

The Role of Social Media in the Success or Failure of a Revolution: A Comparative Case Study of 2008/2018 Revolutions in Armenia

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Abstract : The rapid development of social networks in the 21st century increases the interests towards the role and impact of social media on the success or failure of a revolution. Even though studies are investigating the role of social media on the outcome of a revolution, still, the conclusions on this matter are ambiguous so far. Hence, this research aims to investigate the role of social media in the success or failure of a revolution and make a contribution to the literature gap. The study aims to examine the research question whether the use of social media explains the success or failure of revolutions in 2008 and 2018 in Armenia. The research question is investigated through content analysis of two cases; failed revolution in 2008 and the successful revolution in 2018 in Armenia. The secondary data analysis was based on information devoted to two revolutions using local and major international news articles, journal and critical articles, in Armenian, Russian and English, also videos, posts and live streams of the revolutionary leaders. There can be many factors explaining the success or failure of a revolution. However, the investigation of the factors and their role to explain the outcome of a revolution other than the use of social media is beyond the scope of this research study. The study holds other variables constant and concludes that in the cases of 2008 and 2018 revolutions in Armenia the mobilization of society through social media explains the differences in the outcomes (failed or successful). The comparative case study of the revolutions in 2008 and 2018 in Armenia emphasizes the important role and impact of the use of social media on the success or failure of a revolution. The results highlight that the use of the Internet, particularly social media and live streams, by the opposition was the essential difference between two revolutions. Social media platforms, live streams, and communication apps that were absent in the revolutionary situation in 2008 were fundamental to the Armenian Velvet Revolution in 2018. The changes in the situation in favor of the opposition, so the outcome of the protests, were mainly based on the Internet-based mobilization of the society. It is also important to take into consideration that the country experienced a great increase in penetration rates over the decade. The percentage of access to the Internet drastically increased between 2008 and 2018. This fact may help to have a clearer understanding of the use of the Internet and social media by the opposition and the reliance on social media by society. According to the results of the content analysis, the use of social media to direct the protests and to mobilize the society, have a vital role and positive impact on the outcome of a revolution. Thus the study concludes that it is the use of social media to initiate, organize, and direct the protests that explain the success or failure of two Armenian revolutions.

Keywords : social media, revolution, Armenia, success, failure

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