

Facebook as a Virtual Space in Formatting New Form of Social Movements: A Study on Shahbag Uprising

M.S.S 2nd Semester

Examination Roll No: 4444

Registration No: Ha-5292

Session: 2011-2012

**Department of Sociology
University of Dhaka
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Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only that ever has.

-Margaret Mead

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Abstract

Today, in the age of internet, as a social networking site Facebook is expanding its power of connecting people. Facebook, after being launched in 2004 continues to be a budding phenomenon through which people are connected to each other in a way never experienced before. Keeping pace with the network society the urban youth of Bangladesh are using the power of social networking for several purposes but most importantly for disseminating political thinking. Recent Shahbag Uprising carries out the proof of it. Under these circumstances I felt a genuine urge to plan my master's dissertation on such a contemporary topic like Facebook in formatting new form of social movement. The major argument of this paper is that Facebook as a social medium has not only changed the very notion of social networking, but also it provides a 'Space' for political and social organization and activism as well.

This paper will look closely at the extent to how Facebook was used by the activists of Shahbag Movement for organizing the protest, and diffusing awareness of political mobilization among public. This paper will use recognized theories of social movements and communication in order to analyze the role of Facebook as a virtual space in mobilizing crowds towards change and pro-democratic movements. The paper focuses on the various Facebook pages which played crucial roles in garnering the sentiments and opinions of the people about war criminals of Bangladesh, and initiating the protest against the verdict, and in formatting new form of social movements.

This paper will make a significant contribution to the social movement discourse of Bangladesh as it has made a pioneering effort in analyzing the role of Facebook in formatting new form of social movements guided by new form of activism.

Key Terms

New social Movements, Virtual Space, Social Networking, Social Media, Facebook, Shahbag Uprising

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

FB	Facebook
NSMs	New Social Movements
POS	Political Opportunity Structure
SM	Social Media
SNS	Social Networking Site
SNSs	Social Networking Sites
RM	Resource Mobilization Theory
BTRC	Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
NATO	North American Treaty Organization

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

While social networking is a phenomenon which has been prevailing in our society since time immemorial, online social networking is a recent trend. We are now living in an Internet Galaxy (Castells, 2001) where the proliferation of social media and their scope in everyday practices is affecting the lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world. In Bangladesh the scenario is not an exception to that. Almost 100 million people are getting addicted to social media. Social media have not only changed social networking, they provide a valuable tool for political and social organization and activism. Through social media, people are connected to each other around the globe in a way never experienced before (Bong et al., 2012).

Social media like Facebook is a type of virtual community that has grown phenomenally in popularity over the past few years (QuantCast, 2007). Now, It is being considered as one of the most alternative powerful tools of social movements. And the role of this kind of virtual spaces in political activism is increasingly attracting the attention of academic researchers and scholars from diversified fields. Many have examined these sites in order to understand the practices, implications, culture, and meaning of the sites.

Social Media like Facebook, Twitter, and blogging in Bangladesh especially in Dhaka city are very popular tools which assist individual to communicate, interact, and share personal information with friends and family members. These online social networks provide users to organize events, user-to-user personal communication (Harlow, 2011).

Social Networking through facebooking has become a passion among the urban youth of Bangladesh. Though by definition Facebook is a medium of expressing and sharing personal stuffs but eventually it has turned out to be a space for the political minds for sharing their political views and thoughts. The phenomenon of sharing political thinking has gained additional dimension and intensity during the recent time regarding the verdict of the war criminal Abdul Qader Mollah. Very recently, at Shahbag, we observed some comprehensive political uprising have taken place through the networking power of Facebook. In Bangladesh over 100 million youth are active members of Facebook, and importantly many of among

them are using this virtual space to reshuffle the political practice of Bangladesh. They want nothing, but change.

1.2 Statement of Problem and Research Questions

The world, we are told, is in the midst of a revolution. The new tools like Facebook have reinvented social activism. With Facebook and Twitter and the like, the traditional relationship between political authority and popular will has been upended. Besides it has facilitated the powerless to collaborate, coordinate, and give voice to their concerns (Gladwell, 2011).

Keeping pace with the Law of Motion we have shifted to the epoch of ‘Internet Galaxy’ (Castell, 2001) where network has taken a new form of life through Social Networking sites (SNSs). SNSs have phenomenally become the spaces of expression of the urban youth. They are using the power of social networking for several purposes but most importantly for disseminating political thinking. As the SNSs are purposely designed for free communication they are taking maximum applications of them to shape the present phase of politics.

In Bangladesh the scenario is not an exception to that. Almost 100 million people are getting addicted to Social media like Facebook. After the revolutionary phenomena of Shahbag Movement we cannot overlook the proliferating power of Facebook in shaping political attitude. The aim of this paper is to provide a deeper understanding of this online form of collective action, with specific focus on whether it could be termed as a new social movement.

I felt this topic worthy of research because of three aspects. First, social media like Facebook is clearly a growing medium of social interaction and mobilization, and therefore it has the potential of being a topic for discussion and research in the future. Second, it is very important to understand the fact that how Facebook is playing as a catalyst in forming new social movements. And the third is, whether we can visualize the future of social movements in Bangladesh through model of Shahbag Movement or not.

The research questions of this study are:

1. Why the Shahbag activists do choose virtual tool like Facebook as their form of communication? And what role did Facebook play in forming Shahbag Uprising?
2. Can we recognize the attributes of Shahbag Uprising as the expression of new form of social movement?
3. What are the implications, limitations and prospects of this form of movement and activism?

1.3 Significance of the Study

Like any other country of the world Social Media have become the part and parcel of urban youth of Bangladesh. The phenomenon has gained additional dimension and intensity in the last few years. Breaking the limitations of merely friendship and entertainment social medium are now being used as a catalyst of disseminating political thinking and crystallizing different types of ideologies. So called democratic and capitalist form of political ideology is facing intense amount of opposition from some skeptical political groups. Under that circumstance progressive urban youth cherish some reformations in our political level. And for carrying out their agenda virtual spaces like Facebook, Twitter, and Blogs are being used by them as the platforms of spreading thoughts and views.

Very recently the world has observed the revolutionary power of Social media in Arab. The influence of Social Media(SM) has also taken the streets of western countries in 2011 by storm in the name of 'Occupy Wall Street: We are 99%'. The revolutionary process through SM has also echoed in other regions, including Bangladesh. The recent Shahbag Movement of Bangladesh also carries out the global legacy of the power of Social Media like Facebook. From historical perspective of the country Shahbag movement is significantly unique type of protest. At that time it is very important to trace out the current dimension of political thought transmitting via Facebook.

There exists a significant research gap linking reformative political thinking and new form of activism based on online social network in Bangladesh. The present study aims to present the findings about the degree of influence of Facebook in shaping political thought & activism, formatting new form of social movements in Bangladesh. This paper presents a conceptual and exploratory analysis of the relevant variables which will direct for further empirical studies. This paper will make a significant contribution to the social movement discourse of

Bangladesh as it has made a pioneering effort in analyzing the role of Facebook in formatting new form of social movements guided by new form of activism.

1.4 Organization of the Research Paper

Chapter 2 of this paper will discuss the theoretical framework that I use to evaluate the new form activism used in Shahbag Uprising. Here I am using different theories on social movements, and communication to understand my research substances from the point of view of existing discourses. This chapter also covers a brief clarification about the concept like social media, Facebook, Virtual Space etc.

Chapter 3 deals with the methodologies I have used in this paper.

Chapter 4 is basically an attempt to understand the role of Facebook in Shahbag Uprising. For that this section begins with portraying the background of the uprising and its timeline. Then by analyzing different contents it critically focuses on analyzing the role of Facebook and other social media in formatting a collective action, mobilizing crowd and diffusing the spirit of movement globally.

Chapter 5 will deeply analyze the basic contents of different FB pages. It critically analyses the message and activities run on FB pages during the uprising. The chapter will use the components of the theoretical framework to determine whether or not Shahbag Movement is a new form of social movement.

Chapter 6, as a concluding section, will revisit the main research questions and recapitulate the achievements, limitation and prospects of this new form of activism used in Shahbag Uprising.

1.5 Conceptual Clarity

1.5.1 Virtual Space

Space is viewed through various lenses across disciplines as wide-ranging as mathematics, philosophy, architecture, geography, and sociology. The idea of space is been under constant evolving since the time of early Greek Philosophy. It was the Greeks who first theorized about space. But gradually the notion of ‘Space’ has become important for other disciplines including social sciences.

Before 1915, space and time were basically considered to be “a fixed arena in which events took place, but which was not affected by what happened in it” (Hawking 1988, p. 33 in Saunders et al. 2012). That changed in 1915 with Einstein’s general theory of relativity, which viewed space and time as both related and expandable. Later the idea of space has taken a great reformation through the appearance cyber-technology.

It is argued that telecommunications, and internet technology is producing a network society, in which a highly interdependent space of flows, constituted through electronic impulses, dominates the meaning and dynamic of places (Castells, 1996).

