

## Examining the Impact of Technology on Political Activism in the Middle East

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### Abstract

*This analysis explores the impact of technology, politics, and media in the dynamic landscape of the Middle East. The region, long characterized by political turbulence and societal complexities, has been profoundly shaped by technological advancements and media coverage, particularly in the wake of transformative events like the Arab Spring and in recent years in peace initiatives such as the Abraham Accords and terrorism activities following the events of October 7, 2023, and the War in Gaza. The study explores how social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp have become instrumental in political activism, grassroots mobilization, and public discourse. These platforms have empowered citizens to challenge authoritarian regimes, organize protests, and disseminate alternative narratives but also disrupted traditional power structures, fostering a more open and transparent public sphere. The research investigates the impact of global media coverage on shaping perceptions and influencing foreign policy decisions regarding critical issues like the Palestine-Israel conflict and diplomatic developments such as the Abraham Accords. It emphasizes the dynamic evolution of media narratives and public discourse in response to these geopolitical shifts, reflecting changing alliances, power dynamics, and regional tensions.*

**Keywords:** technology, political activism, the Middle East

### INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, political activism in the Middle East has transitioned from a predominantly social media-driven phenomenon to a landscape increasingly shaped by global media coverage and digital diplomacy. Historically, public relations in the region was closely tied to government institutions, focusing on areas such as publicity and government affairs, serving as a tool for governments to manage their public image and disseminate information about their activities (Kirat, 2005). Albishri et al. (2019) found that political public relations messages have effectively shaped media coverage and influenced public opinion. Sweetser and Brown (2010) further found that in times of war and conflict, governments in the Middle East have utilized propaganda and military public diplomacy strategies. Daneshnia and Rostami (2022) explain that the Middle East is one of the world's most turbulent regions, witnessing ongoing warfare and conflict resulting from the complexity of identities and cultures. They found that the primary causes of conflict and warfare contribute to the escalation of antagonism in the region, particularly in the context of public diplomacy and social media. They emphasize that acts of violence often stem from motives associated with religious, national, or ethnic identity, perpetuating cycles of conflict.

Over the past decade, technological advancements have catalyzed significant shifts in public relations. The emergence and widespread adoption of interactive communication tools and applications have driven this transformation. The proliferation of interactive communication tools has presented opportunities and challenges for public relations practitioners. As explained by Hassan (2023), the emergence and widespread adoption of interactive communication tools have presented challenges for governments in public relations since new technologies have democratized the dissemination of information, allowing individuals and organizations to engage directly with their audiences and global media. The abundance of online information has increased competition for audience attention, making it more difficult for governments since the interactive nature of these platforms has empowered audiences to voice their opinions and engage in two-way communication, requiring governments to adapt the new public relations strategies to accommodate the new dynamics of global politics.

With the rise of digital technologies, the methods for developing organizational identities have become more diverse, with a commitment to embracing the concept of government digital transformation. This includes Saudi Arabia, which transitioned towards a digital government and implemented comprehensive plans and strategies to ensure its objectives are of the utmost quality and efficiency, in alignment with the Kingdom's Vision 2030. Alkathiri (2022) explains that this policy was followed by other governments that aim to accomplish their strategic objectives through digital public relations. They emphasize that communication dynamics between diverse peoples and cultures have undergone a significant transformation with the advent of the world's information and communication revolution, marked by technological advancements and digital innovations such as the Internet and various social media platforms. Alhuzali and Bin Abdurhman (2022) explain that governments in the Middle East have embraced social media platforms as integral tools for engaging with their audiences and promoting their objectives, missions, and communication activities at local, regional, and international levels. They emphasize that the role of digital public relations has expanded beyond merely enhancing organizational image and introducing missions and objectives at local or regional levels and extends to the international arena by leveraging the internet and social media to promote soft power and shape the national image on the global stage.

Technology has profoundly impacted political developments in the Middle East, reshaping the dynamics of governance, activism, and public discourse. New media, particularly social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook, have emerged as powerful tools for nations to advance their goals and interests in diplomacy (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020). Politicians, leaders, insurgents, and protestors have realized the power of digital and social media to reduce communication costs, increase speed, and disseminate information while providing new data, fundamentally altering the information available to conflict actors (Zeitsoff, 2017).

