nabous, the Libyan journalist and blogger who founded the Benghazi TV station *Libya Al-Hurra* in the early days of the uprising, was shot dead by a sniper on 19 March 2011, just a few hours before the military intervention by the coalition. http://www.rsf.org/rapport/RSF_BILAN_MOYEN_ORIENT_2011_GB.pdf
Incidents of social media activism/censorship	
2011	
	February 1, writer and political commentator Jamal Al-Hajji, who used the Internet to call for protests, was arrested. Subsequently, access to social networking websites was severely disrupted.
	February 16, blogger Mohammed Al-AshimMasmari was arrested after giving interviews to the Arabic service of the *BBC* and *Al-Jazeera*.
	February 18, Internet access was cut several times.
	February 21, all land line and mobile telephone connections were cut.
	February 23, the signal from the Nilesat satellite, which carries the stations *Al-Hurra*, *Al-Jazeera* and *Al-Arabiya* and which covered the unrest and broadcast eyewitness accounts by telephone, was jammed.

	July 30, the air strike by NATO forces on the headquarters of the Libyan national broadcaster *Al-Jamahiriya* in Tripoli destroyed satellite dishes.
	September 11, Libya's transitional government uncovered the technology that Gaddafi's regime used to spy on citizens' text messages and emails. The software came from French, South African, and other international companies. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/02/opinion/political-repression-2-0.html?_r=2
Technical and legislative controls	
	The Libyan government was able to disrupt the Web with the help of the main Internet service provider, owned by Gaddafi's son Mohamed.
Recent trends	
	Before his removal and death, Gaddafi tried to impose a news blackout by cutting access to the Internet. The overthrow of the Gaddafi regime has ended an era of censorship, but many challenges remain. There has been a clear shift away from pervasive Internet censorship, but it is still too early to tell what the future will bring.

Country Profile	2011/2012
Name	Myanmar
Political Type	Authoritarian (Rank 161)
Population	53,999,804
Estimated number of internet users	110,000
Internet penetration	0.2%
Facebook	Unknown
Twitter	Unknown
YouTube	Unknown
Social media activism	
Facebook	After his release from prison in January 2012, Nay Phone Latt who won the Reporters Without Borders' Blogger Award said that the new media and bloggers had helped to achieve political change in Burma. Although he finds the swiftness of these changes troubling, he said that it is now possible to use Gmail, read blogs, go on Facebook, and visit news sites.
YouTube	YouTube and several Internet news websites such as *BBC*, *Reuters*, *The Bangkok Post*6, *Straits Times*7, *Radio Free Asia*8, *Irrawaddy*9, *Democratic Voice of Burma*10 (*DVB*), and the Burmese version of *Voice of America*11 were unblocked directly after the visit of the United Nations' special rapporteur on human rights in Burma. This coincided with the International Day of Democracy. http://en.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/rapport-internet2012_ang.pdf
Incidents of social media activism/censorship	
2007	
	Since 2006, cybercafés have had to be approved as 'public Internet access points'. This obliges managers of cybercafés to carry out screen captures of each computer every five minutes. They must also be able to provide the identity card number of each user, along with their telephone number and their address each time they connect, if the regime requires it.
	September 29-October 13, the Burmese junta shuts down the internet in the wake of mass demonstrations.
2008	
	In 2008, nearly 3,000 internet cafés became inaccessible. The censorship system became highly organised, with the