The idea of ‘virtual space’ is relatively a new term which is generally used information technology sectors. In virtual worlds, physical space does not exist. In this internet galaxy we are heading towards a new form of existence. That is virtual reality. The Internet is a key catalyst of digital globalization has challenged the integrity of places and the notion of space.

In this paper by virtual space I mean the interlinked space provided by the internet, communication technology.

1.5.2 New Social Movements

In this paper the idea of New Social Movements holds the major importance as it is prime research question of this thesis is to determine whether the Shahbag Uprising is a new form of social movement or not.

It is important that we understand and clarify the term “New Social Movement” in order to avoid future complications of the notion. The emergence of social movements can be understood as a

historical phenomenon, with collective action taking a center stage during the early years of the 21st century.

The term new social movements (NSMs) is a theory of social movements that attempts to explain the plethora of new movements that have come up in various western societies roughly since the mid-1960s (i.e. in a post-industrial economy) which are claimed to depart significantly from the conventional social movement paradigm (Pichardo, 1997).

The new movements instead of pushing for specific changes in public policy emphasize social changes in identity, lifestyle and culture. Thus the social aspect is seen by the NSM as more important than the economic or political aspects. Some NSM theorists argue that the key actors in these movements are different as well, as they are more likely to come from the "new middle class" rather than the lower classes (Pichardo, 1997).

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Theorizing Collective Action and Social Movements

Though Collective action refers to mainly political action, yet it could be any kind of action, which aims to bring change towards betterment. This type of action generally takes place when a certain group of people do not conform to existing social order, from another sense when they want to construct a different form of social reality which would bring positive change for them.

According to B. Bimber, A. Flanagin, and C. Stohl (2005, p. 365-388 quoted in Agarwal et al., 2011) perspectives on collective action have been useful in explaining “diverse phenomena”, including social movements, be it in real world or virtual worlds, membership in interest groups, the operation of the international alliance, establishment of electronic communities, formation of inter organizational relationships, formation of standards-setting organizations, and even bidding behaviors. Further, they argue that “this range of actions accounted by collective action perspectives illustrates the centrality of this body of theory to social science”.

From other angles, collective action could be defined as the actions undertaken by individuals or groups for a collective goal, for instance the advancement of a specific ideology or idea or the political struggle with another group (Brunsting, 2002 in Shehada, 2012).

Pursuing a common end is the fundamental ground of collective action. Every protest must have a visualization of its own; it definitely contains a collective axiom. To exemplify the mechanism we can take help from the work of Charles Tilly. He defined Collective action as ‘joint action in pursuit of common ends’ (1978: 84), such as a protest or petition campaign, can be employed as part of a social movement, or it can be a one-time event. Whether a long-term social movement or an outburst of action, successful mobilizations depend on the degree of a group’s common interests and shared identity, its available resources, its political power, its opportunities and threats, and the level of governmental repression (Tilly, 1978 quoted in Harlow, 2011).

Collective action theory doesn’t necessarily include the entire component to portray the image of Shahbag Movement. We know there are many theories on collective action; and one

of the best ways to understand collective action is through social movement theories. Traditionally, a social movement is seen as an extension of more basic forms of collective behavior and containing both movement of personal change (e.g. religions and cultures) and institutional change (e.g. changes in political power and legal reformations) (Jenkins 1983, Shehada 2012).

Foss and Larkin (1986 in Shehada, 2012) indicate that throughout history, social movements were never anticipated or led by those in power, because the “leading characteristic of social movements is the rebellion against the prevailing social structure which is thought by those in control to be a fact of nature”. This statement suggests that collective actions anticipated by social movements are likely to be identified as political intervention.

2.2 Political Opportunity Structure Theory

Political opportunity structure (POS) theory focuses on the external conditions that foster a social movement. POS theory intends to explain the origins of the social movement, emphasizing the political conditions in which the movement emerges (Buechler in Van Susteren, 2010).

POS was first introduced by Eisinger in 1973; however, in later decades Sydney Tarrow expanded on and solidified POS theory in his well-known book *Power in Movement* (1983). For Tarrow the term “political opportunity” refers to the receptivity of the political system to opponents; “political opportunity structure” refers to the political dimensions that create such opportunities (McAdam and Snow, 1997).

According to the proponents of the model, the emergence and development of a social movement in a country is related to changes in either the formal political structure or informal power relations of a country. Hence, the trajectory of social movements or cycles of a protest movement in a country is explained by the opportunities and the constraints of political systems of a country.

To understand the political structure and external conditions of Shahbag Uprising we going to take help of POS.

2.3 Resource Mobilization Theory

The Resource Mobilization theory has become a dominant paradigm for studying collective action in recent decades. It concentrates on the mechanisms by which movements recruit participants (Peterson 1989).

In the contemporary social movement discourses the Resource Mobilization theory (RM) gains a distinctive place as it critically explain the link between various resources & success of any social movement.

According to (Wiest 2011:1209 in Shehada, 2012), the Resource Mobilization theory (RM) “is based on the notion that resources – such as time, money, organizational skills, and certain social or political opportunities – are critical to the success of social movements”.

The main elements of the resource mobilization theory are rational actions oriented towards clearly defined, fixed goals with centralized organizational control over resources and clearly defined outcomes that can be evaluated in terms of tangible gain (Peterson 1989). Further, resource mobilization theorists see social movements as an extension of institutionalized actions and change that attempt to adjust elements of social structure and organize previously unorganized groups against institutional elites besides representing the interest of groups excluded from the polity (Jenkins, 1983, Shehada, 2012).

Charles Tilly (1978) advances a "political process" view of movements arguing that collective action derives from a population's central political processes. Tilly (1979:12) defines a social movement as: "A sustained series of interactions between national power holders and persons successfully claiming to speak on behalf of a constituency lacking formal representation, in the course of which those persons make publicly-visible demands for changes in the distribution or exercise of power, and back those demands with public demonstrations of support”.

But Tilly didn't stand on a permanent point. In later years we see that Tilly (1978:49) breaks from previous definitions by refusing to mark the social movement as the unit of analysis, arguing instead that a movement is not a group that emerges and transforms over time. Most importantly Tilly roots the concept of 'social movement' in historical time and space (See: Morris & Herring, 1984).

Social media can be useful for organizing or mobilizing large numbers of individuals quickly. Arab spring and the case of Shahbag movement have justified this statement. Though what makes a social media campaign successful is unclear yet.

2.4 New Social Movement Theory

To find out the role framing & cultural processes of Shahbag movement this study puts serious emphasis on this theory. We have to be dependent on the components of this theory to find out the roots behind the collective action of Shahbag activists.

The New Social Movement theory is rooted in the central European traditions of social theory and emerged as a reaction to the scantiness of classical Marxism for analyzing collective action. New Social Movement theory emphasizes on the role of framing activities and cultural processes in social activism (Buechler, 1995:441).

In this 'age of complexity' we observe that many 'cultural', 'global', and 'complexity' turns have seriously challenged the notion classical form of social movement. The classical social movement represented by the paradigm case of the labour or workers movement has given way to a range of new social movement based on issues like liberty, anti-privatization, environment, ethnicity, cultural intrusion, anti-imperialism and so on (Taylor, 2010). And to locate this newer form of movements the necessity of the Theory of New Social Movements arises.

The proponents of the New Social Movement theory look to other logics of action based on politics, ideology and culture as the root of much collective action, and they look to other sources of identity such as ethnicity, gender and sexuality as the definers of collective identity (Shehada, 2012).

It is important to note that, there is no single new social movement theory in the paradigm rather there is diversity in New Social Movement theories; they all try to answer the question of why social movements emerge in specific contexts. The Resource Mobilization theory, on its part, tries to answer the question of how social movements engage their supporters in the process of collective action. Thus, they complement each other to some extent. The New Social Movement theory has also sparked debate. There is a debate over whether a social movement has to be either cultural or political. Buechler (1995:451-453) sees a danger in

making such a distinction, because it “can create and perpetuate unfortunate dichotomies that obscure more than they reveal about movements”. In the case of Shahbag, the Facebook group is both: it is cultural in the sense that it advocates post-materialist values such as freedom, democracy and social justice, and political since it consistently called for the ban of Islamic politics.

2.5 Theories of Communication

“Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power and culture” (Castells, 1996:500).

The way in which Shahbag activists via Facebook demanded justice against the war crime is characteristic of what Castells (2001) called a ‘networked social movement’ of the Information Age. This networked social movement was based on cultural values (justice); was a loose and semi-spontaneous coalition relying on internet technologies (Facebook); and was a locally based movement aiming globally (Castells, 2001; Harlow, 2011).