After centuries of traditional monarchies, social media emerged as a powerful political mobilization tool, allowing citizens to organize protests, share information, and amplify dissenting voices. During the Arab Spring, social media was critical in galvanizing mass demonstrations and calls for political change, challenging traditional power structures, empowering grassroots movements, and facilitating cross-border collaborations among activists and civil society organizations. Social media lowered the barriers to protest participation by reducing mobilization costs and providing avenues for citizen journalism, enabling ordinary individuals to share news and information about political developments.

As political activism evolved, global media coverage became increasingly influential in shaping public opinion and driving discussions about political developments in the Middle East. International news outlets provided a platform for highlighting key issues, such as regional conflicts, humanitarian crises, and diplomatic relations. Coverage of events influenced how people worldwide perceived the region and impacted the foreign policy decisions of governments and international organizations. Media narratives played a crucial role in garnering support for various causes and shaping diplomatic agendas, reflecting the interconnectedness of global politics and media dynamics.

More recently, digital diplomacy has emerged as a significant factor in shaping political dynamics in the Middle East. Governments and international actors have increasingly utilized digital platforms to engage with audiences, communicate policies, and influence public opinion. Digital diplomacy encompasses a range of activities, including public diplomacy campaigns, social media engagement, and online diplomatic initiatives. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube have become essential tools for governments to project soft power, build international alliances, and shape narratives about their policies and actions. Digital diplomacy reflects the growing importance of technology in diplomacy and international relations, highlighting the need for governments to adapt to the digital age and leverage digital platforms to advance their strategic objectives.

This research explores the multifaceted impact of technology and global media on political developments in the Middle East, focusing on their role in driving social movements, shaping public discourse, and influencing international relations. It examines the transition from social media to global media and digital diplomacy. It underscores the evolving nature of political activism in the Middle East and the increasing influence of technology on political dynamics. While social media plays a significant role in mobilizing citizens and amplifying voices of dissent, global media coverage and digital diplomacy have become integral components of the region's political discourse and diplomatic engagement.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Technology and media have become intertwined forces shaping the political landscape of the Middle East in profound and unprecedented ways. Over the past decades, the region has witnessed a transformative surge in digital connectivity, with social media platforms emerging as powerful tools for political mobilization, activism, and communication. Initially, governments underestimated the Internet's potential to disseminate social and political messages and empowered social movements to circumvent government and traditional media influence. However, the advent of new media, particularly social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook, has revolutionized political engagement and activism in the Middle East. Digital technologies enabled citizens to find new avenues to challenge authoritarian regimes, advocate for change, and mobilize mass movements (Al Momani, 2020).

The Arab Spring stands as a testament to the catalyzing power of social media in galvanizing protests, disseminating information, and amplifying dissenting voices across the region. By bypassing traditional media channels, social media has empowered citizens to connect with like-minded individuals, organize protests, and demand political reforms. Social media platforms have emerged as virtual battlegrounds where political actors, including governments, activists, and insurgents, vie for influence and control over public narratives. These platforms have democratized

political discourse, providing forums for citizens to debate governance, democracy, and human rights. They have also facilitated cross-border collaborations, enabling activists and civil society organizations to forge alliances and garner international support for their causes.

Technology has fundamentally transformed the Middle East's political landscapes, offering citizens new hope. It has empowered them, challenging authoritarian regimes and reshaping governance structures. Digital technologies challenged government control over information and communication channels (González-Bailón and Lelkes, 2023). During the Arab Spring, these platforms played a crucial role in organizing protests, disseminating information, amplifying dissenting voices, and enabling citizens to bypass traditional media channels and connect with mass demonstrations and calls for political change. Organized people throughout the Arab Spring and brought about political change. Aday et al. (2012) explain that technology challenges the control of governments by empowering civil society organizations and movements by providing communication, advocacy, and networking tools.