	Information Bureau of the Council of State and the Publicity Department (formerly the Propaganda Department) as the main instruments of censorship.
2010	
	January 18 Bagan ISP, one of the two internet service providers under MPT (Myanmar Post and Telecommunication), started banning more websites, including blogs with their own domains.
	November 4, a major cyber-attack hit Burma, preventing Internet access just before the country's first election in 20 years. http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-11693214
2011	
	March 2011, President TheinSein said that the media's role must be respected.
	May 2011, restrictions on cybercafés were tightened. The use of external hard drives, USB flash drives and CDs were banned, as well as the use of Internet telephony services (VoIP) to make international calls. This measure intended to further isolate dissidents. http://en.rsf.org/burma-burma-11-03-2011,39754.html
2012	
	Authorities promised in 2012 to adopt a media law that will put an end to censorship. They are expected to revise or repeal the Electronic Act and emergency rule.
Technical controls and legislature	
	The new Myanmar Internet gives the authorities more surveillance options, while reserving the fastest and best-quality access for the government and military.
Recent trends	
	Myanmar has embarked on a promising period of reforms, which includes the release of journalists and bloggers and the restoration of access to blocked websites. It could also soon leave the 'Enemies of the Internet' list if it takes the necessary measures. But it must now go further by abandoning censorship altogether, dismantling the surveillance apparatus that was built on the national Internet platform, and repealing the Electronic Act. There is therefore some hope that it may shift from pervasive and substantial censorship in the political and other spheres of activity.

Country profile	2011/2012
Name	Pakistan
Political type	Hybrid (Rank 105)
Population	187,342,721
Estimated number of Social Media users	Unknown
Internet users	29,128,970
Internet penetration	15.5%
Facebook	6,412,960
Twitter	Unknown
YouTube	Unknown
Social media activism	
YouTube	The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) ordered the country's ISPs to block access to YouTube for allegedly featuring a blasphemous video. According to Pakistan's 'Don't Block The Blog', however, the reasons for banning YouTube were: vote rigging videos that showed evidence of election fraud in Karachi; and a blasphemous video disgracing the Prophet Mohammed.
Incidents of social media activism/censorship	
2007	
	January 2, Pakistan Telecommunications Authority orders blocking of six sites on the basis that they are harmful to the integrity of the country.
	During 2007, ISPs cut access to thousands of websites to comply with a supreme court order to restrict access to all 'blasphemous' content. http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrint.aspx
	November 2007, stringent media regulation resulting from ex-President Musharraf's declaration of emergency led to the uploading of news broadcasts from banned television stations to YouTube by journalists, lawyers, and viewers.
	November, millions signed online petitions, and students, youth, and others created blogs. Blogs and Facebook were used, and videos and photos were uploaded to Flickr to plan flash protests and to document resistance in the face of a media blackout.
2008	
	February 24, YouTube was blocked.

	http://advocacy.globalvoicesonline.org/2008/02/24/pakistan-partial-block-of-youtube/
	August, six URLs were blocked upon the request of retired Admiral Afzal Tahir, who was accused in a number of YouTube videos of abusing his office in a personal land dispute.
2009	
	January 2, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority ordered the blocking of six sites because they are 'harmful to the integrity of the country'. http://www.thenews.com.pk/index.html
2010	
	May 19, Facebook blocked after a video goes viral. http://www.foxnews.com/scitech/2010/05/19/facebook-fracas-breaks-everybody-draw-mohammad-day/
	May 20, Pakistan Telecommunications Authority blocks YouTube, Facebook, Wikipedia, and 450 other websites after it deems certain online content to be blasphemous. http://opennet.net/about-filtering/2010yearinreview/may.html
Technical and legislative controls	
	Internet filtering in Pakistan is regulated by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, which has been accused of wanting to build its own Great Electronic Wall. http://en.rsf.org/pakistan-government-wants-to-create-02-03-2012,41977.html
Recent trends	
	Internet censorship has intensified in Pakistan. The government has called for proposals for a massive, centralized, Internet censorship system since the current manual blocking systems are ineffective in blocking millions of 'undesirable' web sites. The state-run National Information Communications Technology Research and Development Fund said it needs 'a national URL filtering and blocking system'. http://www.cpj.org/internet/2012/03/pakistans-excessive-net-censorship-plans.php

