

ICTs & the Arab Spring

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ICTs (1st use for regime change*)

- Radio (??)
- Terrestrial TV (??)
- Audio cassettes (Sri Lanka 1970-71)
- Video cassettes/DVDs (??)
- Satellite TV (Tunisia, 2010)
- Fixed phones (??)
- Mobile phones (Iran 2009-10)
- Sat phones (Syria 2011)
- Internet (Iran 2009-10)
- Blogs (Iran 2009-10)
- Twitter (Iran 2009-10)
- Facebook (Tunisia 2010-11)
- VPNs (Iran 2010)

* Working list; corrections welcome



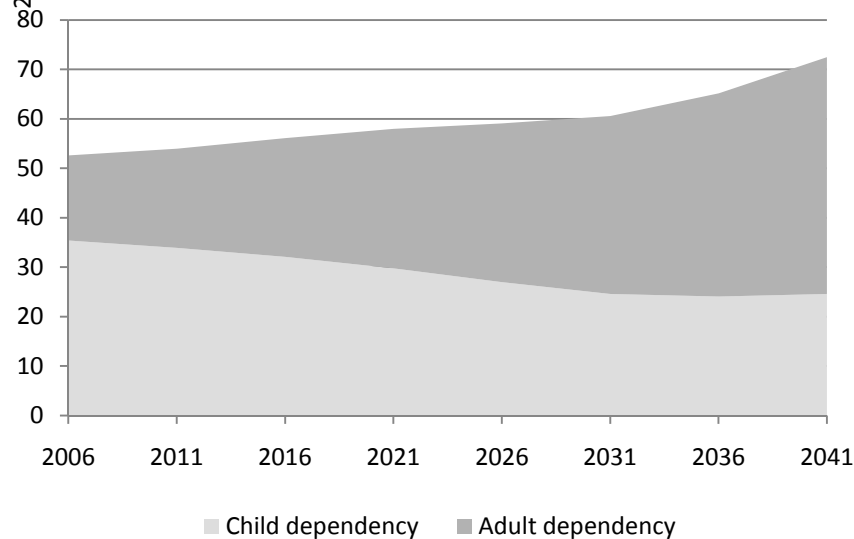
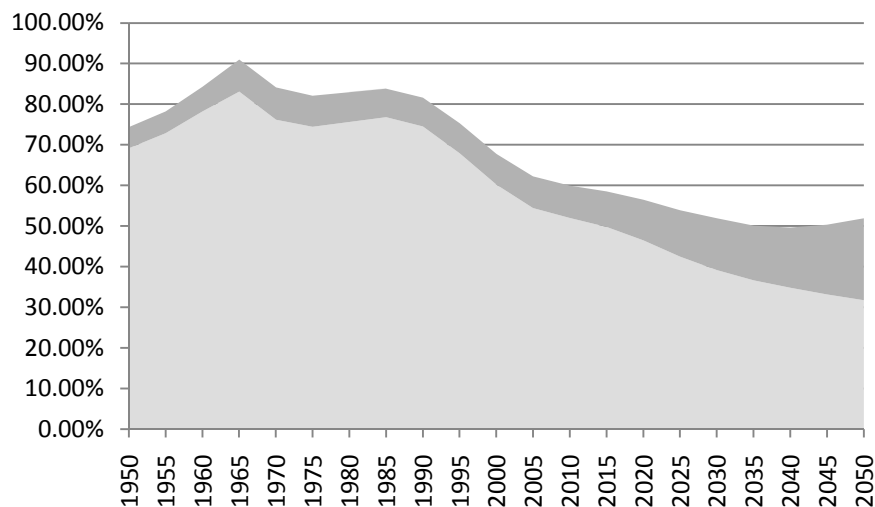
The perennial hope

- Daniel Lerner, *The passing of traditional society* (1958)
 - Radio will accelerate modernization by enhancing empathy
 - Knowing how others live (better), expectations will change
 - Curiously, based on research for VoA audience surveys in West Asia and Iran
- Ithiel de Sola Pool, *Direct broadcast satellites and the integrity of national cultures* (1974)
 - What will happen when images jump borders like short-wave radio?