Due to the decline in trust in political institutions, traditional forms of political participation have declined in popularity across many nations, particularly among younger demographics. Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for political mobilization and activism as the expansion of digital technology has allowed young people to be involved in politics (Al-Anani, 2019). According to Al-Sayed (2013), Twitter gained immense popularity as citizens used it to voice their opinions and concerns. As Zagidullin et al. (2021) explained, the rise of digital technology and social media transformed political engagement, offering alternative avenues for participation that may be more accessible and appealing to younger generations.

Social media has a favorable and considerable impact on political participation since it challenges traditional power structures, amplifies marginalized voices, and shapes the trajectory of political developments in the region. It has facilitated connections between activists, civil society organizations, and international supporters, allowing for the exchange of ideas, solidarity campaigns, and cross-border collaborations. Through online networks, individuals in the Middle East can engage with global audiences, receive solidarity from international allies, and draw attention to their struggles on the global stage. Social media platforms have transformed political discourse, providing public debate, discussion, and deliberation forums on various issues. Citizens in the Arab World can engage in online conversations about governance, democracy, human rights, and social justice, contributing to the democratization of public discourse and the diversification of voices in the public sphere.

Social media platforms provide avenues for information dissemination that governments find challenging to control, unlike traditional media outlets that serve governmental interests in the Arab World. Lynch (2011) notes the transformative impact of information delivery and the consequent shift in power dynamics from local to global media platforms.

The Arab Spring, as illuminated by Zeyneb and Bensouici (2016), marked the first popular uprising that overthrew established regimes. With their unwavering resilience, Middle Eastern people continued striving for a more democratic and inclusive society. Alshammari and Willoughby (2017) found that the uprisings demonstrated the power of mass and peaceful protests and the critical role of social media in navigating the protests and communicating with the global community. Tufekci and Wilson (2012) found that social media played a critical role in shaping

individual decisions to participate in protests, including logistical planning and assessing the likelihood of success. Shirky (2011) viewed social media positively as a platform for online activism, facilitating offline activism and civic engagement in countries like Tunisia and Egypt. The Arab Spring demonstrated how social media lowered the barriers to participation in protests, reducing mobilization costs and altering traditional editorial policies of mainstream media.

What was the real impact of social media on the events and the future political dynamics in the Middle East? Social media involvement in uprisings across the Arab World has been a significant and central aspect of shaping political discourse during the Arab Spring and the following years (Howard et al., 2019). Kassim (2012) suggests that platforms like Facebook and Twitter were particularly effective in enabling citizen journalism, allowing ordinary individuals to share news and information about the uprisings. Shirky (2011) contends that it has been instrumental in spreading ideas of freedom and democracy. At the same time, Duggan and Smith (2016) argue that social media reinforces existing opinions rather than changing them, Howard and Hussain (2011). The growth of social media usage during the Arab Spring led to a significant shift in the relationship between governments and societies in the Middle East (Ghannam, 2011). The extensive use of social media and its global reach has provided an understanding of the Middle East's daily life (Mourtada & Salem, 2012). Social media helped spread the revolution in the region during the Arab Spring (Byrman, 2021).

A prime conclusion from the events is the impact of technology on political movements in the digital age. This underlines that political stability cannot be achieved by military and security forces alone, and governments must address the legitimate needs and aspirations of the people.

## **DIGITAL MEDIA**

The Arab Spring marked a significant turning point in the use of social media for political activism, signaling a shift in the balance of power between governments and the public. Brown, Guskina, and Mitchell (2012) underscore the groundbreaking role of social media in disseminating political messages, garnering support, and raising awareness of people's causes. Online campaigns gained momentum, with social websites playing a pivotal role in supplying public information.

Social media facilitated the organization of large-scale protests and empowered activists by providing a platform to share uncensored and accurate information, as noted by Kassim (2012). The ability to coordinate and communicate through social networks helped alleviate the fear barrier among protestors, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose. The utilization of messaging apps like WhatsApp and Telegram, along with features like Facebook Live, further enhanced the effectiveness of social media in facilitating protests and disseminating real-time coverage. This digital revolution transformed the political landscape in the Arab World, challenging the traditional media's government-controlled narrative.