2.6 The concept of Social Media

Manuel Castells, one of the most celebrated sociologists of our time, has defined Information Communication Technology (ICTs) as “the converging set of technologies in microelectronics, computing (machines and software), telecommunications/broadcasting, and optoelectronics” (ibid, 30). For the purpose of this discussion, social media networks (SMNs), a subset of ICTs, will be defined as “online tools and utilities that allow communication of information online and participation and collaboration” (Newson, Houghton and Patten 2008:3, quoted in Storck, 2012).

Nay more, we can define social media tools are websites that “interact with the users, while giving them information” (Storck, 2012).

2.6.1 Facebook: Scope & Implication

The newsroom of Facebook states that the Facebook's mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected.

Facebook is an internet-based social medium facilitating the creation and sharing of messages, pictures, and videos by Internet users, continues to be a growing phenomenon. Facebook, initially designed for access by users with college (.edu) e-mail addresses when launched in 2004, opened to the general public and, as of early December 2011, had more than 800 million users worldwide (Chang, 2011).

In the launching period it was just a social networking website exclusively for Harvard students, but astonishingly, Facebook now has roughly 1.19 billion active users, as of December, 2013 and which is a 18 percent increase year over year (source: Facebook). Facebook users interact with other users or "Facebook friends by updating their "status", writing on other members "walls" or sending direct personal messages. Users are able to "create and join interest groups, 'like' pages, import and search for contacts, and upload photos and videos. Approximately 728 people log onto Facebook daily, which represents a 25% increase from 2012 (source: Facebook as of 9/2013).

The most common age demographic is age 25 to 34, which shares 29.7% of entire users (source: Emarketer, 2012). We have many other statistics regarding Facebook which clearly signify that in this network society there are no other best alternative for activists to mobilize resources. For example, five new profiles are created every second that means the potential audience on Facebook is growing exponentially. Facebook users are 53% female and 47% male that refers it is a space for getting both the gender simultaneously.

Every 60 seconds on Facebook: 510 comments are posted, 293,000 statuses are updated, and 136,000 photos are uploaded. So the scope and implication is clear enough that on the virtual space of Facebook there are a lot of engaged and active users, not only that a huge amount of information competing for their attention. Sharing is a crucial factor for a protest to turn into a massive movement, in that case the statistics show that 4.75 billion pieces of content shared daily as of May 2013 (source: <http://zephoria.com/social-media/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/>).

2.6.2 Facebook Users in Bangladesh

According to the BTRC report the number of internet subscriber in the country is 36649,038 till October 2013. The following picture reveals the trend of using internet.

Internet Subscribers in Bangladesh	
The total number of Internet Subscribers has reached 36649.038 thousand as the end of October 2013.	
The Internet subscribers are shown below:	
Category	Subscribers
Mobile Internet	35114.801
ISP + PSTN	1223.62
WiMAX	310.617
Total	36649.038

Table 1: Internet Subscriber in BD, Source: BTRC website

The total number of Facebook users in Bangladesh is 995,560 as of 6th May 2013, having penetration rate of 0.60% (source: Economy Watch Report 2013). The account number is significantly increasing day by day. But most important fact to be taken under concentration is the demographic trend. If we critically study on the trend then it becomes clear to us that the age group between 18 to 24 controls almost half of the total subscription. And for any social movement the participation of youth means a lot.

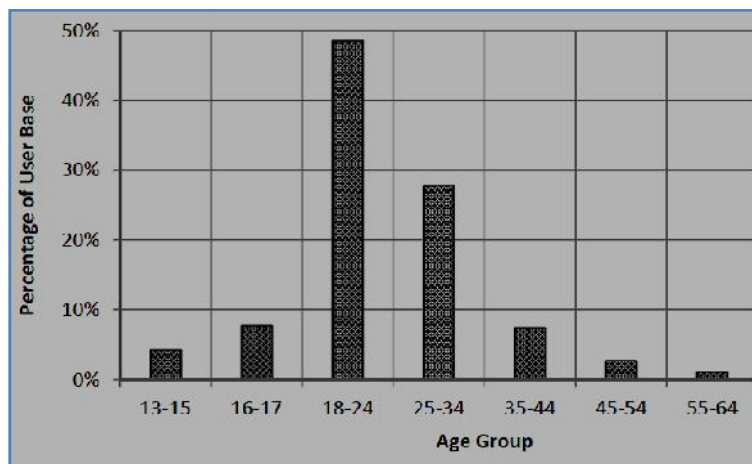


Table 2: Demographic trend of Bangladeshi FB Users, source: Social Bakers.com

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Methodologies

The approaches I took in my attempt to address the research questions were limited, yet multi-faceted.

I was personally attached to the uprising as a participant. There I played a role of participant observer; hence the first method I am applying in this study is covert observation. The other method I used in this small-scale study is Content analysis.

In order to obtain the necessary information required for this paper, I primarily conducted archival research, searching for information within peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and other scholarly publications, as well as news articles from well-known organizations. I also used my own Facebook and Twitter accounts to confirm my observations.

In this study I am using two information sources. First, a review of the relevant literature will be employed for the context of the study and the theoretical framework used for the analysis. My theoretical framework consists of theories on communication, collective action, resource mobilization and social movements.

The second source of information is Facebook posts of Shahbaga Cyber Juddho, Station 71.13 and Projonmo Chottor. I studied more than 2000 posts and comments placed on Facebook in February-April 2013, and took hundreds of screenshots as the contents for analysis.

This paper analyzes Facebook activity during Shahbag movement to recognize how Shahbag Uprising took a shape via off-line activism.

By using the contents of social media this research paper hopes to examine some of the common characteristics of Shahbag Uprising as a New Social Movement, and analyze the new form of strategies employed in the recruitment, and mobilization process. And by going through several scholarly works and relevant theories the paper also hopes to answer whether information and communication technology in the form of social media plays a role in mobilizing people for collective action. The paper would also seek to understand the role of the FB in connecting and expanding the uprising across borders making it an issue of international importance.

Chapter 4: Understanding the Role of Facebook in Shahbag Uprising

4.1 Background of Shahbag Uprising

Shahbag movement began on 5th February 2013, with the demand of capital punishment for Abdul Quader Mollah and all the other accused war criminals of the 1971 war. Shahbag is being marked as the return of the spirit of '71 because of its cross-class, secular, youthful, nationalistic, idealistic character. It was the actors of the uprising that made all the difference in a surprising way. The young with no direct connections to 1971, and who were born years after the liberation year, were among the first to raise their voices against the verdict and demanded death penalty (Mac, 2013).

In order to seek justice the uprising began at Shahbag (an intersection in Dhaka near the University of Dhaka) as a peaceful protest in which hundreds of people were mobilized by Facebook and other social media.

From the official website of Shahbag Movement (<http://shahbagmovement.com/page/4/>) we can know about the inner spirit worked behind the beginning of the uprising. 5th February, 2013 was the scheduled date for verdict on war crimes convict Quader Mollah's case. At around mid-day, much earlier before being reported by mainstream media, people spotted brief news floating around the social networks (Facebook) that Abdul Quader Mollah got life imprisonment. Despite people in Bangladesh are up to some degree acquainted with its inadequate and politically influenced legal system, nobody was prepared to tolerate such in the question of war-crime. Hence, people all over the social network outburst immediately with frustration and anger as the verdict was deemed too little for the massive and brutal crime Quader Mollah is known to have committed.

The reaction was so strong that leaving all ego behind, it also touched the people who are known to have closely worked with the tribunal. Very soon, a handful of bloggers and online activists picked up the sentiment and called for a protest at around 3:00 PM at the Shahbag intersection (north-east of Dhaka University Campus). With very small participation at the very beginning, not exceeding a hundred, nobody knew what was next. After the night passed, followed by media coverage, the protest venue started to take shape as one of the largest non-political (not influenced or led by party interests), non-violent and peaceful demonstration ever seen the last 20 years of the nation.

Not that the protest was confined to only at Shahbag rather the flame of protest was spread throughout the country, even crossed the national border. It probably will mark as a shift in Bangladeshi political culture, as the movement contains a new uprising character guided by a new form of activism.

4.2 Timeline of the Uprising

To better understand the complete mechanism, contexts, upheavals and narration of Shahbag uprising it is important to have idea on time line of the events. Therefore, I am bringing here the time line of earliest significant days, as a ‘background literature’, directly from the official website of Shahbag Movement (shahbagmovement.com).

- **Second day of protest (February 6)**

After passing Thursday night mostly covered by blogger activists along with their close networks, the second day of the sit-in protest began to gain momentum with the participation of some noted non-political personalities. People and students from extended networks of the initial participants started to gather at the venue.

It is worth noting that a general strike was called by Jamaat on the same day, but it did not stop the protestors from getting together. It is further speculated that the protest encouraged the protestors by means of opposing reaction.

Surface of the road was painted A symbolic trial was staged by hanging the effigy of Mollah. A snake-shaped effigy of Azam, considered mastermind of war crimes was placed at the square. By the evening, even more people including female and children stepped in after the strike was over. The protest venue got a new look with thousands of candle lights and torches lit all around.