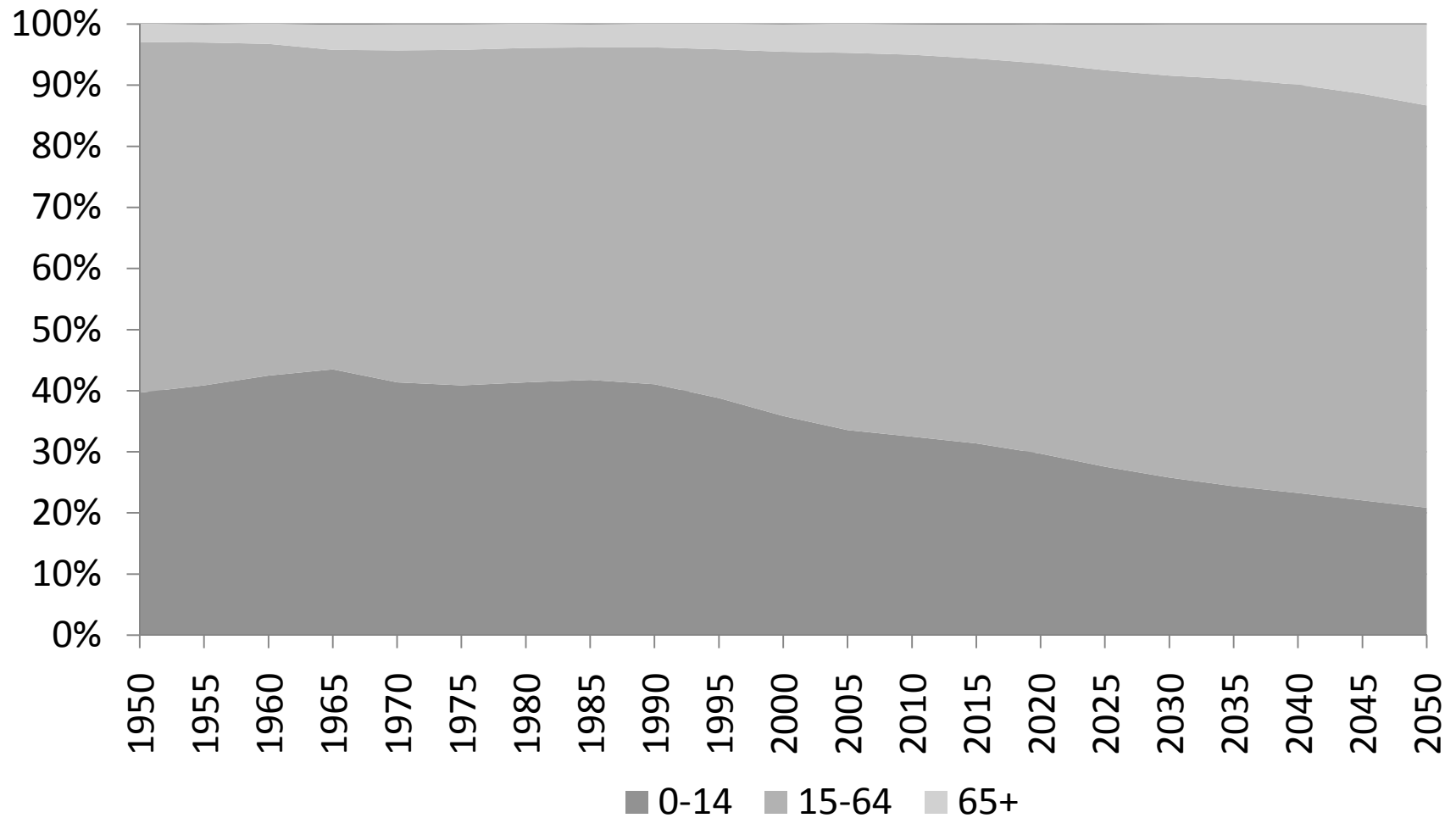
What Lerner postulated happened, but 50 years late

- Speculation that Tunisia and Egypt uprisings were driven by unhappiness about how their countries were not keeping up
 - WikiLeaks on what Americans were saying of Ben Ali's family's kleptocratic ways was also said to be a catalyst
 - “We know, but others know too” (a complex form of empathy)
- Demographic structure
 - Demographic dividend when not exploited, becomes a bomb (e.g., Sri Lanka's three insurrections of 1971, 1987-89, and 1983-2009)
- Food prices