The impact of these social movements extended beyond the Arab Spring, fueling civic engagement in countries like Tunisia and Egypt, as highlighted by Howard (2018). The transformations spurred by social media reached policymaking circles at regional and global levels, shaping political agendas and discussions (Mourtada & Salem, 2012). However, governments responded to these challenges by adapting their strategies, as observed by Brand (2017). While initially caught off guard in 2011, governments in the Arab World increasingly utilized social media for their agendas

while also combating extremist ideologies propagated through these platforms. Despite initial success in catching governments off guard, subsequent protests in 2018 faced more excellent resistance due to governments' improved response strategies. Arab governments demonstrated a proactive approach, preempting escalations and thwarting significant social and political changes. The evolution of governments' policies towards social media reflects their growing awareness of its power and potential impact on global politics. Today, governments play a crucial role in navigating the digital landscape, advancing technology, and engaging with new policy frameworks involving digital technologies (Garrett, 2019).

Since then, the Middle East has experienced a substantial surge in the adoption of social media platforms. The Social Media Review of the Middle East (2023) illustrates this trend, indicating that its influence extends beyond regional borders, impacting interactions and perspectives globally, with the region boasting some of the highest social media penetration rates worldwide. Particularly noteworthy is the increasingly important role of social media in politics, as politicians and activists leverage these platforms to connect with the public and gain support for their agendas. As highlighted in the report, the Middle East has emerged as a significant market for social media platforms and businesses aiming to engage with Arab audiences, underscoring the region's growing importance in the digital landscape.

While investigating the contrasting outcomes of social revolutions in the Middle East, it is clear that the civil unrest in 2011, initiated and propelled by social media, swiftly evolved into widespread civil demonstrations across the Arab World. Originating in Tunisia, the upheaval rapidly spread via social media channels, inspiring citizens in Egypt and other Arab nations to rise, fundamentally altering the region's political landscape. The contrasting fate of the Yellow Vest movement in France in 2018 and 2019, which failed to reignite a social revolution in the Middle East, underscores the altered dynamics between governments and social movements since 2011. The research indicates that the success of the 2011 protests stemmed from social media catching Arab governments off guard, precipitating swift social and political pressure from the populace. Conversely, the failure of the 2018 uprising can be attributed to governments' adept response to the new wave of social movements, contrasting sharply with the influential role social movements played in 2011.

The Arab Spring was primarily driven by the mobilization of the masses, facilitated by technology and the influence of external forces. Arab states have actively suppressed the emergence of alternative leadership beyond the ruling regimes, yet technology empowered citizens to confront oppressive security forces, no longer relying on established leaders (Keiswetter, 2012). The transformative impact of social media on political movements and activism is a recurring theme. Social media played a crucial role in mobilizing mass protests, challenging traditional power structures, and amplifying voices of dissent. The events stemmed from mass dissatisfaction with respective regimes and sparked conflicts across the Middle East, mobilizing collective identities and informal networks. Hamada (2019) emphasizes the significant interaction between press freedom and political instability, noting that the Arab Spring did not enhance this relationship positively. The influence of social media on global politics is profound, challenging traditional media and politics worldwide and prompting a shift towards a more reactive stance from governments and media outlets. The internet's role in social revolutions became evident, signaling a change in power dynamics. This dynamic reshaped global politics, particularly in developing countries like North Africa and the Arab world. However, by 2018, with movements like the Yellow Vest protests in France, the balance of power had shifted back towards

governments. Arab governments demonstrated an ability to control social movements, signaling a shift in the social impact of the Internet. Governments now seek to leverage technology to enhance their competitive edge in the global arena.

To comprehend the divergent power dynamics between the two protest waves, analyzing the transformed role of governments in shaping social and political changes is imperative. Notably, contemporary governments refrain from attempting to block the Internet, a stark departure from their tactics during the protests earlier in the century. These uprisings underscored that while social media presents significant opportunities and challenges for social and political actors worldwide, the balance of power has shifted, and governments, the public, media, and international organizations recognize the potency and impact of social media in instigating and propelling civil demonstrations, thereby shaping public discourse and national or global policies.

