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Title

A decade after the Arab Spring - Comparing narratives around democracy and freedom in 2011 and 2021 through discourse analysis of English language news media and Twitter.

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Abstract

This thesis argues that the English language was a useful tool for some of the participants and many of the observers of the Arab Spring. It demonstrates that while many of the narratives on both traditional and social media used or were shared by the English language, there is no correlation with the intent of the protestors, despite some of them reflecting western liberal democratic values. Furthermore, this research project argues that even those based in the MENA region used the English language to merely amplify their messaging while not necessarily seeking to mirror western liberal democracy in home countries. This thesis is a discourse analysis study of narratives surrounding democracy and freedom in English language coverage of the Arab Spring for the time periods January 1st, 2011, to March 31st, 2011, and January 1st, 2021, to March 31st , 2021. The study compares the mediums of news websites and Twitter to analyse how political language changes in different contexts in relation to three case-study countries- Libya, Egypt, and Lebanon. The newspapers chosen for this study are The Guardian, The New York Times, Al Jazeera English, and Al Arabiya. To conduct its analysis, this thesis has created a unique data corpus from the four news websites and Twitter using corpus linguistics as the methodological approach. It undertakes rigorous quantitative analysis of the data corpus resulting in the selection of materials for its qualitative analysis through political discourse analysis and thematic analysis. Building on existing research of the Arab Spring from both linguistics and political science, this thesis provides original interdisciplinary research, filling gaps in scholarship.

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List of abbreviations used

AA – Al Arabiya
AJE – Al Jazeera English
EUI – Economist Intelligence Unit
MENA – Middle East and North Africa
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NYT – The New York Times
UK- United Kingdom
USA- United States of America

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This thesis is dedicated to Elizabeth Mashova.

1. Introduction, historical context, case studies, defining key concepts and research questions

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is a study of the English language and the linguistic representations of the events surrounding the Arab Spring. It produces and uses original quantitative and qualitative data, gathered from two unique data corpuses. These were created from news media websites and the social media network Twitter for the periods of January 1st to March 31st 2011 and January 1st to March 31st 2021. It is first a study of the relationship between language and politics in different time periods, second of how language use changes in different mediums, and finally how language is used to describe individual and collective identities. All three of these factors impact the usage of the concepts 'democracy' and 'freedom' which will be shown through an analysis that challenges existing narratives on the Arab Spring.

This thesis will argue that the English language was a useful tool for some of the participants in and many of the observers of the Arab Spring. It will show that while many of the narratives on both traditional and social media were shaped by the English language and reflected western liberal democratic values, there is no correlation with the intent of the protestors. Even those Arab Spring participants who used the English language to amplify their messaging, did not necessarily seek to mirror western liberal democracy in their countries. Ultimately, English language media narratives related to freedom and democracy were shaped and dominated by forces outside the region where the Arab Spring occurred. Consequently, this research project challenges arguments that social media greatly amplified the concerns of protestors in the revolutions and, therefore, effected change (Howard and Hussein 2013, Cottle 2011). The thesis will also contradict assertions that all regions are on a path to western-style liberal democracy via the 'waves of democratisation' process (Huntington 1996).

By examining the role of language in political revolution, this work will analyse cultural attitudes towards democracy and freedom when channelled through the lens of the dominant global language, English. Additionally, the thesis will consider the significance of the USA, an Anglophone country, as the global hegemonic power and the significant global reach of Anglophone media, including in the Arab World, pointing at the power of the English language.

This thesis will approach the use of English language in discourses on the Arab Spring from two angles of analysis. The first dimension is chronological, looking at the differences in language used in discourses around democracy and freedom regarding the Arab Spring in 2011 and 2021. The second dimension is to look at what significance the medium in which language

is used has for the concepts surrounding democracy and freedom by analysing both news media and Twitter. It will do so by analysing English language articles and tweets about three different countries, Egypt, Libya, and Lebanon in relation to the Arab Spring as it occurred in 2011 and ten years later in 2021, from the data corpus created specifically for this study.

In Chapter One this thesis will examine key concepts, definitions and provide an overview of the historical and political context of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and present its research questions. In Chapter Two the project will go on to assess literature that has engaged in existing academic debates which this thesis will contribute to. In Chapter Three it will set out the research questions, how the data corpus will be constructed in terms of the search methods and the source material and how theoretical approaches from linguistics, will be used for both the quantitative and qualitative analysis. In Chapter Four it will move on to the presentation and discussion of the quantitative findings. In Chapter Five it will present and discuss the qualitative findings using hypotheses developed in Chapter Four to find nuance amongst existing scholarly debates outlined in the literature review. Finally, Chapter Six will draw conclusions to show that the findings support the arguments made in this thesis and make suggestions for future research.