Egypt's combined child and elder dependency, 1950-2050 (upper) compared with Sri Lanka's 2006-2041 (lower)



Population by broad age groups, Egypt 1950-2050



What Pool foretold happened, but 35 years later and with an unexpected protagonist

- Al Jazeera, a global TV news channel funded by a rich Gulf Emirate swimming in natural gas, was seen as violating Qaddafi's sovereignty
 - Its reporters & camera persons were killed and imprisoned
 - Its signals were jammed
- Pool would have been totally surprised the target would be an Arab-owned channel, not VoA or BBC
 - He did not talk about GMPCS, but as author or *Technologies and Freedom*, would not have been too surprised



The trials of Jewish-American scientist Norman Finkelstein

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Africa

Watch Al Jazeera during jamming

Alternative frequencies on the Nilesat, Badr4 and Hotbird satellites where the signals are available.

Last Modified: 23 Feb 2011 21:00 GMT

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Al Jazeera is suffering interference on the Arabsat satellite frequency.

The network, on the basis of investigations by specialists, has blamed Libya's intelligence services for jamming its TV signals and blocking its websites. It has traced the source of the jamming to a Libyan intelligence technical administration building south of Tripoli, the capital.

During jamming Al Jazeera English can be watched on

Hotbird 13E Frequency: 11034 Vertical FEC: 3/4 Symbol rate: 27500

Arabsat/Badr4/Eurobird 2 (26East) Frequency : 11680.8 Horizontal; SR: 27.5; FEC: 3/4

Nilesat/ Atlantic Bird4A (7West) Frequency: 11393 Vertical; SR:27.5; FEC :3/4

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- Al Jazeera M

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Necessary conditions (and the role of ICTs therein)

- Demographic structure, rulers who had become stale, government machinery that was inefficient and brutal . . .
- Food prices
- Dissatisfaction caused by knowledge of how others lived (only necessary condition influenced by ICTs: satellite TV and perhaps Internet)

Connecting: What made it an Arabian Spring, no just a Tunisian Spring . . .

- Media, primarily Al Jazeera Arabic and Al Arabiya, articulated the protests in individual countries and told the outside world about stories that were off the conventional beats of foreign correspondents
 - Tunisia is off the beat
 - In Tunisia, where the coast is where the action is, Sidi Bouzid in the interior is off even the Tunisian beat
- Protests started Dec 18th; got on Western news radars toward the end of the month; major coverage started in January, after a free run by Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya for weeks

ps?hl=en&client=firefox-a&q=tunisia+sidi+bouزيد&ie=UTF8&hq=&hnear=Sidi+Bouزيد,+Sidi+Bouزيد+Ouest,+Sidi+B ☆

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Stage 1: Tunisia

- Highly connected country; educated populace
- No network shutdowns
- Army split from government when shooting orders were given
- Fast-moving revolution under the security radar: game over in 26 days

Contrary to Ben Ali, Al Jazeera was not responsible for coordinating internal resistance

- Iran: Lots of external coverage, no regime change
- Myanmar: External coverage, no regime change
- How did the word get around within Tunisia from Dec 18th to Jan 14th (e.g. Trigger event in Sidi Bouzid → Tunis)
 - Decentralized use of mobile networks (Tunisia's mobile SIMs/100 people =95.38 in 2009)
 - Decentralized use of Internet, including facebook and twitter (Tunisia is relatively well connected, with 3.63 broadband subs/100 in 2009)
 - Government did not shut down networks, confident in its sophisticated censorship apparatus

Mobile SIMs/100; average growth 2004-09; Mobile: Fixed ratios (2009, latest ITU data)

	Mobiles/100	CAGR 2004-09	Mobile: Fixed
Myanmar	1	40.3	0.9:1
Nepal	19.09	116.8	6.9:1
Yemen	35.25	41.3	8.3:1
Syria	45.57	33.6	2.6:1
Egypt	66.69	48.6	5.4:1
Sri Lanka	69.65	44.8	4.1:1
Iran	70.83	59.6	2.0:1
Tunisia	95.38	21.3	7.7:1
Oman	139.54	37.6	13.2:1
Libya	148.51	80.3	9.0:1
Saudi Arabia	173.47	37.4	10.8:1
Bahrain	177.13	16.6	5.9:1