## GLOBAL MEDIA

The Middle East region has consistently attracted significant attention from global media beyond domestic affairs to shape regional and global dynamics. Global media coverage shapes international perceptions of regional conflicts, crises, and diplomatic relations. The Palestine-Israel conflict has garnered extensive media attention, influencing public opinion and foreign policy decisions worldwide. Martin et al. further claim that countries in the Middle East invest significant efforts in utilizing mass media to shape and enhance their images among the U.S. public. They often launch negative media campaigns against each other within the U.S., aiming to undermine public support for their regional rivals. Nevertheless, they found that news and media consumption contributed minimally to the variance in diplomatic ratings, suggesting that efforts by a country to tarnish the public perception of its regional rival might ultimately backfire, as negative attitudes toward one country in the region may spill over to affect perceptions of others. The findings suggest a complex interplay between media influence, public perceptions, and diplomatic relations. They highlight the limitations of unilateral media campaigns aimed at shaping public opinion and emphasize the need for nuanced and strategic approaches in diplomatic communication and public diplomacy efforts.

Technology and media have become indispensable forces driving political change and shaping public discourse in the Middle East. While social media has empowered citizens to demand accountability and advocate for their rights, it has posed new challenges in governance, security, and international relations. Likewise, global media coverage has played a pivotal role in shaping international perceptions of the region, influencing foreign policy decisions and diplomatic ties.

Global media coverage plays a significant role in shaping developments in the Middle East by providing a platform for highlighting key issues and bringing international attention to regional conflicts, humanitarian crises, and political developments. This heightened visibility can pressure governments and international actors to respond to crises and emergencies and address underlying issues since media coverage influences how people worldwide perceive the Middle East. Media coverage has influenced foreign policy decisions and diplomatic relations as governments and international organizations have responded to media narratives and public opinion when formulating policies and interventions in the Middle East, particularly in response to humanitarian crises or security threats.

Global media coverage of the Middle East has far-reaching implications for public opinion, policymaking, and international relations. Examining how the

Palestine-Israel conflict is portrayed and covered globally demonstrates the influence on public opinion towards the conflict. The Palestine-Israel conflict is not just a regional issue but also has implications for broader international relations, and the policies of this country are crucial to understanding inter-Middle East politics. The influential policies of the USA and Saudi Arabia on the Palestine-Israel issue direct the policies of Western countries according to the American leadership and the Saudi impact on the Arab world, being the world's largest Muslim country.

The conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians represents a longstanding and complex issue that involves world powers like the USA, EU, and UK. A relevant issue in constant debate is the policies of these global powers towards the conflict. Batt et al. (2023) analyzed Saudi Arabia and the USA policies and found that these countries tend to support Israel, while many Muslim-majority countries support the Palestinians.

Qatar's strategic media use through the Al Jazeera network has reshaped the landscape of public diplomacy and international relations. Qatar sought to enhance its soft power and influence global agendas by leveraging media platforms to disseminate narratives and shape public perceptions. Drawing from Al-Jazeera's coverage of the Arab Spring, it is evident that Qatar pioneered a model of public diplomacy by leveraging Al-Jazeera as a hybrid entity – both a state-sponsored and privately operated network. Amaireh (2021) analyzed Al Jazeera's Reporting of the Israel-Palestine Crisis and found that the reporters at Al Jazeera exhibit their ideology through their choice of language, portraying either a positive or negative perspective towards the crisis, with Palestinians perceived as the 'in-group' and Israelis as the 'out-group.' He found that the news coverage framed Palestinians as the innocent victims of colonization, positioning them as 'us.' At the same time, Israelis were depicted negatively as victimizers, racists, and colonizers, emphasizing syntactic agency. A notable observation is Al Jazeera reporters' prioritization of the Palestinian narrative and expressing personal sentiments and attitudes towards the crisis. At the same time, Israeli perspectives were marginalized and derogatorily depicted in the news coverage. Khatib (2013) claims that it was highlighted during the Arab Spring. She maintains that Qatar has positioned itself as a political mediator and a provider of foreign aid, enhancing its international profile, but it needed long-term planning and coherence. Samuel-Azran (2013) explored Qatar's utilization of Al-Jazeera, which exemplifies a paradigm shift in public diplomacy tactics. He highlights the evolving landscape of global media and its impact on diplomatic relations, arguing that this strategic approach effectively transformed Al-Jazeera into a potent tool for public diplomacy, revealing a significant correlation between Al-Jazeera Arabic's portrayal and the network's influence in shaping public perceptions. Prakoso (2023) asserts that Al Jazeera has significantly influenced public opinion on politics and introduced new concepts through its news coverage, increasing awareness of Middle Eastern issues. He found that Al-Jazeera is one of the most reputable media outlets in the international arena and has a considerable role in raising awareness of Middle East issues worldwide. He explains that rapid and accessible information in the global media has been supported by information among countries that have changed the authorities' politics, and mass media in international relations has grown so fast recently by knowing that the media and politics are related to each other and sharing mutual benefits each other.