1.2 Language, politics, and their relationship

As the title images for this thesis shows, it was not uncommon for protestors and participants in the Arab Spring to use the English language to draw attention to their cause. For example, with a clear call to action such as ‘people demand removal of the regime’ using recognisable branding such as the Facebook logo and Twitter hashtags or other messages and slogans in both physical and digital spaces. This section will explore and define the key concepts of language and politics, the relationship between the two and its significance for this thesis in terms of its application to the analysis of different types of texts. Whilst the following paragraphs will provide definitions of language and politics to establish a framework of reference for the analysis that will follow later in the paper, they will also elaborate on the argument this thesis will adopt, having briefly mentioned it in the introductory section above.

Starting with definitions of key concepts and, firstly, the notion of language, the work will accept the following definition proposed by the linguists Lindsay Ferrara and Gabrielle Hodge: ‘language—and not only language use—can be viewed as intentionally communicative action involving the specific range of semiotic resources available in situated human interactions’ (Ferrara and Hodge 2018: 1). This is because this thesis seeks to examine the

variety of uses of the English language in the Arab Spring as 'intentionally communicative' (Ferrara and Hodge 2018: 1) within different contexts and through a range of medium and resources. Furthermore, this research project is not only examining the use of the English language itself but also the importance of the language itself in a politicised, globalised world, reflecting Ferarra and Hodge's definition. When speaking about globalisation, though it is important to consider that although the use of the English language was used by participants in the Arab Spring, in both digital or political spaces, it does not mean that they sought political outcomes that mirror Anglophone concepts of democracy and freedom, as argued by the journalist John Bradley:

> 'Different peoples of different cultures and religions who speak different languages, do not, by default, instinctively translate their wish to live with dignity into a love of the British parliamentary system or American individualism. To suggest otherwise, as many armchair commentators do, is crude and simplistic' (Bradley, 2013: 8).

Whilst Bradley's claims broadly align with the argument adopted by this thesis and the issues raised by his statement are important when considering the research questions in this work, it is important to take a more nuanced view rather than empirically state that they do not want any of the facets of British/American political governance. It is, of course, plausible to consider that some participants in protests during the Arab Spring were using English, because their motives were indeed related to Anglophone conceptions and understandings of democracy. Equally, however, it is just as important to note that it was only a minority, albeit a significant and vocal one, that used the English language to voice their opinions and even amongst those who did, it does not necessarily mean that they were referencing the political outcomes adopted by Anglophone, democratic countries. What this thesis does definitively agree with Bradley on is in recognising the plurality of 'different languages, cultures, and religions' of the Arab Spring that a monolingual and singular political system can neatly be mapped onto. This thesis acknowledges a variety of interpretations of the relationship between the political and linguistic in traditional and social media representations of the Arab Spring and it will equally treat all such assessments with a degree of caution.

Turning to the definition of 'politics' and what makes something 'political', the thesis will adopt Jamie Ranger's conception that it is 'something that emerges from within the social, rather being a separate sphere of activity altogether' (Ranger 2019). In the context of the Arab Spring and for the purpose of this thesis, this definition applies to the citizen-led protests and

the traditional and social media representations of these political activities. Nevertheless, regarding the relationship between politics and language, it is important to note the development and shaping of both concepts have been strongly dependent on one another. This is supported by the linguist John E. Joseph's sentiment that 'language has a political dimension' (Joseph 2006: 2) which is shared throughout a variety of academic fields. Joseph's view resonates with the interdisciplinary nature of this thesis and scholarly approaches taken to the study of linguistics related to political events, making it highly relevant to the study of the Arab Spring. The political language this thesis will focus on will not be sourced, in terms of its data collection, from academic writing on the Arab Spring, but from journalists and ordinary citizens reporting their lived experiences of the events.

The linguist Paul Chilton's study of politics and language as interlinked through the understanding of all human actions as political and mediated through linguistics (Chilton 2004: 1-29) can be closely linked to the aims of this thesis in assessing the nuances of both news media and social media representations of the Arab Spring. Whilst this thesis will focus on linguistic expressions of the political, it will also note that political actions can go beyond language, expanding on Chilton's claim and will discuss relevant events that occurred because of such actions. Chilton's distinction of discourses in relation to language will be central to this project: 'it is important to distinguish the human capacity for language, from a particular language and from *use* of language which we will call discourse' (Chilton 2004: 16). This thesis will make a further distinction between two mirroring concepts: discourses on democracy and the democratic discourse. The former will illustrate this research paper's focus on the ways in which western media has represented the Arab Spring as a struggle to achieve democracy. It will enable it to look at its predominant use of the framework of Western liberal values and juxtapose it with the latter, the actual democratic discourse in terms of social media being a 'democratic' space where anyone can join the discussion.