Country Profile	2011/2012
Name	Singapore
Political type	Hybrid (Rank 81)
Population	4,740,737
Internet Users	3,658,400
Internet penetration	77.2%
Facebook	2,602,880
Twitter	Unknown
YouTube	Unknown
Social media activism	Certain YouTube uploads were banned since its early days, but the social media have more recently facilitated political dialogue. Government critics can now more easily identify and support one another without the typical risks in Singapore. The youth has played a vital role by 'harnessing the force of social networks and other alternative media'. http://www.demdigest.net/blog/2011/05/social-media-fuels-unprecedented-activist-challenge-to-singapores-authoritarian-model/
Incidents of social media activism/censorship	
2008	
	August 20, Prime Minister Lee announced that the government will ease up the ban on political video. This includes using the new media to show political videos. As a democratic country, political films can help voters make better decision at the polls. http://blog.dk.sg/2008/08/20/singapore-to-ease-ban-on-political-videos-%E2%80%93-finally/
Technical and legislative controls	
	Singapore's Media Development Authority (MDA) has instituted a "light-touch" regulatory framework for the Internet, which promotes responsible use while giving industry players "maximum flexibility.
	The Prevention of Electronic Crimes Ordinance requires ISPs to keep all traffic data for at least 90 days and to

	provide it to the government upon request, or face fines and up to six months' imprisonment.
Recent trends	
	Many Singaporeans complain via Facebook or blogs, and although it is still too early to tell whether censorship and self-censorship will decline, there has been some progress towards greater freedom of expression.

Country Profile	2011/2012
Name	South Africa
Regime Type	Flawed Democracy (Rank 28)
Population	49,004,031
Estimated number of Social Media users	Unknown
Internet users	6,800,000
Internet penetration	13.9%
Facebook	4,954,280
Twitter	1,400,000
YouTube	Unknown
Social media activism	South Africa's controversial Protection of Information Bill, also called the 'Secrecy Bill' has been the target of social media protest. Four of the top 10 trending topics on Twitter related to the bill. In November 2011, Facebook and Twitter changed their avatars to a simple black image to show support for "Black Tuesday" in sympathy with protests against the Bill outside the ANC's Johannesburg headquarters and Parliament in Cape Town. YouTube is the fourth most popular website, Facebook is the second most popular site, and Twitter comes in at number seven. All of them have been involved in social media protests against the 'Secrecy Bill'. The specific incidents are listed below. http://memeburn.com/2011/11/south-africans-take-to-social-media-for-black-tuesday-in-protest-to-'secrecy-bill'/ http://www.kas.de/medienafrika/en/publications/29931/
Incidents of social media activism/censorship	
2010	
	19 July, objections against the Protection of Information Bill, similar to apartheid-era secrecy laws.
	23 July, the Media Institute of Southern Africa states that the Protection of Information Bill would

	mean that the State would decide what information is confidential and what is not. Journalist found guilty of infringement could face 25 years imprisonment.
	16 August, the Committee to Protect Journalists condemn a proposed Media Appeals Tribunal, and the arrest of a Sunday Times journalist for publishing a critical review of the police in South Africa.
2011	
	15 June, IFEX requests organisations to oppose the Secrecy Bill
	1 July, a commentator points out that a Protection of Information Law will keep information out of the public domain and could lead to the marginalisation of society
	22 November, The Bill is passed by the National Assembly.
Technical and legislative controls	
	The Protection of Information Bill was passed in 2011, after what many South Africans regarded as a sham process of public consultation.
Recent trends	
	As South Africa faces the possibility of a return to apartheid-style censorship under the guise of a Protection of Information Law, there is every possibility that the social media will undermine it in the same ways that grassroots and alternative media did so during apartheid. The social media may make the imposition of a veil of secrecy in South Africa impossible. http://www.kas.de/medien-afrika/en/publications/29931/