Despite its adaptability and assertiveness, Qatar's foreign policy approach raised concerns about its sustainability and effectiveness. Domestically, Qatar's centralized decision-making process regarding policy formulation may lead to growing



pressure for reform and potential instability. Externally, Qatar risks diluting its diplomatic efforts by engaging with a wide array of political partners, potentially undermining its credibility and facing skepticism about its motives. Khatib (2013) argues that the need for a coherent foreign strategy challenges Qatar's leadership role in the Middle East. It underscores the importance of balancing pragmatism with a long-term vision to navigate complex regional dynamics effectively. Qatar may need a strategic framework to guide its actions and maintain its influence and credibility on domestic and international fronts. Thus, there is a growing need for Qatar to develop a more cohesive and sustainable foreign policy approach to address evolving regional challenges and uphold its leadership aspirations in the Middle East.

Global media has significantly shaped perceptions and reactions to the Abraham Accords and relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia. Media coverage has influenced public opinion by disseminating information about these diplomatic developments and generated discussions about the implications of closer ties between Israel and Arab countries. Bakare (2024) explains that media coverage of the Abraham Accords served as a form of diplomatic signaling, conveying messages to domestic and international audiences about the parties' intentions and priorities. This led to the normalization of the relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia. The emergence of diplomatic initiatives like the Abraham Accords has been closely scrutinized by global media, reflecting shifting alliances and power dynamics in the Middle East. Salama (2021) examined the political dimensions of the visual coverage surrounding the Abraham Accords and the potential shifts in portraying the Arab-Israeli conflict following the agreement. He found that the visual framing analysis indicated that despite cultural and editorial differences among news outlets, most photographs presented distinctly positive and pro-normalization frames while downplaying negative frames. The findings suggest that news outlets served not simply as carriers of news but had a substantial influence on the news events.

## **DIGITAL DIPLOMACY**

Political activism has undergone a significant transformation with the emergence of digital diplomacy, marking a shift in how individuals, governments, and international actors engage in political discourse and activism in the Middle East, enabling direct engagement between citizens and governments through online platforms. Governments in the Middle East have increasingly utilized social media channels to communicate with their citizens, address grievances, and solicit feedback. This direct interaction has allowed citizens to express their concerns, advocate for change, and hold governments accountable in real time. As a result, political activism has become more dynamic and interactive, with digital platforms serving as virtual town halls where citizens can engage with policymakers directly.

Digital diplomacy has facilitated the formation of transnational advocacy networks, enabling activists to connect with like-minded individuals and organizations across borders. Social media platforms have become essential tools for building solidarity campaigns, coordinating advocacy efforts, and amplifying grassroots movements on a global scale. Activists can leverage digital platforms to share information, resources, and best practices, fostering collaboration and collective action across national boundaries. This transnational dimension of digital activism has empowered activists to mobilize support from international allies and draw attention to their causes on the global stage. It has provided a platform for promoting alternative narratives and counter-discourse in the Middle East. Activists and civil society

organizations can use social media to challenge official government narratives, disseminate independent news and information, and amplify marginalized voices often excluded from mainstream media outlets. Digital platforms have democratized the flow of information, allowing activists to bypass government censorship and media gatekeeping and reach audiences directly. This has facilitated the emergence of diverse perspectives and dissenting voices, enriching political discourse and fostering a more pluralistic public sphere in the region.