Finally, this thesis's justification for its assessment of English language sources is two-fold. First, given the global scope of social media and the fact that the English is the most popular language online (Statista 2020), this project will use a multitude of sources on the Arab Spring such as academic books, research papers, political and journalistic commentary, and blogs in addition to the data corpus specifically created for this project. Second, it will attempt to challenge and reframe arguments of whether English is 'the language of democracy' and the idea that the link between language and politics is 'embedded in the tradition of western political thought' (Chilton 2004: 4). This thesis will, therefore, examine the use of the English language in the Arab Spring as not intrinsically linked to democracy by virtue of the fact that

democracies such as the US and the UK are Anglophone. This is in line with the main argument that despite the use of the English language regarding political outcomes in the Arab Spring, the relationship between the aims of the protestors and Western liberal democratic values is not straightforward. Ferit Güven notes the 'self-congratulatory tone of the democratic discourse concerning the Arab Spring' (Güven 2015: 2) which, as this thesis argues, is unsurprising due to the Western-centric domination of both intellectual and popular discourses on democracy and freedom.

This section has demonstrated the importance the interconnected relationship between language and politics and shown that the topic of the Arab Spring provides rich potential for new, interdisciplinary research in the form of this thesis. It has given important definitions of the main concepts under study whilst laying out the main argument this thesis employs in its assessment of the use of the English language in representations of the Arab Spring. Finally, it has set out how this research is also novel in that it positions itself intellectually from a postcolonial perspective that will stand outside of traditional western perspectives.

1.3 Historical context, case studies and defining key concepts

This section will set out to explore the historical context of the Arab Spring, the choice of case studies and their relevance to studying the Arab Spring. It will also look at key concepts related to the analysis which will be employed regarding the case study countries in following chapters.

1.3.1 The context of the Arab Spring

There is a well-established narrative within western discourse on the Arab Spring as having begun in Tunisia with Mohamed Bouazizi, an impoverished vegetable seller, setting himself on fire on January 4th, 2011 (Lynch 2013: 70). Bouazizi did so in protest to continued harassment from municipal officials which, in turn, drew national and international attention to endemic corruption and social injustice in his country, Tunisia. This act was seen as the 'spark' which lit a protest movement, particularly amongst younger people, demanding greater freedom across countries in the MENA region (Howard and Hussain 2013: 18).

As a result of this, the events in the following months of 2011 led to the deposition of presidents Ben Ali of Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt in relatively quick succession, amongst other revolutions. These events came to be collectively known as the 'Arab Spring' and this thesis will use this term throughout. However, given that this research project is an

analysis of discourse as language use as foregrounded in Chilton, it is important to note that the term 'Arab Spring' itself arguably has colonial associations. This goes as far as the very fact that a western academic, Marc Lynch has claimed that he coined the term 'Arab Spring' in January 2011 (Lynch 2013: 9). Güven argues that using the collocating the capitalised 'Spring' with 'Arab' intrinsically links it to events across Europe in 1848 and Prague in 1968, which then 'attributes a European teleology to Arab politics', (Güven 2015: 1).

Lynch does, however, make a distinction between the 'Arab Spring' and the 'Arab Uprising' (Lynch 2013: 24). Regarding the former, he defines it as the 'revolutionary moment' which took place between December 2010 and March 2011 whilst defining the latter as a 'longer term structural change' which preceded and followed this period (Lynch 2013: 24) and is arguably still in process, as will be explored throughout this thesis. With protests against governments in the MENA recurring throughout the 2010s and into the 2020s academics such as Ianchovichina and Devaraja use the terms interchangeably. In fact, they have argued that more 'Arab Springs' will happen 'for as long as Arab Governments are not addressing the underlying cause of the Arab Spring, namely a broken social contract' (Ianchovichina and Devaraja 2020). This justifies the chronological dimension of source analysis employed by this thesis, examining discourses on these events at the time they happened in 2011 and when they were revisited ten years on in 2021.