Country Profile	2011/2012
Name	Turkey
Political Type	Hybrid (Rank 88)
Population	78,785,548
Internet users	35,000,000
Internet penetration	44.4%
Facebook	30,963,100
Twitter	3,746,786
YouTube	N/A
Social media activism	
YouTube	The 'Hands Off My Internet' initiative made Internet users aware of the risks associated with the filtering system, and the Senin Yüzünden ('Because of You') site invited netizens to post photographs of blindfolded people.
Incidents of social media activism/censorship	
2007	
	June 8, Turkey government bans YouTube through wide-spread IP blocking.
2010	
	June 4, Turkey's High Council for Telecommunications asks ISPs to block YouTube-linked IP addresses, drawing condemnation from Reporters Without Borders. http://en.rsf.org/turkey-blockage-of-youtube-spreads-to-07-06-2010,37684.html
	June 8, Twitter blocked and other Google services interrupted.
	July 22, protests over the introduction of an Internet Censorship policy.
	November 3, YouTube banned in Turkey again, less than a week after the ban was lifted.
2011	
	2011, fifteen supposedly pro-Kurd news websites were banned, including Firat News. www.firatnews.ws, gundem-online.net3, and welat.org
	March 14, the filtering of the Blogger platform was lifted after two weeks of blocking following mobilizations both on and offline.
	May 6, the Turkish Telecommunications Directorate announced plans to ban websites with domain names containing any of 138 offensive words. However, according to the Turkish web providers, the Turkish

	Telecommunications Directorate is inconsistent with the law. http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=tibs-forbidden-words-list-inconsistent-with-law-2011-04-29
	May 2011, demonstrations against online censorship were held in 31 Turkish cities. Several anti-censorship sites were the targets of cyber-attacks. The strength of the mobilization, as well as the reactions of the OSCE and the European Union, compelled the authorities to make some concessions.
	June 21, after retaining control of parliament with nearly 50% of the vote, Turkey's governing Justice and Development Party announced it would introduce a compulsory Internet filtering system later in the summer. http://www.eurasianet.org/node/63724
Technical controls and legislature	
	Turkey's Information Technologies and Communications Authority (BTK) recently launched a new centralized filtering system 'for the safe use of the Internet'. This evoked strong reactions both in the country and abroad. It requires Internet users to install filtering software on their computers in order to protect them (particularly minors) from any 'objectionable' content.
Recent trends	
	Turkey appears to have backed away from a plan to censor 138 words online. Nonetheless, the online content filtering, although optional, is seen as a veiled form of censorship and the future still seems uncertain.

Country profile	2011/2012
Name	United Kingdom
Political type	Full Democracy (Rank 18)
Population	62,698,362
Estimated number of Social Media users	25,900,000
Estimated internet penetration	84.1%
Internet users	52,731,209
Facebook	30,470,400
Twitter	26,000,000
YouTube	32,100,000
Social media activism	
Facebook	Along with the other social media, Facebook came under the government's spotlight after it was said to be a key tool for rioters to organise the unrest in 2011. http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2012/mar/28/uk-riots-twitter-facebook
Twitter	A seminal moment for Twitter was the England riots. While the mainstream media organisations struggled to keep up with the fast-moving spread of the unrest, millions of people used Twitter for information. This, however, led to a misunderstanding of how the network was used. Politicians and commentators claimed that it played an important role in inciting and organising riots, but a study found that, in contrast, Twitter was a valuable tool to mobilise support for the post-riot clean-up.

Twitter's prominent role in the riots re-opened a debate about professional reporters and citizen journalists. It is clear that citizens collaborated extensively with reporters during the riots, often advising on and helping refine the coverage.

http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/dec/07/twitter-riots-how-news-spread |
Incidents of social media activism/censorship	
2010	
	April, the U.K. passed the Internet Censorship and