- **Third day of the protest (7th February)**

Thursday started with the people singing national anthem at 8:00 AM. More and more people started to gather at the venue with placards and banners. The protest spread across other major cities in Bangladesh.

Call for a grand rally to be held at 3:00 PM on the next day (Friday) has been voiced by the activists.

Mainstream media started to focus on the movement from around this time. People from all walks of life, all over the place have been seen to express their solidarity with the movement. Stories floating around prove touching stories like “rickshaw-pullers carried activists to the venue for free”, “beggars spending their whole day income to buy food for the activists” and “grass-level candle-light retailers willing to sell their entire stock at half-price”. Stories like these continue to prove solidarity of general people from all walks of life from all over the country.

- **Fourth day, the grand rally (February 8)**

More and more people started to gather at the venue. The crowd overflowed out to the nearby areas of the Shahbag square. Rooftops of the surrounding buildings were populated with tenants. About 300 reporters from local and international media houses were present along with their equipments.

Noted personalities from all arena including politicians (except from Jamaat and its allies), teachers, freedom fighters and media personalities expressed solidarity with the movement and put the speech from the stage.

By the end of the speech session, Dr. Imran H. Sarker led the participants swear on an oath to continue their protest until the demands are met, and to boycott Jamaat and their business by all means.

- **Seventh day of protest (11th February)**

The non-stop sit-in protest continues at Shahbag as well as in rest of the cities. Monday gives us one good news that the government has taken initiative to make required changes to the International Crimes Tribunal to protect the rights of victim.

And among many other activities, we learned that people signed petitions on more than 2700 yards of cloth.

At 5:00 PM, Imran H Sarkar on behalf of the Shahbag demonstrators called for 3 minutes stand-up demonstration throughout the whole country on the next day. He called every citizen

in the country to stand up at 4:00 PM and keep standing silent till 4:03 PM to participate in the demonstration.

Also, a huge 120×60 feet national flag was made by the university students.

- **Eighth day of protest (February 12)**

Tuesday, 12th February, 2013. One full week passed and the protest proceeds into second week. In the earlier day, on behalf of the demonstrators, Dr. Imran H. Sarkar declared a countrywide demonstration to stand silent for 3 minutes starting at 4:00 PM today. This call has been another big success.

3 Minutes of Silence

The crowd at Shahbag got even bigger today. Reportedly it was bigger than that of the last grand-rally held in Friday. In addition to the Shahbag protestors and other stages around the cities, people from all over the country took part in the protest from their own location.

The reporters and editors in all TV stations except a few broadcasted their own minutes of silence side-by-side with reports about other places.

Parliament members with rest of the staff of parliament building gathered in two different lounges inside the parliament building to participate in the demonstration.

There is a saying that silence is dangerous, it is a sign of upcoming storm. Be aware traitors! That is how some speculations are coming from general people.

- **Eleventh day of protest (February 15)**

Friday, 15th February 2013. The day of second grand-rally as scheduled and declared in the earlier day. First grand-rally in the history of this movement was held on 8th February at the same venue and time. It was the weekend holiday, and people started to gather and join existing crowd since the morning. By 3:00 PM, hundreds of thousands of people gathered. The stage known as Ganajagaran Manch started the program late at around 4:00 PM by singing the national anthem.

Leaders from different student organizations addressing the rally demanded justice for war-crime victims and ban on Jamaat-Shibir activities. Finally, Dr. Imran H. Sarker put his speech with guidelines for the movement. It was long and detailed. Among other topics, he emphasized the need to spread the spirit the movement all around the country at root level. He declared the decision to shorten the protest schedule from 24 hours (every day) down to 7 hours, i.e. 3:00 PM to 10:00 PM which however did not last for long.

Rajib Haider Killed

Ahmed Rajib Haider, a young architect and blogger famous with the nick-name *Thaba Baba* was brutally stabbed and slaughtered to death by some unknown person or group while he was returning home from Shahbag. His throat and wrists were slit, in signature Chaatra Shibir (Jamaat-e-Islam's student wing) style, and he was left to die. As soon as the news spread, activists immediately cancelled the 7 hours limit and returned back the 24 hours schedule of non-stop protest. The entire crowd stood up to 1 minute of silence to show their respect to Rajib Haider. Later in the night, Dr. Imran H Sarker claimed in front of the crowd that the assassination was carried out by Jamaat-Shibir. From there, The demand for restricting Jamaat-Shibir strengthens further. For reference, earlier in mid-January, another blogger activist Asif Mohiuddin was attacked with very similar intentions, as bloggers speculate.

- **Thirteenth day of protest (February 17)**

As declared earlier in the twelfth day, educational institutions all around the country raised the national flag and sung national anthem sharp at 10:00 AM.

Schools and colleges in Dhaka, as well as those in other major cities and divisions have been reported to participate in program by raising half-mast national flag and my singing the national anthem.

Although it has been raining since morning, ignoring the weather, people from all walks of life including students in their uniforms from a number of institutions in Dhaka has joined the protest at Shahbag. People repeat their determination to continue the protest until the war-criminals are hanged.

This day also marks another major achievement that the parliament of Peoples Republic of Bangladesh passes an amendment (2013) to International Crimes Tribunal Act 1973 under tremendous pressure from the public united under Shahbag Movement. This will allow the state to appeal against inadequate verdict and limit the timeframe to resolve such appeal to 60 days inclusive of a 15 days grace period. Additionally, this amendment includes a provision to accuse organizations for planning and execution of war-crimes.

- **Fourteenth day of protest (February 18)**

Monday, 18th February, 2013. A procession was launched from Shahbag at 10:30 AM to protest the dawn to dusk shutdown called by Jamaat-Shibir. People led by activists and student organizations marched from Shahbag through Science Laboratory intersection, Kalabagan and Karwan Bazaar, and then, returned to Shahbag. Carrying a black flag in the memory of 3 people killed in Jamaat-Shibir recent attacks across the country, activists loudly chanted various slogans against Jamaat-Shibir.

The shutdown called by Jamaat-Shibir was officially rejected earlier yesterday by shop owners and public-vehicle owners through their respective association leaders. Majority of the mass people therefore denied the shutdown and continued through their daily activities. Educational institutions hoisted black flag and people wore black badges to honour the people who lost their lives.

Despite mass rejection from people, as usual, Jamaat-Shibir continued to demonstrate their violent activities at random intervals and places including in Dhaka, Cox's Bazaar and Comilla.

In the afternoon, a group of about hundred artists joined the protest and announced that they will boycott all media houses linked with Jamaat.

On the street, spring flowers and candles were decorated to read **30,00,000+ 1** to denote the lives lost in the 1971 war and that of Rajib Haidar.

In addition to continuing the sit-in protest, additional programs for the upcoming days were declared:

- Write letters to martyrs of the Liberation War, and then release balloons carrying those letters on Tuesday, at 04:13 PM, the moment the Pakistani forces surrendered in 16th December 1971.
- Third Grand Rally at Shahbag scheduled for Wednesday, 20th February 2013 at 03:00 PM.
- In the first hour of 21st February, later declared as International Language Day, flowers from the Ganajagarna Mancha will be placed at Shaheed Meenar to honour the Language Movement martyrs.
- At 03:00 PM, Ekushey'r Gaan will be sung in all educational institutions countrywide.

- **Seventeenth day of protest (February 21)**

The grand rally scheduled for 21st February 2013 started officially at around 4:25. Under the leadership of Dr. Imran H. Sarker, the entire crowd focused their sight towards the gigantic flag flying high above Shahbag square, and sung national anthem and ekushey'r gaan in chorus. Verses from the holy Qur'an, Bible, Bhagavad Geeta and Tripitaka were read by scholars from respective religions to symbolise and uphold the peaceful coexistence of diverse religious population in the secular state.

In the 3rd rally in the history of 17 days of Shahbag protest, an exception was set by reserving the stage for student leaders only, intentionally excluding senior political leaders and noted persons. Presidents, general secretaries and higher ranked leaders from several student organizations put their speech to the crowd. Leaders emphasized on the necessity of addressing the 42 years old problem of political impurity which relates closely with the nations birth.

Dr. Imran H. Sarker then closed the session with a 3-page written speech containing 6 ultimatums to the government and declaration of programmes for the upcoming days.

(Source of the time line: shahbagmovement.com)

4.3 The Role of Facebook in Shahbag Uprising

We do understand that social media like Facebook alone does not cause revolutions, overthrow an ineffective government, or even cause civil unrest but can we undermine the profound impact of its in recent global uprisings?

In this section we will critically discuss about the role Facebook has played in Shahbag uprising and we will seek the answer why the protestors chose this medium for mobilizing crowd and disseminating information.

According to a 2009 survey by DigiActive, social network sites (SNS) are the most common entrance to online activism, despite the fact that SNS were not created with activism in mind. Considering that much still must be learned about how the internet is impacting mobilization (Rolfe, 2005; Harlow, 2011).