Digital diplomacy has enabled governments to project soft power and shape public perceptions through strategic communication (Hesmondhalgh, 2019). Governments in the Middle East have invested in building an online presence and engaging in digital public diplomacy campaigns to influence international opinion, promote their policies, and enhance their image on the global stage. Digital platforms are powerful tools for conducting public diplomacy initiatives, such as cultural exchanges, digital outreach programs, and online dialogues, to build bridges with foreign audiences and advance national interests through diplomacy.

Digital diplomacy has reshaped the landscape of political activism in the Middle East by facilitating direct engagement with governments, fostering transnational advocacy networks, promoting alternative narratives, and enabling strategic communication efforts. The rise of social media platforms has revolutionized communication dynamics within societies, reshaping the interaction between power structures and the general populace. This transformation has fostered the emergence of citizen journalism, a phenomenon characterized by ordinary individuals actively disseminating news and information. In the context of the Israeli attacks on Gaza, citizen journalism played a pivotal role, as these events were extensively documented and shared across various social media platforms. Alakkhouk and Gülnar (2023) found that the significance and relevance of citizen journalism during the Israeli attacks on Gaza allowed insights into its impact on news coverage and public discourse. Wolfsfeld (2017) explains that the advent of the digital age has led to significant changes in the media's role in military confrontations in the Middle East due to the spread of camera phones and the authorities' inability to keep secrets. On the other hand, he also argues that the advent of the digital age represents a tremendous boon for spreading hatred and intolerance.

New media has emerged as a revitalized communication landscape with the proliferation of various communication networks and platforms. Utilizing official interactive platforms, diplomatic organizations and bodies engage in communication activities to elevate the state's standing in society. The rapid advancement of internet technologies has given rise to digital diplomacy, where integrating internet-related technologies with traditional diplomatic practices reshapes the landscape of international relations. Digital diplomacy has been influenced by changes in administrations, resulting in fluctuations in perceptions and policy approaches. These efforts encompass various activities, including public diplomacy, strategic communication, and crisis response, conducted through multiple digital channels such as social media, online platforms, and digital networks.

Digital diplomacy revolutionized how diplomats interact, with platforms like Facebook offering unprecedented opportunities to engage with previously inaccessible segments of society. The new platform is an extension of public diplomacy efforts on the Internet using practices facilitated by interactive communication technologies (Mazumdar, 2021). By reassessing their digital diplomacy strategies and prioritizing dialogue over monologue, diplomatic missions can harness the full potential of social

media platforms to foster mutual understanding, build trust, and advance diplomatic objectives in the modern era of communication.

Digital diplomacy and Internet activities greatly assist in projecting a state's foreign policy positions to domestic and foreign audiences (Adesina, 2017). Recognizing the global reach and innovative potential of digital and social media, countries have integrated these platforms into their diplomatic efforts. The United States, in particular, has been at the forefront of leveraging the Internet to promote its national interests abroad, with the US State Department emerging as a leading user of digital diplomacy, and the European Union (EU) is committed to strategically leveraging social media in its diplomatic endeavors.