	Disconnection Law to censor websites deemed "likely to be used for or in connection with an activity that infringes copyright," and to disconnect the Internet connection of any household in the U.K.
2011	
	August 11, British Prime Minister David Cameron suggested a social media crackdown after rioters in the UK used Facebook and Twitter to organize large-scale lootings and demonstrations. http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2011-08/11/david-cameron-social-media
	November 23, the British government stated that it is aware of sales of surveillance equipment to foreign countries whose regimes may use it to censor the Internet and stated it would not actively prevent these sales from happening. http://www.theregister.co.uk/2011/11/23/surveillance_software/
2012	
	A panel, which visited twenty one communities and interviewed thousands of people affected by the riots, concluded that the social media aided rioters. According the panel, the spread of rioting was worsened by televised images of police apparently watching people causing damage and looting, as well as the ability of the social media to bring together determined people to act collectively.
Technical and legislative controls	
	The panel also noted that evolving and new mobile communications technology may benefit the police and authorities rather than rioters. Some mobile networks have installed systems to detect crowds and the direction they are moving in order to manage congestion, or what is called cell congestion monitoring. A worrying development was that the Canadian company Research In Motion, manufacturers of the Blackberry, gave the police the personal details of some users without a prior court order. The riots demonstrated, however, that there is no simple 'switch off' solution, and that viral silence may hold as many dangers as viral noise. http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2012/mar/28/uk-riots-twitter-facebook
Recent trends	
	Although rioters were aided by social media, there is anger

	about plans to shut down websites such as Twitter and Facebook. Since the UK pledged support for the open use of social media during uprisings across the Middle East, it would be problematic to shut them down for uprisings at home.

Country profile	2011/2012
Name	United States of America
Political type	Full Democracy (Rank 19)
Population	347,394,870
Estimated number of Social Media users	Unknown
Internet users	245,203,319
Internet penetration	78.3%
Facebook	157,418,920
Twitter	Unknown
YouTube	Unknown
Social media activism	
Twitter	Twitter has been used by activists to post messages to help other protesters at events such as the G-20 summit, and several others. The police have used Twitter to look for 'evidence of federal and anti-rioting law violations', as in the case of a New York social worker who was found with computers and police scanners while using Twitter. FBI agents executed a search warrant at his home in Jackson Heights, Queens, New York (Moynihan, 2009).
Incidents of social media activism/censorship	
2009	
	October, during the 'Group of 20' summit in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania about 200 arrests were made during demonstrations.
2010	
	September 27, federal law enforcement and national security officials are preparing to seek sweeping new regulations for the Internet, arguing that their ability to wiretap criminal and terrorism suspects is "going dark" as people increasingly communicate online instead of by telephone. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/27/us/27wiretap.html?_r=3
2011	
	February 7, U.S. seeks veto powers over new domain names. The Obama administration wants the power for it and other governments to veto future top-level domain names, raising questions about free expression and the role of states in shaping the Internet. http://news.cnet.com/8301-31921_3-20030809-281.html#ixzz1DIBIEiDi

	February 2011, there was a series of public employee protests against proposed legislation which would weaken the power of labour unions.
	July 13, a blog post by Adbusters proposed a peaceful occupation of Wall Street to protest corporate influence on democracy, the lack of legal consequences for those who brought about the global crisis of monetary insolvency, and an increasing disparity in wealth.
	October 15, Facebook was also used to coordinate protests across the country. At some protests there were a few hundred in number, and at others there were hundreds of thousands. There were 100 arrests made in Boston, 90 in New York, 175 in Chicago, 50 in Phoenix, 19 in Sacramento, 20 in Raleigh, and 24 in Denver.
	December 19, amid heated debates and the uproar surrounding the controversial Stop Online Piracy Act, Congress postponed its vote. Fears are growing that the law aimed at fighting copyright infringement will ultimately lead to censorship. http://rt.com/news/sopa-congress-vote-postponed-113/
Technical and legislative controls	
	The Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and Protect IP Act (PIPA) threaten to sacrifice Internet freedom for the sake of copyright protection.
Recent trends	Many Internet users in the United States, as in other Western countries, cut their teeth with the Occupy Wall Street movement. Many of them took to the streets to protest against repressive legislation, and a 24-hour blackout was observed by many websites, including Wikipedia, that would be affected. http://en.rsf.org/etats-unis-blackout-sopa-17-01-2012,41695.html

7. Discussion

The data can be analysed in several ways, but this article asks whether established democracies are less vulnerable to Internet censorship than authoritarian states. More specifically, the focus is on how the use of social media in protest across the world has blurred 'free' and 'unfree' labels. Just as earlier forms of communication have tested the strength and tenacity of intellectual freedom in established democracies, social media are doing so today and revealing their vulnerability to Internet censorship.