1.3.2 Case studies

Although this thesis has and will continue to refer to the Arab Spring as broadly related and interconnected set of events and political phenomena, it is equally important to acknowledge and distinguish the nuances which exist within individual countries in the MENA region. This project will therefore focus on the complexities of the Arab Spring as seen in the three case study countries- Egypt, Libya, and Lebanon and the rationale for this choice is set out below. This is useful as it will help to situate the analysis in the broader historical, political, and cultural context of the Arab Spring in the MENA region, whilst enabling for a closer look at specificities of the revolutions in each of these three countries and their implications for linguistic and political discourse. This thesis accepts Lynch's assertion that one 'must be attentive to internal debates and contestations' due to 'extremely significant variations in national political cultures, political histories, ethnic and sectarian distributions, and orientations towards key issues' (Lynch 2013: 70). This research project has, therefore, chosen a range of

different political context and situations so that research can be corroborated in breadth as well as depth.

This thesis' rationale for choosing to focus on Egypt and Libya is due to the contrast between the dynamics of the revolutions in the two countries. The fact that Egypt, whilst having some episodes of violence had a relatively peaceful transition of power, with the army refusing to back the then president, Hosni Mubarak as strongly differentiated from the factional civil war and unrest which erupted in Libya at the time, offering a fascinating lens of analysis of similar phenomena in contrasting contexts. This, perhaps, explains why the case of Tunisia will not be included as one of the studies, despite being historically and politically important in the MENA region. Tunisia is not only seen as the only success story of the Arab Spring in terms of its transition to democracy (Gasiorowski and Yom 2017: 19) but this very interpretation of the events in the country has ensured that Tunisia has also received a significant amount of academic attention already. Furthermore, Tunisia, similarly to Egypt and unlike Libya, did not descent in a full-scale civil conflict and will, therefore, not be included in this study in order to diversify the analysis. The decision to focus on Lebanon is due to it receiving less attention in both academic and journalistic discourse in the context of the Arab Spring. To give further insight into this rationale, unlike Libya and Egypt's major political outcomes in terms of total regime change following the events of the Arab Spring, there were only minor political outcomes in Lebanon (Howard and Hussain 2013: 6).

Furthermore, since this thesis is concerned with definitions of democracy, in terms of applying definitions of levels of democracies to individual counties, both Egypt and Libya were classified as having 'authoritarian' status by The Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU) Democracy Index in 2011, whereas Lebanon was classified as a 'hybrid regime' which means it is closer to a democracy than the other two (by the EIU's criteria). Another important distinction is that unlike Lebanon and Egypt, Libya experienced outside intervention which played a major role in its revolution, particularly through NATO's assistance to the rebel groups which overthrew Muammar Gaddafi. The figures of Gaddafi in Libya and Mubarak in Egypt presented narratives centred around personality cults well-known to western audiences (the former, in particular) and so the downfall of these two individuals may be a reason for their greater media coverage. By contrast, Lebanon is a less authoritarian state and its president Michel Suleiman remained in power, with his presidency remaining relatively unaffected by the protests and continuing after 2011. Such contextual details regarding the three case study countries are crucial in providing a nuanced overview and understanding of the Arab Spring. This is also mirrored in the comparison between the social media output in the three countries,

with Libya and Egypt having largest quantities of tweets contrasted by considerably smaller amounts regarding Lebanon, which will be discussed in more detail in the Quantitative Analysis chapter of this study (Chapter Four). Therefore, this thesis has chosen case studies which, aside from being part of the broader discourse on the Arab Spring, differ in other ways, so that the research findings cannot be explained in terms of individual contexts alone.

1.3.3 Key concepts: defining democracy

With democracy being one of the central concerns to this thesis, it is critical to explain in detail what is meant by the term 'democracy'. With its origins rooted in Ancient Greek, literally meaning 'power of the people', the Oxford Learner's Dictionary further elaborates on his defining 'democracy' as 'a system of government in which the people of a country can vote to elect their representatives' (Oxford Learner's Dictionary 2022). Whilst these are so-called 'minimalist' definitions of democracy, giving the basic criteria (Frantz et al 2019: 21) there has been much debate, both in academia and beyond, about the true meaning of the term. This thesis will adopt Dahl's definition of democracy, also termed as his seven principles for a polyarchy, distinguishing between democracy in practice and democracy as an ideal. According to Dahl, a democracy should be manifested through:

1. Control over government decisions vested in elected officials
2. Frequent and fairly conducted elections
3. Practically all adults have the right to vote in the election of officials
4. Practically all adults have the right to run for office
5. Freedom of expression
6. Freedom of information
7. Freedom of association (42-3)[1]

(Frantz et al 2019)