Internet users/100 and fixed broadband subscriptions/100, (2009, ITU data, ranked by fixed broadband subs/100)

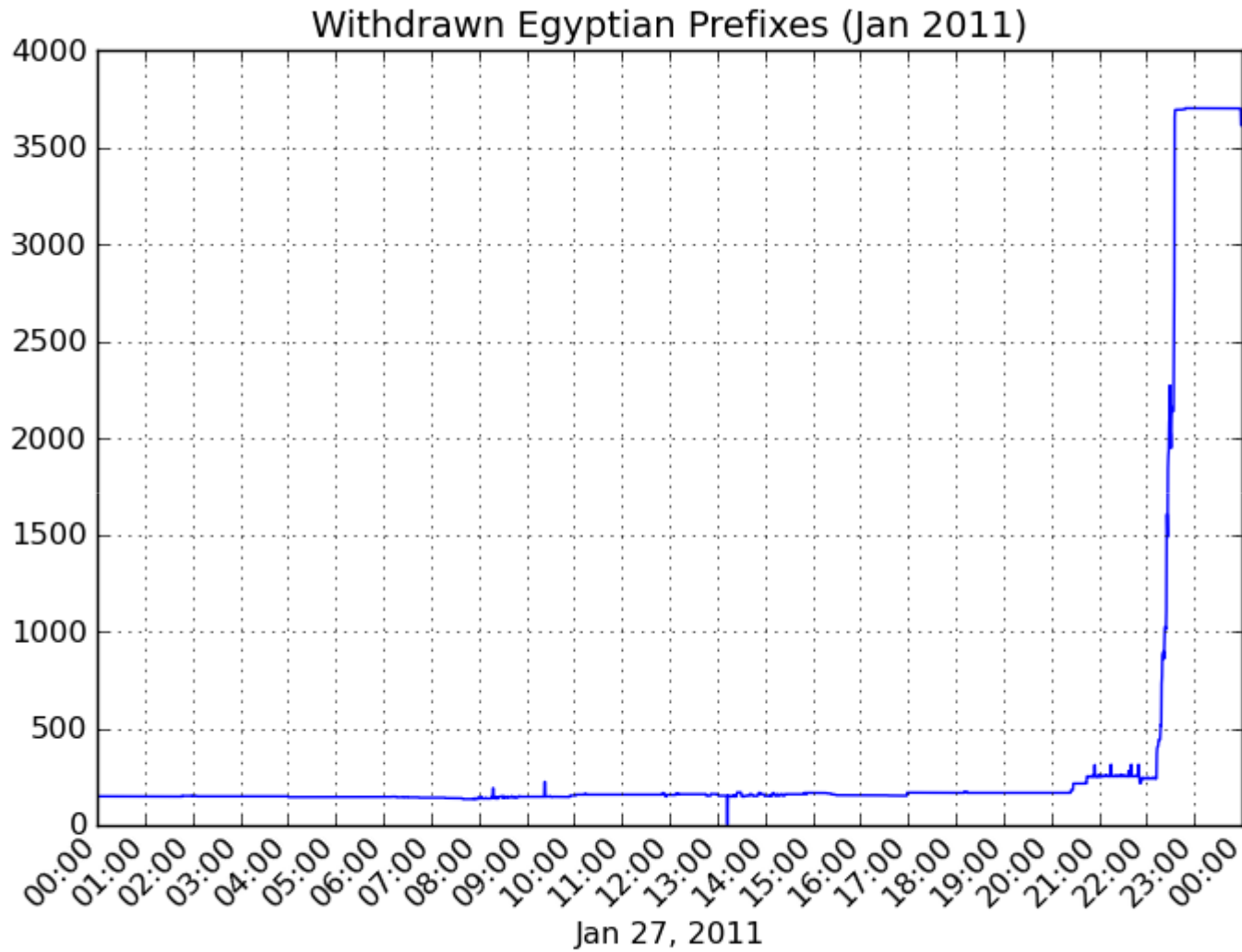
	Internet users/100	Fixed broadband/100
Myanmar	0.22	0.03
Nepal	1.97	0.05
Syria	20.4	0.16
Yemen	9.96	0.23
Iran	11.07	0.54
Sri Lanka	8.78	0.84
Libya	5.51	0.98
Egypt	24.26	1.33
Oman	51.5	1.44
Tunisia	34.07	3.63
Saudi Arabia	38	5.22
Bahrain	53	9.59

Trust fixed broadband numbers more because arbitrary multipliers used in estimating Internet users.