According to the description provided in section 2.3, established democracies have been stable over a longer period. It is therefore unsurprising that the 2011 Democracy Index identifies Australia, Finland, the UK, and the USA as full democracies. South Africa and Chile are not established democracies because of their relative youthfulness and, perhaps also unsurprisingly, they are identified in the 2011 Democracy Index as flawed democracies. The established democracies under the spotlight in this discussion are therefore primarily Australia, Finland, the UK, and the USA. References to Chile and South Africa are useful, however, in terms of the lessons they can learn along with the established democracies.

7.1 Social media activism

Across many of the countries there is a pattern of contradiction between the actual use of social media in protest actions and the government's claim of how they were used. An example is the blocking of access to YouTube in Pakistan for allegedly showing a blasphemous video, whereas the actual reason was that election fraud was exposed. More relevant is that in an established democracy like the UK, Facebook and Twitter came under government scrutiny for suspicion of fomenting the unrest in 2011, whereas a study showed instead that the social media were used to a far greater extent to mobilise support to clean up after the riots.

This is not to say that activists did not use the social media during protests, but that, as in the case of the USA, the police also used the social media to track violations of anti-rioting law. In China, both activists and authorities used Weibo in order to impact the public because this is where millions share their thoughts on the good and bad in society. So, although Weibo is censored from time to time, it is still where the greatest exchange of information occurs.

Another feature of social media use is international collaboration, and the borrowing of strategies by both government officials and activists. The Australian government, for

example, signed an agreement with German ISPs in 2009 to enforce a blacklist of banned websites. In 2011, on the other hand, South African social media activists drew on the Australian citizens' experience of turning Twitter and Facebook websites black in protest against Internet filtering by doing the same to protest the controversial 'Secrecy Bill'. More intriguingly, several American companies have provided technology to China, Iran, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar to block websites. (See http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/fighting-chinas-golden-shield-cisco-sued-over-jailing-and-torture-of--dissidents-20110816-1ivkv.html; http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704438104576219190417124226.html.)

As with other media, therefore, the social media are used both to wield power and to check the abuses of power. The established democracies are not significantly different from the way flawed democracies and authoritarian regimes are responding to social media activism.

7.2 Incidents of social media activism/censorship

The number of incidents of activism and censorship involving the social media over about a five-year period reveal patterns of stricter or more relaxed censorship across the continuum of political types of government. They show both directional shifts and the similarities or differences in the kinds of action and reaction.

While there may be more incidents documented for the hybrid and authoritarian regimes, the number of incidents for full and flawed democracies are not significantly fewer. A noteworthy feature is the sharp increase in the number of incidents in the past two years (2010-2011) in some of the established democracies. The riots in the UK and the 'Occupy Wall Street' movement in the USA are good examples not only of the increase in incidents of social media activism, but of the growth of Internet censorship and the kind of government reactions in those countries and other democracies. Tougher legislation, calls from across the party political spectrum to curb or shut down the social media, and the rise in number of actual censorship actions such as banning, blocking, filtering, blacklisting, and cyber-attacks in the democracies of Australia, the UK, the USA, Chile, South Africa, and Finland show more similarities than differences from authoritarian regimes.

The growth in the number of actual incidents and threats of Internet censorship in established democracies have not only strengthened the perception of their similarity with less democratic governments, but has also weakened their claim to the moral high ground.

7.3 Technical and legislative controls

Recent legislation and the preparation of new legislation to censor and regulatory frameworks to self-censor the social media are clear indications of the vulnerability of established democracies to regress in their freedom of access to information and freedom of expression. Alongside legislative controls are the technical mechanisms sought and used to clampdown on the use of the social media for political purposes. Some examples of these controls among both the full and flawed democracies include Australia's mandatory national web-filtering system, Finland's increased Internet surveillance for terrorist threats, the UK's Internet Censorship and Disconnection Law, the USA's Stop Online Piracy Act and Protect Intellectual Property Act, South Africa's Protection of Information Bill, and Chile's Internet bill.