4.3.1 Facebook as an Entrance to Online Activism

As an active user of Facebook (FB) I observe that the most fundamental function of FB is that it has given voice to the voiceless. The young political minds have got a platform never before experienced. They can share their political views & opinions on this virtual space targeting to get the supporting opinion of similar minds. The similar views gradually become a story and travels here and there in virtual spaces. Consequently this mechanism helps to crystallize a certain political believe in a shortest possible time. Deanna Zandt graphically depicts the ‘diffusion power of sharing’ through using social media like FB (Please See Appendix A).

One of the fundamental findings of this study is that Shahbag uprising was not the instant result of 5th February; rather a continuous conversations had been taken places in social media like FB & blogging sites for years. The more conversations took place in virtual spaces the more activism (invisible) got crystallized day after day. This hidden activism finally sparked out on 5th February regarding the verdict declared by the ICT.

Social Networks started as the means for people to have a social connection with other people with similar interests. They were once considered a tool for youthful entertainment, but over the course of the last Nine years, Social Networks have been used both for individual

purposes as well as for conducting socio-political purposes. Online social network like Facebook is one of the new platforms for exchanging personal and professional information by allowing users to incorporate external web applications (Enrique Bonsón-Ponte, 2000 in Harlow, 2011).

4.3.2 Facebook as a virtual space in Mobilizing Crowd

Scholars tend to view the Facebook's role in social movements as two-fold: it can facilitate traditional offline activism, can create new forms of activism and resistance (Castells, 2001; Juris, 2005; Harlow, 2011).

It is very important to identify how FB being an online social media can facilitate traditional offline activism. Shahbag Movement as a reminiscent of the 'Arab Spring' has proved it once again that a uprising could be taken place through the diffusion power of social media like FB. It can contribute a lot in facilitating traditional offline activism by mobilizing crowd. We can provide some example from the FB page named "Shahabage Cyber Juddho" (Cyber War at Shahbag) to establish the argument (Please, See Apendix B).

In a post on 6 March, the admin of the named "Shahabage Cyber Juddho" appealed:

"Join us, then, brothers and sisters around the globe in ensuring that these criminals do not remain unpunished. All of us must unite to send the message that we, the people of Bangladesh, will no longer tolerate this injustice to continue. And what a better day to send this message than that of the historic March 7th? So on this day, let all Bengalis around the world speak out, and speak out loudly. Let us do this with a single voice and significant symbolism, and let this symbol be from the sky. So, on the historic March 7th, at 12:30PM your local time, let us saturate the heavens with balloons, released simultaneously from all the brothers and sisters of Bangladesh, and representing the martyrs, the raped, and the tortured. Let us cover the atmosphere with markers of those for whom justice has so long been neglected!"

According to Edwards and McCarthy (2004 quoted in Shehada, 2012), resources include: moral resources such as solidarity and support to the movement's goals; cultural resources such as specialized knowledge; and human resources such as labour, experience, skills and expertise. The above appealing post over FB is an outstanding example of mobilization of these resources. And appeal was a massive success. Thousands of people rushed to the spot on March 7th to participate on the cultural demonstration organized by Ganajagoron Mancha (Mass Awakening Stage). And this is how FB can facilitate offline activism through the power of sharing.

To understand how FB played a crucial role in mobilizing resources we have to analyze the posts of related FB page. To do so, this study analyzes the continuous posts of the FB page 'Shahbaga Cyber Juddho'(Cyber War at Shahbag). After analyzing the posts from the inception time of the page to 31st March 2013, we can roughly categorize the posts into four major facets. The following table will reveal the facets and the number of the posts regarding each facet.

Mobilizing Issue	Cultural Awareness/information	Security concern	Against propaganda
85	135	81	74

Table 3: Number of Posts on FB page 'Shahbaga Cyber Juddho' during uprising period, source: researcher calculation

History of uprising suggests that, a common problem of social movements has been how to obtain enough highly motivated individuals to initiate a mobilization, and attract more participants and resources, but with social media, all it takes is a click of the mouse for participants to be recruited globally (Harlow, 2011). Facebook users and their social networks – users have an average of 130 friends (Facebook, 2009) – provide an easily and instantaneously accessible critical mass. In case of Shahbag Uprising we see that more than 85 posts were posted in FB page concerning crowd mobilization.

By a screenshot from the social media analysis website 'socialbakers.com' we can understand the process of how fast the fans grow in Shahbag related FB pages. Here I am providing the fan alluring statistics of a single FB fan page named Shahbaga Cyber Juddho (Please See Appendix C).

4.3.3 Facebook in Gearing ‘Shahbag Uprising’ Beyond Locality

In mobilizing resources social media, especially FB has played a significant role. But the role was not only confined to mobilizing the crowd only, rather it contributed immensely in getting the mass support both home & abroad. By virtue of the social media The Shahbag Movement has become a international movement. The flame of protest was sparked successfully by the continuous posts of several FB pages and blogging. The Bangladeshi community living different parts of the world expressed their heartfelt support to Shahbag Uprising by organizing processions, demonstrations etc. (See Appendix D).

The Bangladeshi youth taking the best advantages of Facebook and other virtual spaces have successfully drawn the global attention. Since the inception period of Shahbag Movement it has extended its roots in approximately 126 cities and 23 countries of the world. By the help of a mapping we can clarify the momentum of spreading (See Appendix E).

Now let’s have a look on the international fans of a single FB page. The statistics would help us to understand the fact that how Facebook played the significant role in sparking the Uprising in a global scale (See Appendix F).

4.4 Conclusion

According to Niven (2004) the essence of mobilization theory posits the fact that increased access to political information increases political participation within the cognitive and behavioral contexts. This promulgates the idea that increased awareness leads to more discussion and analysis which makes mobilization more effective.

Facebook as a virtual space and diffusing tool played a significant part in the political participation, collective action process and crowd mobilization, thus, proved an effective and easy way of activism in forming a movement. And due to the flexibilities and effectiveness of it the actor of Shahbag Uprising chose it. Hence, “hyperactivism”, I will coin this term in the following chapter to signify the character and uniqueness of off-line activism guided by Facebook and other social media.

Considering all the above mentioned attributes of the new form of activism used in Shahbag Uprising, I am stating that the actors of Shahbag Uprising have successfully made the best use of social networking and got a reach to the international audience. Online activism has proved tremendously fruitful in crossing the local boundary and portraying a true picture of the country to world people.

Chapter 5: Shahbag Uprising as a New form of Social Movement

5.1 Shahbag Movement: Reconnecting the Youth with the Liberation War

Shahbag Movement was not just an impulse to follow the footsteps of Arab Spring or Occupy Wall Street. It started over blogs and FB that had been raising the issue for many years now, however finally been successful to get critical mass after Quader Mollah's verdict (Ahmed in India Today's conclave 2013-Reinventing Democracy).

First of all, I term Shahbag Movement as a new form of social movement as it is directly linked with identity politics (beyond any particular class politics) as a nation in making. The youth of the nation, carrying the legacy of 1971, have engaged themselves once again to raise voice against the collaborators for their part in war crimes. The slogans, ways of demonstration in Shahbag extend beyond calls for justice, to reflect Bangladesh's liberation and history (Qayum, 2013). They have kept the spirit of liberation after the 42 years of the event. Because of its non-violent, cross-class, secular, youthful, nationalistic, idealistic and cultural character we can certainly categorize the movement as a new social movement. The distinctiveness of our Bengali identity was been uphold by the movement. The Facebook had worked as a fruitful tool for upholding the spirit of 1971 (See Appendix G).

From a critical point of view, I tag Shahbag Movement as the movement of 'identity politics', it is a movement of construction of identity. The mass people especially the youth were so much conscious about the distinctiveness and pride of them and that was nothing but country's history of liberation war. It is such a history which makes them separate from others in the world. It is such a national chapter which gives them a source of meaning. And from sociological insights we know that in today's network society identity is nothing but

people's source of meaning and experience. Identities are sources of meaning for the actors themselves, and by themselves, constructed through a process of individuation (Castell, 2010:7-8).

As an uprising concerning identity politics Shahbag Movement could definitely be categorized as a new form of social movement.

5.2 Shahbag Movement: Using new form of Activism-The Hyperactivism

Based on the findings of this study, from another angle we can tag Shahbag uprising as a 'new social movement' as it was guided by new form of activism. The voiceless youth of the country have made the best uses of the social media like FB to make their voices heard. The new generation activists used the virtual spaces of social media, especially FB, to form public opinion against the verdict, to mobilize crowd, to disseminate the news update of the uprising globally, and to raise counter against the propaganda of several groups.

This would not be an overstatement if we say that it was a movement solely sparked by online activism. Not that it was only initiated by virtue of social media but also the throughout uprising was directed and guided by online activism. The posts in Facebook groups regarding mobilization, awareness, security concern and reply against propaganda have played central character as activism. To appraise this form of activism run on virtual spaces I, being inspired by Jean Baudrillard (1983), am offering here a fresh jargon '**hyperactivism**'. By coining the term '**hyperactivism**', I am basically signifying the new form of activism hold on hyper real spaces like social media (See Appendix H).

