

What Happens to Social Media After a Twitter Revolution



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Two years after the Arab Spring, questions still remain as to how much social media actually helped fuel and drive the uprisings that arose in Tunisia and swept across the region. But regardless of what happened during those Twitter-fueled revolutions, what's happened afterward?

That's what social media analytics firm Crimson Hexagon and Sanitas International wanted to find out when it decided to analyze tweets coming out of Egypt, Libya and even Syria, where there still is a war going on. The results of its 3-month study, which will be discussed in a panel at SXSW on Sunday, underscore the changes these countries are undergoing.

"Nobody has really talked about what happens when people put their flags away and go home," Christopher Harvin, co-founder and partner at Sanitas International, told *Mashable*.

Crimson Hexagon turned to Twitter and crafted specific keywords to analyze the tweets. That's how the authors of the study were able to have an idea about what the population of

these countries we're talking about online, according to Elizabeth Breese, an analyst at Crimson Hexagon.

The main discovery of the study is that after the uprisings brought down decades-old regimes, "citizens in Egypt and Libya use social media to talk about revolution and state-building in two distinct registers: instrumental and interpretative," the study's abstract says.

In Egypt, that means that citizens are both expressing their opinions and views of the current political atmosphere and talking about the new institutions and how to build a new government. Spanning from February 2011 to June 2012, the study analyzed around 12 million tweets in Arabic and more than one million in English. The results underline how the population shifted its focus from looking back and reflecting on the revolution, to looking forward and focusing on new state institutions and the elections.

Before the election period, from February 2011 until November of the same year, 54% of the tweets analyzed were "reflections on the revolution." After that, and until mid-January 2012, only 26% of tweets were about the uprising, and the rest were about the elections and state institutions. From February until June, tweets about revolutionary activities dropped to 10%, according to the study abstract.

The picture in Libya is significantly different, according to the data. After the death of Gaddafi, in October 2011 and until December of the same year, depending on the language of the tweets, the people were talking about different things. In English more tweets were about military clashes, while in Arabic most of the conversations were about state-building.

Most interestingly, Libyan people seemed to struggle to move on more than Egyptians. Even months after Gaddafi's death, more than one-third of of conversation in both languages were about "the punishment and fate of Gaddafi's family," and "the crimes of the Gaddafi era," according to the abstract.

Sanitas and Crimson Hexagon decided to analyze tweets from Syria too, even though the country is still at war. Unsurprisingly, most tweets (more than 60% in both Arabic and English) in Syria are about war clashes, violence and coping with death. Perhaps unexpectedly, only 7% of tweets in English and 4% in Arabic criticize the ████ and call for international intervention.

Check out the infographic below to see some of the results of the study.

I OVERTHREW MY GOVERNMENT

After toppling repressive and corrupt regimes, citizens in Egypt and Libya use social media *...Now What?*

to talk about revolution and state-building in two distinct registers: instrumental and interpretive.

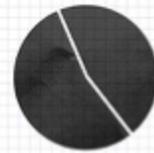
Citizens use social media instrumentally to alert others in their social networks to events and fast-changing developments, to report police or military violence, and to coordinate action. After revolution in Egypt and Libya, citizens also use social media to interpret the meaning of their social and political experiences and what they believe the future holds for their nation and countrymen and women.

#OVERTHROWN 



PERIOD OF SCAF RULE: 2.11.11 – 11.11.11

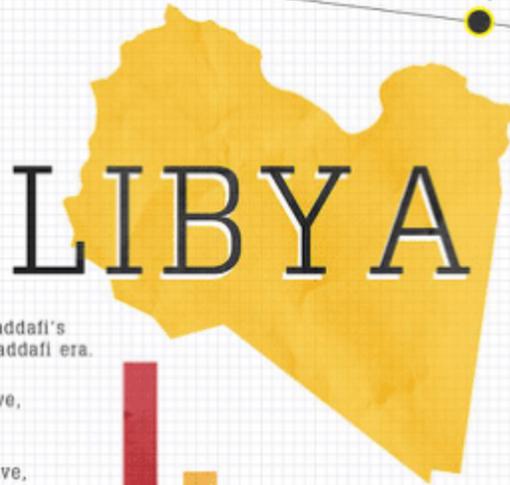
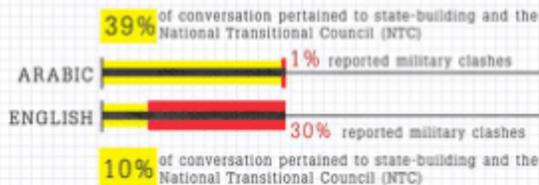
54% of Arabic tweets about "reflections on the revolution"



ELECTIONS PERIOD: 11.12.11 – 6.1.12

conversation shift from revolution to state-building

LIBYA AFTER GADDAFI: 10.13.11 – 12.31.11



LIBYA TRANSITION: 1.1.12 – 4.30.12

- 1/3 posts addressed the punishment and fate of Gaddafi's family and supporters and the crimes of the Gaddafi era.
- 1/10 posts discussed the future of Libya in a positive, optimistic light.
- 1/20 posts discussed the future of Libya in a negative, pessimistic light.



ANALYSIS BY @HEBREESE AT CRIMSON HEXAGON GRAPHIC BY @CHRISCREATIVE 



WHAT ABOUT SYRIA?

- In Arabic, 20% of the conversation discusses Free Syrian Army progress and anti-Assad opinion. In English, the proportion of the conversation about the Free Syrian Army's progress and anti-Assad opinion is 14%.
- In English, 7% of the conversation criticizes the U.N. and includes appeals to the world beyond Syria to intervene. In Arabic, this segment is 4% of the conversation.

Mashable composite, image via [iStockphoto](#), [EMNG](#). Infographic courtesy of [Crimson Hexagon](#)