These laws and regulations are not very different in intent and scope to legislation in authoritarian regimes, such as Singapore's Internet regulatory framework, Myanmar's Electronic Act, Pakistan's Internet filtering, and China's range of regulatory mechanisms. The similarities in technical control are also striking. Internet filtering, blocking domain names and URLs, crowd monitoring systems, cyber-attacks, jamming devices, and surveillance mechanisms feature across the entire sample of countries. While the justification for the use of these technical controls may be expected in authoritarian regimes, it is their use in established democracies that are cause for concern.

7.4 Recent trends

Along the full democracy-to-authoritarian regime continuum, country rankings have not been static. Some countries improved their rankings in the 2011 Democracy Index, while others have regressed. Some of the reasons for downward movements include the introduction of tougher surveillance and other censorship mechanisms. The UK and the USA are at the bottom end of the full democracy category while there has been some progress in Latin American democratisation.

More specifically, from 2010 to 2011 for the full and established democracies, Australia remained unchanged at 6th position, Finland slipped from 7th to 9th position, the UK improved from 19th to 18th position, and the USA dropped from 17th to 19th position. For the flawed democracies, Chile dropped from 34th to 35th position, and South Africa improved from 30th to 28th position. For the hybrid regimes, Pakistan dropped from 104th to 105th position, Singapore improved from 82nd to 81st position, and Turkey climbed from 89th to 88th position.

For the authoritarian regimes, China regressed from 136th to 141st position, Libya improved from 158th to 125th position, and Myanmar climbed from 163rd to 161st position.

The improvements among the countries outside the established democracies are encouraging, while the regression in two of the four established democracies is worrying. Also of concern is that despite South Africa's improvement, there is growing concern about media freedom. South Africa is an example of a new democracy that is struggling to resist a return to apartheid-style censorship, just eighteen years after its first democratic elections. The encouraging recent trend, however, is that older activists still remember the role of alternative media in the liberation struggle, and are turning to the social media to fight for freedom of access to information and freedom of expression.

In the established democracies of Australia, Finland, the UK, and the USA, the pressure of their 'free' status and their long-standing traditions of intellectual freedom curb their use of strong-arm tactics to deal with the social media. Drastic steps to censor or shut down the social media will reflect poorly on their moral standing to advise authoritarian regimes not to do so. Nonetheless, a more oppressive political climate is emerging that threatens to undermine that status and those traditions, and that could drive them further down the Democracy Index rankings in the future.

8. Conclusion

There is clear evidence from the social media test that the established democracies of Australia, Finland, the UK, and the USA are not less vulnerable to Internet censorship than authoritarian regimes. It may be argued that they are actually more vulnerable since they have much at stake, and because the globalisation of threats like terrorism, climate change, and economic austerity following the global economic crisis in 2008-2009 have elicited the kinds of actions that are stripping away some layers of media freedom. Reactions from established democracies to the 'Occupy movement' and Wikileaks, coupled with the erosion of media freedoms, will require transnational solidarities using the social media to defend Internet freedom. The established democracies analysed in this article have not performed well in the past couple of years, and some have regressed in the Democracy Index rankings. Their responses to social media activism have not differed significantly from the responses of authoritarian regimes. Sustained and active vigilance is urged upon all established democracies for the sake of freedom of access and freedom of expression worldwide.

9. Recommendations

In the light of these findings, the IFLA's FAIFE Committee should:

- Extend this type of investigation to other established democracies and authoritarian regimes regionally, and even globally;

- Add Internet censorship as a special focus of any future FAIFE World Reports;

- Call on all library associations to join other Internet freedom bodies in fighting attempts to shut down social media in their countries and worldwide;

- Monitor especially the censorship of social media in hybrid and authoritarian regimes with library associations that are members of IFLA, with a view to assisting them with anti-censorship strategies;

- Arrange IFLA pre-conference seminars or IFLA conference sessions dealing with all aspects of the censorship of social media; and

- Update the Internet manifesto, and all other FAIFE relevant learning materials for future workshops.

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