One of the important observations of this paper is that this 'hyperactivism' significantly facilitated the offline activism of the uprising to a great extent. Almost every offline activism was fixed initially on virtual spaces-garnered public opinion-then instigated at Shahbag. We can explain the whole cycling-mechanism with the help of a chart:



5.3 Shahbag Movement: as an Expression of Ordinary People

In a country like Bangladesh where repressive and ineffective governments block most avenues for participation, Shahbag provides a new platform for citizens to express. It was a space where citizens have engaged themselves in political activity for the sheer act of expression (Qayum, 2013).

The uprising was started off, at least, as a nonaligned and non-partisan way. Initially We observed that traditional political leaders like Mahbub-ul-Alam Hanif, Sajeda Chowdhury and many other tried to penetrate the uprising but thrown out by the protestors. The uprising was completely owned by the common people, at least in the initial stage, who were tied by the invisible bonds of country's national struggle. The protestors considered themselves as the children of a new war, a war which can remind the unresponsive govt. about the very existence of ordinary people. They doubt against the 'underhand negotiation' of erstwhile government regarding the trial process and verdict of Abdul Quader Mollah. Hence, they hoisted the slogan initially 'atater rai manina, manbona' (we snub the verdict of conciliation). At least 34 posts on Facebook in different pages regarding Shahbag Movement celebrated the slogan against the government.

I want to conclude the point in a way that it was a potential uprising against authority and the interior strength of the movement was the common man, therefore it had a massive support base, the support of ordinary people.

5.4 Shahbag Movement: as a Secular Movement

First of all, we have to make it clear that in a monolithic Islamic country like Bangladesh to sprint a secular movement is not at all an uncomplicated task. In the initial period of the uprising, a blogger named Razib Haidar, who was an atheist by chance and one of the founding figures of the uprising, was brutally murdered by the fundamentalist forces. It was a fact that Razib Haidar as a psychedelic blogger and did the heinous crime of humiliating the Prophet of the Muslims. But that doesn't mean that the whole uprising was driven by atheists and anti-Islamic mass. The complications became shoddier when a so called pro-Islamic force Hefajot-a-Islam recognized the whole movement as an atheist movement and sought action against the protestors.

Eventually, the force ran propaganda and used the religious sentiments of the Madrasha going students and underprivileged people and finally garnered them in order to capture the capital to take action against the Shahbag protestors. On 5th of May, 2013 they rushed to the capital uttering 'Nastik blogger der fashi cai' (we demand the atheist bloggers hanged). They were locked in a clash with the Hefajot activist near Shahbag. The agitated Hefajot activists was to rush for occupying Shahbag but failed against the bar of State forces. In Chittagong, another city of Bangladesh, where Shahbag activist wanted to form a demonstration but couldn't because of the threat of some fundamentalist groups. Basically, the uprising was never against the Islamic beliefs, rather the spirit of secularism was the beauty of the movement which made it a new form movement.

The spirit of secularism was formed in FB pages through postings, comments and re-comments and then the crystallized idea was been implemented later on off-line activism. With the help of two consecutive screenshots of FB pages we can elucidate how the actors of Shahbag Uprising borne the secular spirit through virtual space of social media to real world (See Appendix I)

Under this complicated situation it is not easy to be united as the voice of secularism, but the Shahbagi tried to do so. But bearing the spirit of 'collective secular psyche' Shahbag Movement has successfully diffused (both offline and online) the ideological message 'Dhormo jar jar, Rastro shobar' (Religion is to individual but the state is to all) (See Appendix J).

5.5 Conclusion

To understand Shahbag Uprising as a new form of social movement the major attributes of NSMs should be taken under consideration.

According to Morris (1992) the final and most important attribute in defining new social movements is by understanding the values represented by them. A common distinction made in this regard is to say, that new social movements represent “non materialistic intangible and qualitative values such as personal autonomy, self actualization, and democracy, unlike their predecessors” (Morris, 1992:5).

Shahbag Uprising nonetheless represents a significant cultural statement, it is an expression of peace, it is an expression of secular democratized politics, it is an expression of identity politics of ordinary people in the history of Bangladesh once again after 1971. Considering all the elements it carries we must have to say that it is an appearance of new form social movement in the ‘age of complexity’.

Chapter 6: New form of Activism & Shahbag Uprising: Accomplishments, Limitation & Prospects

6.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter we will discuss on the other surfaces of the Shahbag uprising and the new form activism guided by FB. It is important to understand the overall achievements of Shahbag Uprising as a social movement guided by new form of activism. Simultaneously, we have to be critical enough to recognize the limitations and prospects of this new form of movement and activism in the political milieu of the country.

6.2 Accomplishments

Earlier in the recent histories we have seen uprisings like ‘Arab Spring’ and ‘Occupy Wall Street: we are 99%’ which were guided also by ‘hyperactivism’ like Shahbag Movement. But can we say this new form activism run on social media in a poor country like ours can impact a lot in formatting a successful a movement? Can we link Shahbag Movement with Tahrir Square?

Perhaps NO, as we know Shahbag yet not an absolute movement (the series of events still on function on a occasional basis) as it has not yet toppled down government. But the straight dichotomy of YES/NO might not be adequate to understand the detail. To understand the importance and accomplishments of the uprising we have to be critical enough. I don’t think the problem was in the system of activism or crowd mobilization. Rather the findings say that there is lot of potential of this form activism in Bangladesh. As a virtual space Facebook including other social media has been playing a tremendous role in providing the ordinary people a place to be heard, in making the youth politically aware. So we cannot neglect the prospects of social media and ‘hyperactivism’ in instigating an absolute movement in future, can we?

Though the uprising, until now, has not toppled down the government but it is a big success of the movement that finally on 14 December of 2013, after the long 43 years of victory the country made a justice with the sacrifices of Martyrs by hanging Abdul Quader Mollah.

6.3 Limitations

6.3.1 Urban centered Character

Explaining the riot behaviour in forty-three American cities, Eisenger (1973: 11) employed the concept “structure of political opportunities.” He stated “the incidence of protest ... is related to the nature of a city’s political opportunity structures” (1973:25 quoted in Rahman, 2011). Shahbag Movement is essentially an urban mode of protest and it had to rely on the nature of city’s political opportunity structure. Urban middle class youth was the fundamental actors of the uprising and they couldn’t go beyond the political opportunity structures.

Another drawback of this form of uprising is that it is primarily dependent on on-line activism. And it as we know internet run activism is basically an urban mode expression. In a developing country like Bangladesh, because of the ‘digital divide’ instant rural participation becomes impossible. To form a substantial movement it is important to include the excluded. According to pan-African statesman-cum thinker Amilcar Cabral (1973:68), the element of national culture exists profoundly in rustic areas. Without counting this original rustic element no movement can be successfully turned into a national struggle. When the whole culture of a nation expressed collectively it becomes a Struggle.

But Shahbag Movement importantly missed the inclusion of rural milieu due to its digitized character.

There is doubt that the types of people social media can reach are important for social movements. Social media sites like Facebook are advantageous space as they significantly accommodate the youth. And history of world social movement suggests that youth is the fundamental determiners of a movement. But there is a barrier to social media sites can be Internet access, as it is not universal and it requires some basic technical skills and resources. These limitations may be less widespread for some key political groups, such as younger or middle class citizens (Bong et al., 2012).

6.3.2 Prone to Politicization

Being a movement guided and formatted by ‘hyperactivism’ it contained some basic limitations in managing institutional resources like leadership, finances etc. I think, that is the fundamental problem of this form new social movement formatted in virtual spaces. We know no movement can sustain without the above mentioned resources. In case of ‘Arab

Spring' we saw the resources especially the finances and arms were provided by the Imperialist forces like CIA, NATO and so on. All the movements in Arab region were to some extent backed by USA and its allies. In case of Shahbag, the issue of finance was also a big deal to manage to carry out the protest. As I mentioned earlier it was a movement of ordinary people and formatted in virtual spaces like Facebook, hence it had no filtered organizational character. As a result, after a definite period it became dependent on a certain political group. The apolitical character became questioned.

From Luxemburg's model we find a telling causal mechanism that spurs the growth of the revolutionary movement – but after a definite period strike waves face the disturbances of state repression and eventually the politicization of strike takes place (Rahman, 2011).

(See Appendix K)

Shahbag Movement was initially instigated against the possible 'underhand negotiation' of government with Jamaat-e-Islam Bangladesh regarding the verdict of Abdul Quader Mollah and Judgement process of ICT. So by nature it was a strike against the authority or government. Instead of that we didn't see any form of 'state repression' held against the protestors. As time proceeds we observed that the controversial figure like Imran H. Sarkar took the driving seat of the strike. If we critically observe the momentum of whole uprising it becomes clear that some sort of politicization occurred in Shahbag but in a different manner as described by Rosa Luxemburg in her model. May the leadership had undergone through some sort of politicization yet the spirit of masses remained unchanged for a particular span. The continued spirit of the uprising showed that ordinary Bangladeshis are not ready to give up so easily.