Stage 2: Egypt

- Less well connected country (but Cairo & Alexandria exceptions); educated populace concentrated in Cairo and Alexandria
- Network shutdowns within 2 days of revolt
 - Most Internet and Mobile networks shut down on 27th January
 - Has been done before: Poland (1981) and Nepal (2005) but at very low levels of connectivity. And both regimes fell
 - Restored on 2nd February
 - Scorched earth for BPO industry (4th ranked by AT Kearney)
- Shut down itself was communicative (signal of government losing control) and drew people to the street
- Army split from government in the face of persistent resistance
- Even faster moving revolution than Tunisia's: game over in 18 days



Role of ICTs

- Egypt was less wired than Tunisia, though situation in major cities where action took place may not have been too different
- By now Al Jazeera had lots of company
 - Even domestic TV breaks from supine state, Mona el Shazley of Dream TV interviews Wael Ghonim on February 7th
 - Emotive interview goes viral and gives fresh energy to the revolt
- Facebook and Youtube played catalytic role, though much of the actual mobilization for the 25th of January was face-to-face and street-by-street
- Powerful images that Internet helped circulate
 - Video Egyptian Police had made of them sodomizing a prisoner to humiliate him
 - “We are all Khaled Saeed” on Facebook

Stage 3: Libya

- More connected through voice than Tunisia and Egypt; behind Tunisia in Internet
- Less educated population
- Qaddafi had destroyed all institutions including Armed Forces
- More sophisticated network shutdowns including
 - Jamming Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya
 - Attempts to jam Thuraya satellite phones, something never tried before
- Attempts to manage media coverage by allowing in foreign correspondents, suggesting Western consultants on payroll
- No army to split from ruling family; no hesitation to use heavy weapons and aircraft against own citizens
- Grinding battles leading possibly to stalemate and partition

Stage 4: Syria

- A truly nasty regime, with 10,000-38,000 person Hama Massacre still fresh in memory (from 1982)
- Ruled under emergency law for 40+ years
- Least connected of the Arab states, 20.4 mobiles/100 and 0.16 fixed broadband subs/100
- Regime corralled foreign reporters in Damascus
 - But opposition is running a news service based on satellite phones and modems that were smuggled in after Tunisia
- As with Libya, Armed Forces may not have a separate identity
- Could be bloodier than it already is (Hamas 2.0)

Throughout the early 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood staged a series of bomb attacks against the government and its officials, including a **nearly successful attempt to assassinate Assad** on June 26, 1980 Assad's revenge was swift and ruthless; only hours later, his brother Rifaat al-Assad led a **massacre of hundreds of imprisoned Islamists in Tadmor Prison**. . . . Events culminated with a **general insurrection in the conservative Sunni town of Hama** in February 1982. Islamists and other opposition activists proclaimed Hama a "liberated city" **Brotherhood fighters swept the city of Baathists, . . . killing about 50.**

In the eyes of Assad, this was total war. The army was mobilized, and Hafez again sent Rifaat's special forces and Mukhabarat agents to the city. After encountering fierce resistance, they **used artillery to blast Hama into submission**. After a two-week battle, the town was securely in government hands. Then followed **several weeks of torture and mass executions of suspected rebel sympathizers, killing many thousands, known as the Hama Massacre**. Robert Fisk, who was in Hama shortly after the massacre, estimated that between **10,000 to 20,000** people were killed, but according to Thomas Friedman Rifaat later boasted of killing **38,000 people**. Most of the old city was completely destroyed, including its palaces, mosques, ancient ruins, and the famous Azem Palace mansion.

What next?

- Yemen is tightly linked to Egypt: Saleh yields (or appears to yield)
- Bahrain is tightly linked to Saudi Arabia and is too crucial a pawn in the Sunni-Sh'ia chess game with Iran: clamp down (successful for now)
- Oman insurrection contained in a day by clever Emir
- When does Iran go? Stage 5

- ICTs are not the cause. Necessary conditions must exist. They are not even the sufficient condition. They can contribute to necessary conditions and help organizing by brave people who have had enough (the sufficient conditions)