Traditionally perceived as a region fraught with conflict, the Middle East has witnessed a shift towards economic cooperation, seen as a transformative strategy and integral aspect of foreign policy to safeguard vital national interests. Central to this transformation is the economic significance of the Abraham Accords., which hold the potential to revolutionize and enhance the economies of the signatory states. Ali and Saeed (2023) argue that the Accords have opened up unprecedented regional trade and investment opportunities, particularly emphasizing the UAE and Israel. The Accords present an unparalleled opportunity for economic collaboration between the UAE and Israel, a prospect previously considered inconceivable. Digital diplomacy played a crucial role in shaping the impact of the Abraham Accords by facilitating strategic communication, public diplomacy campaigns, regional security cooperation, and economic partnerships between Israel and the Arab countries. The new means of global politics provided a platform for the signatory countries to communicate their objectives, rationale, and benefits to domestic and international audiences. Through social media channels, official government accounts, and diplomatic websites, the signatory countries engaged in strategic communication efforts to promote the Accords, highlight their significance for regional stability and prosperity and shape public perceptions. By leveraging digital platforms, these countries sought to enhance their image as regional peacemakers and proponents of peace and normalization and facilitate direct engagement between Israeli citizens and Arab countries, allowing them to exchange views, share experiences, and explore common interests, thereby laying the groundwork for deeper ties and mutual understanding.

Digital diplomacy promoted the security and stability of the Middle East by highlighting the strategic importance of the Abraham Accords in countering common threats and challenges facing the region. Through digital platforms, the signatory countries communicated their commitment to enhancing regional security cooperation, combating extremism, and promoting peace and stability. They could focus on building confidence-building measures, fostering dialogue on regional security issues, and encouraging collaboration in counterterrorism, intelligence-sharing, and military cooperation. The new political environment facilitated the exploration of economic opportunities and trade partnerships between Israel and the Arab countries following the signing of the Abraham Accords. Through digital platforms, government officials, business leaders, and entrepreneurs from the signatory countries engaged in virtual meetings, trade forums, and investment summits to discuss potential collaboration opportunities, identify strategic sectors for cooperation, and promote cross-border trade and investment.

The efforts facilitated through digital diplomacy aimed to leverage the Accords to stimulate economic growth, create jobs, and unlock the region's untapped potential through enhanced economic integration and cooperation. The political developments constructed through technology suggest that Saudi Arabia's actions were

driven by interests in maintaining its security stability, preserving the Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) unity, and upholding the status quo in the Middle East region. Military (2024) examined the efficacy of the Department of State's digital diplomacy communication endeavors in promoting national identity and found the significant importance of the official Twitter account of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, serving as the kingdom's official window on social media platforms. He explains that this platform provides subscribers with continuous updates on all published information, facilitating access to Saudi Arabia's stance on various domestic and international issues. Additionally, digital diplomacy efforts aim to portray a positive image of Saudi Arabia's values, policies, and activities by creating content that reflects its culture and policies to the global audience, led by critical objectives and strategies underlying digital diplomacy in the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs are Media and Persuasion Strategies, prioritized on the ministry's official website.

## CONCLUSION

The analysis offers insights into the evolving relationship between technology, politics, and media in the Middle East through a nuanced examination of these complex dynamics. It underscores the transformative potential of technology in shaping political movements, public opinion, and regional dynamics while highlighting the multifaceted challenges and risks associated with its use in the region. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of technology and media in shaping the political landscape of the Middle East and its implications for regional stability, security, and governance.

Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp have become crucial tools for political activism and mobilization in the Middle East. They played a pivotal role during events like the Arab Spring, enabling citizens to organize protests, disseminate information, and amplify dissenting voices. Technology, mainly social media, has challenged government control over information and communication channels in the Middle East. Despite efforts by authoritarian regimes to suppress dissent through censorship and surveillance, citizens use technology to bypass restrictions and access uncensored information, fostering a more open public sphere. Technology has empowered civil society organizations and grassroots movements in the Middle East by providing communication, advocacy, and networking tools. Digital technologies have democratized political participation, allowing citizens to challenge traditional power structures and hold governments accountable.

The impact of technology on political landscapes in the Middle East has been profound, empowering citizens, challenging authoritarian regimes, and reshaping governance structures. Digital technologies have democratized political participation and facilitated the emergence of alternative leadership beyond established regimes. Global media coverage plays a significant role in shaping developments in the Middle East by highlighting key issues and bringing international attention to regional conflicts and political developments. Media narratives influence how people perceive the Middle East worldwide and can pressure governments and international actors to respond to crises. As explained in this research, the global implications of political activism, coupled with extensive use of technology, influenced public opinion and diplomatic relations between countries in the Middle East, serving as a form of diplomatic signaling.

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