6.3.3 The gap between Online & Off-line Activism

Another drawback of virtual space is that false information and rumors can quickly spread. The content of posts, when not carefully considered and vetted, can quickly lead to misinformation and controversy. Additionally, increased awareness and interaction via social media do not always result in real action (Bong et al., 2012). We observed serious misunderstanding regarding the Shahbag Movement also. A blogger named Razib had to lose his life for being not careful in posting posts.

The activism of the virtual actors often becomes vague to the off-line actors as if they not connected to online.

6.4 Prospects

Neither utopia nor dyspotia, the internet is the expression of ourselves-through a specific code of communication, which we must understand if we want to change our reality (Castells, 2001, p. 6).

The emergence of the new form of virtual activism, to me, holds enormous potential in formatting newer form of movements in coming ages. In Bangladesh, the youth have already made Facebook sub-culture on virtual spaces to change the reality of the country. They are politically becoming politically aware through the comments and re-comments, sharing the ideas on different political issues, and all these elements of sharing eventually breeds an uprising. Hence, despite all the dubious reputation I can't overlook the future of new form social movement in Bangladesh guided by Facebook and other social media.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

To make it a compact small-scale study I applied the principles of qualitative research methodology in a very limited way. But within this limited framework I tried my best to maintain consistency and rigor at all stages of my project. Nonetheless, my study was far from perfect.

I have identified three major limitations.

Firstly, due to unavailability of any prior study on Shahbag Movement I had to be solely dependent on my limited sociological imagination. However, I followed some studies conducted on ‘Arab Spring’.

Secondly, due to resource and time constraint this research is solely based on the contents of Facebook pages and several websites, hence, the empirical validity might be questioned.

Thirdly, I included a diverse range of contents from several FB pages to understand the phenomena. But it was too limited. It would be more comprehensive if I could manage some interviews of some actors of the uprising from different areas.

For the above mentioned limitations of the study I recommend further study on the area in a diversified and intensified way. A larger implication of these findings would predict that the existing trend of new social movements would continue at an exponential pace with more people understanding the effectiveness of mobilization technology and using it to address common grievances despite their magnitude. Thus it is imperative that further research be conducted on the field on mobilization mechanisms to understand future trends and identify the scope of future behavior of new social movements on the political milieu of Bangladesh.

7.2 Concluding Remarks

Now, after leaving behind a number of eras we are living in a postmodern world. We have already endorsed the tag of “High-tech Being” as a part of this informative, knowledge-based, global-network society. From ‘homo-sapiens’, in this postmodern world, we are gradually becoming ‘cyborg’, ‘transgenic’, and ‘cyber citizen’ (Lyotard, 1979; Baudrillard, 1994; Jameson, 1991; Castells, 2000).

In this new global wave we often claim originality is dead; artistic tradition is dead. Classical type of networking is now becoming fade away. It has been argued that we live in an information society. The information revolution is leading to a new form of reality- a new form of society-knowledge based society and virtual community (Halal, 1994; Castells, 2001).

Recognizing all the above mentioned socio-cultural changes, contemporary sociologist Graham Taylor (2010) locate this era as the ‘age of complexity’ where classical political sociology is becoming reshaped day after day. Similarly many ‘cultural’, ‘global’, and ‘complexity’ turns have seriously challenged the notion of classical form of social movement. The classical social movement represented by the paradigm case of the labour or workers movement has given way to a range of new social movement based on issues like liberty, anti-privatization, environment, ethnicity, cultural intrusion, anti-imperialism and so on.

In this complicated milieu, Social Media like FB is working as the free and effective platforms of crystallizing these new forms of social movement. We cannot deny any more the fact that Social Media has landed in our urban culture particularly into the youth culture. Social networks like Facebook, and blogging have enabled many new voice to enter into the political fray.

In this tiny study the researcher tries his utmost to bring the scenario of social movement and new form of political thought which have sprung from ‘Facebook sub-culture’. This study recommends in a bonafide way for further empirical sociological research on this very contemporary but urgent, complex, diverse issue.

Appendices

Appendix A

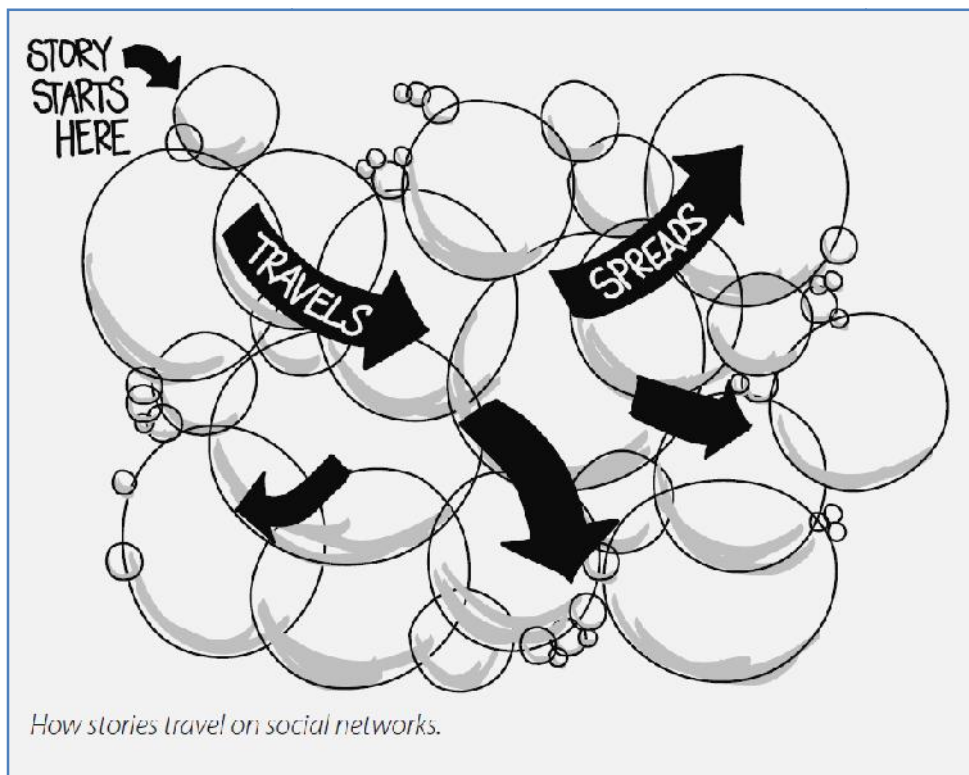


Figure 1: How Stories travel on social media, Source: Zandt, 2010:12)

Appendix B



Figure 2: The initial mobilization on 6th February night, source: FB page Projonmo Chottor

Appendix C



Figure 3: Fans growth Statistics of Shahbag, source: social bakers

Appendix D



Figure 4: Flame of protest sparked through Bangladeshi Facebook, even in abroad. Source: FB page Shahbage Cyber Juddho

