Cyberactivism in the Arab Spring: Potentials, Limitations, and Future Prospects

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Social media played a crucial role in the instigation and orchestration of the sweeping wave of political change that has been sweeping the Arab world since 2011, which came to be known as the "Arab Awakening" or the "Arab Spring." In this presentation, Dr. Sahar Khamis revisits the role played by social media in aiding political transformation, a phenomenon commonly referred to as "cyberactivism," five years after the eruption of the Arab Spring. She argues that social media venues initially played a vital role in paving the road for socio-political transformation in the Arab world, through providing important platforms for the exchange of ideas and the formulation of collective public opinion, as well as the documentation of significant events. Thus, encouraging civic engagement and public participation, on one hand, while providing platforms for citizen journalism, on the other hand. However, she also analyzes the complex, multiple factors which limited the effectiveness of social media's contributions to the socio-political scene in the Arab world today, as witnessed through the unfolding developments in this region in recent years. Finally, she predicts the future prospects for this phenomenon of "cyberactivism" and its potential implications and ramifications, amid all the ongoing changes and challenges in this region."