Appendix E

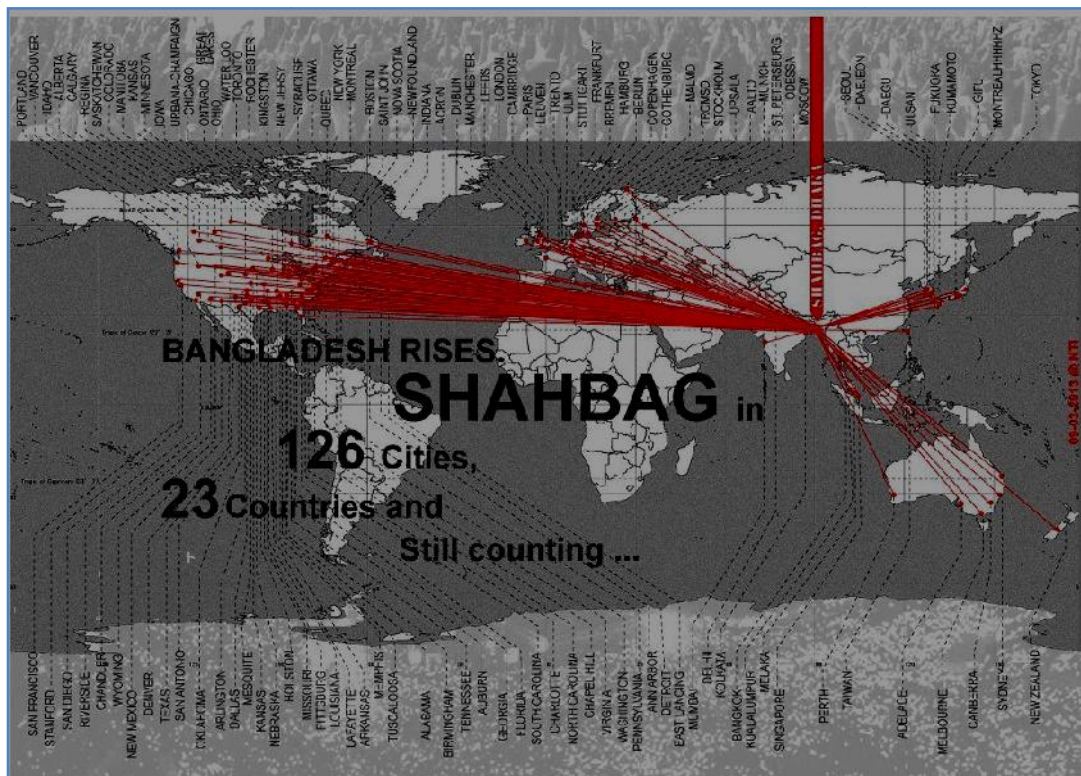


Figure 5: The worldwide rising of Sahgbag. Source: FB page Station 71.1

Appendix F

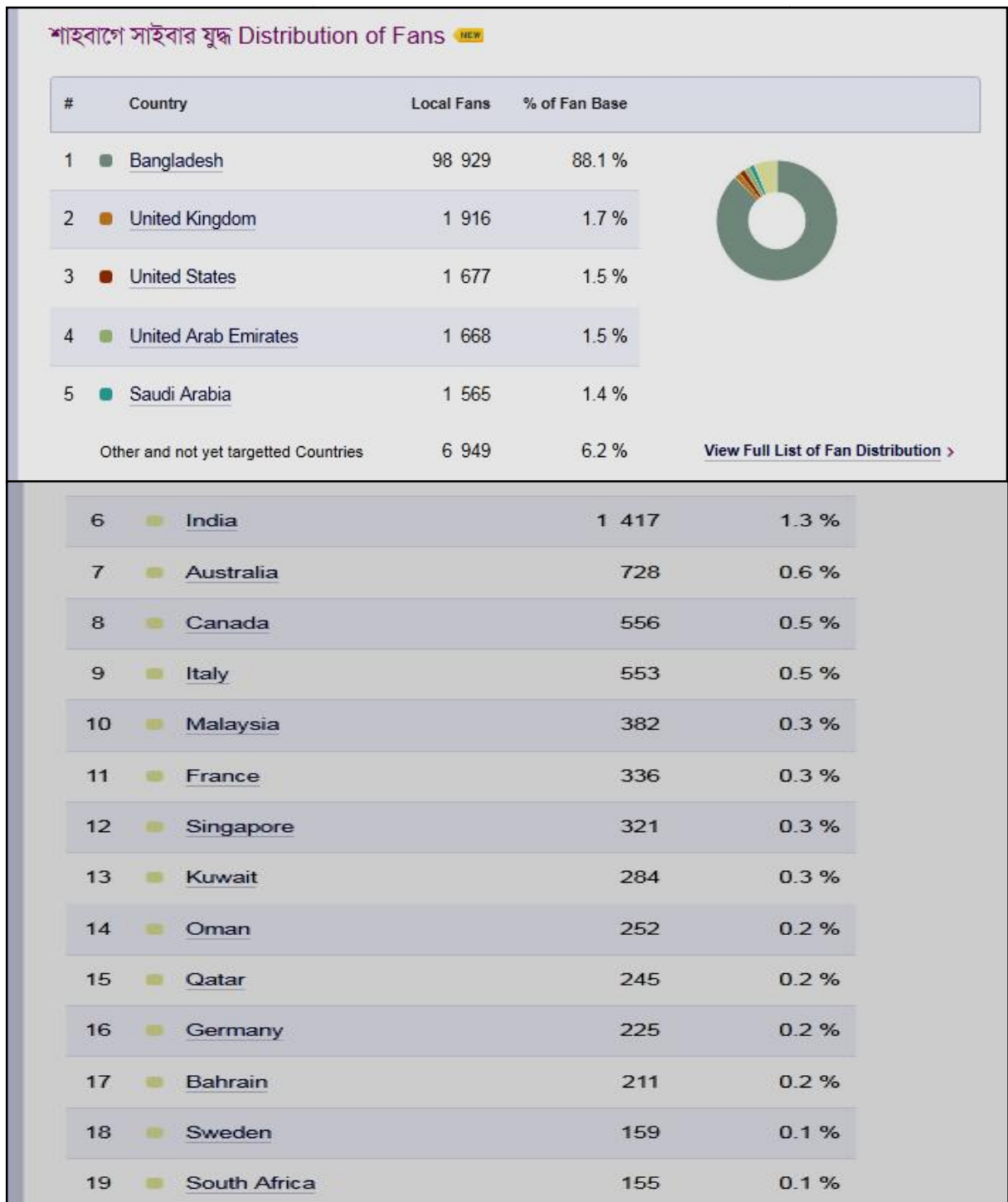


Figure 6: Statistics of global followers of Shahbag Movement over FB page Shahbage Cyber Juddho,

Source: Socialbakers.com

Appendix G



Figure 7: Facebook post regarding the spirit of 71 during the demonstration in Shahbag,
Source: FB page Projonmo Chottor

Appendix H



Figure 8: The Six point ultimatum by the protestors, source: FB page, Shahbago Cyber Juddho.

Appendix I



Figure 9: The secular slogan diffusing on social media then offline activism,
source: FB page Projonmo Chottor

Appendix J



Figure 10: The expression of ‘United Bangali’, source: FB page Projonmo Chottor

Appendix K

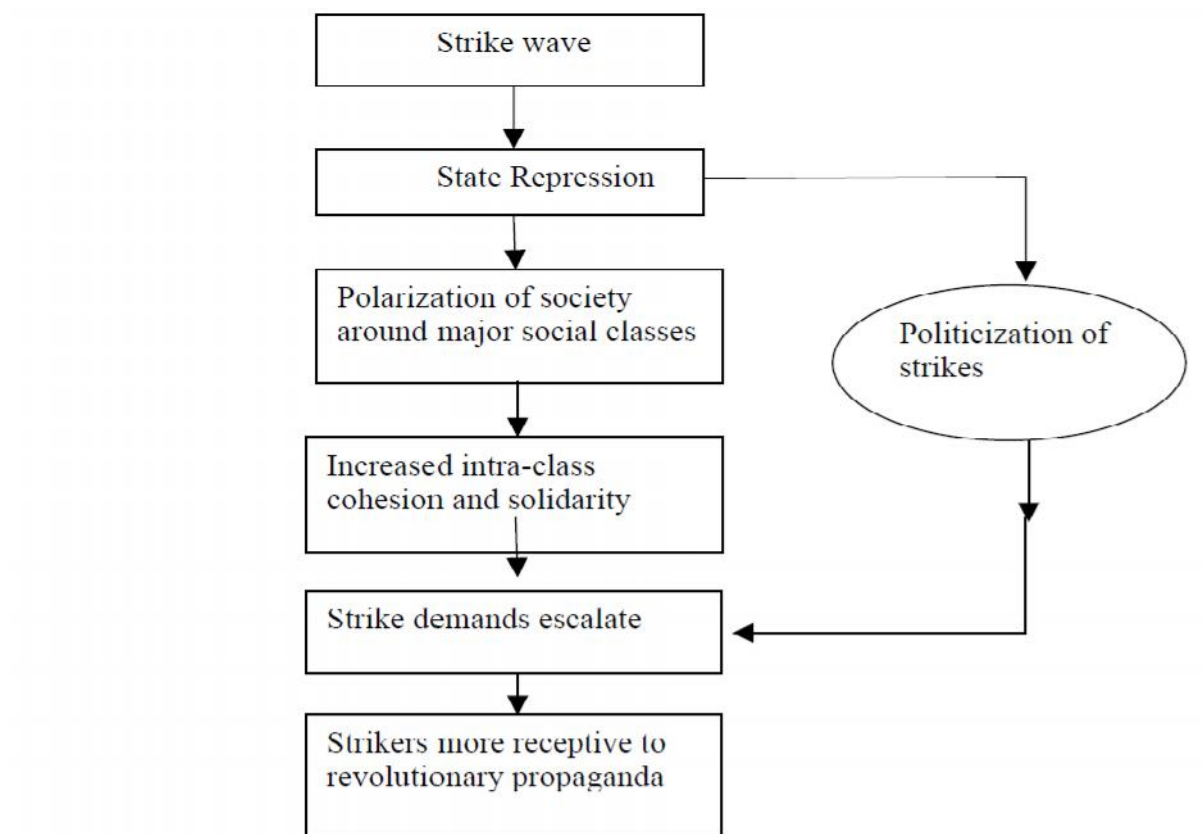


Figure 11: Luxemburg’s model of Strike, source: Kelly 1988:37 in Rahman, 2011

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