Whilst there have been contestations of the definition and terminology used by Dahl, including the assertion that there should be 'procedural and substantive' criteria, such as the

[1] A full definition is included in Annex A.

rule of law and equality (Frantz et al 2019: 21) respectively, this thesis will accept Dahl's framework in to provide a singular definition which the analysis will follow. This will also mitigate arguments such as Chilton's whose assertion that concepts of democracy and western political thought are inextricably linked (Chilton 2004: 4), allowing for consideration of different types of democracies or the desire for them beyond a western liberal lens. Whilst this may explain why it is difficult, if not problematic, for Western commentators to think outside this paradigm when reporting on events in the Global South, including the Arab Spring, it does not explain protestors' use of the English language and nor does it provide basis for understanding the term 'democracy' as they appeal to it. The use of words such as democracy and freedom, therefore, are highly contextual, suggesting that users across the world may mean different things, especially given the politically charged nature of such terms. Nevertheless, whilst trying to dig deeper and beyond western conceptions of democracy the English language, and western media make it particularly difficult to do so.

Closely related to the concept of democracy is the term 'democratic transitions'. Whilst there are historical instances of non-democratic regimes collapsing overnight, like the Carnation revolution in Portugal in 1974, this does not mean that they are immediately replaced by democratic regimes or that the process of democratisation is completed then. Given the complex set of conditions, for example the ones outlined by Dahl, the process of democratic transition can take years, even decades, as can be observed in countries throughout Eastern Europe, following the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Likewise, democratic transitions are not linear teleological processes and can experience setbacks or be reversed, which has been observed through the phenomena of 'democratic backsliding' (Bermeo 2016). This thesis will acknowledge the complicated nature of democratic transitions and agreed with Ibrahim Elbadawi and Samir Makdisi's assertion that there is no one model of democratic transitions, but 'varied, if not contrasting hypotheses' (Elbadawi and Makdisi 2016: 22). Having highlighted the ambiguity of the term 'democratic transitions', a more practical solution for the purposes of this thesis is offered by the EIU. As referenced previously in relation to assessments of Egypt, Libya, and Lebanon, the EIU uses four distinct categories to assess the democratic state of countries across the world- 'authoritarian regime', 'hybrid regime', 'flawed democracy' and 'full democracy'. Regarding what 'democratic transitions' means, the EIU's 'hybrid regime' and 'flawed democracy' define it most appropriately (Economist Intelligence Unit 2021).

1.4 Research questions

Following the contextualisation of this research with the background information, provided in this introduction and the choice of case studies, it is important to turn to the research questions. This thesis's research compares similarities and differences in linguistic representations of 'democracy' and 'freedom' in the context of the Arab Spring in three ways:

1. How English language discourses on the Arab Spring at the time of which it occurred in 2011 compare with discourses from a historical perspective in 2021 on news media websites.
2. How English language discourses on the Arab Spring at the time of which it occurred in 2011 compare with discourses from a historical perspective in 2021 on Twitter.
3. How English language discourses on the Arab Spring in these two mediums compare against each other.

The following research questions, therefore, emerge:

1. How are narratives about democracy and freedom on the Arab Spring challenged by using discourse analysis to compare English language news media coverage in 2011 and 2021 from news websites?

2. How are narratives about democracy and freedom on the Arab Spring challenged by using discourse analysis to compare English language Tweets in 2011 and 2021?

2. Literature review

Studies into democratisation, the MENA region and linguistic analyses of traditional, digital, and social media are not a new phenomenon and although this thesis is making an original contribution in terms of its comparative approach, it does not exist in a vacuum. This section will, therefore, outline existing multidisciplinary literature on the topic and help place this thesis's contribution to current and future scholarship.

Whilst there have been studies into the democratisation and democratic transitions which have taken and are taking place in the Arab World, those have mostly been approached from a political science perspective. However there has also been increasing sociological interest in the use of social media and its relationship with both traditional media, society, and political movements. This thesis presents novel research into the Arab Spring, democratisation, linguistics and a comparison of English language news media and Twitter to fill these gaps in academia and provide a unique interdisciplinary perspective. It will answer Tine Usted Figenschou's call for 'for humble, empirically grounded and methodologically sound analysis in the writings about the Arab uprisings' (Usted Figenschou 2013: 22).

In linguistics, recent research has included Ahmad S Haider's PhD thesis 'A Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis of the Arab Uprisings', providing a comprehensive assessment of the Libyan case during the Arab Spring (Haider 2016). Haider's focus is on newspaper data in Arabic and English and using different types of corpus linguistics as well as thematic categorisation. Similarly, Stephanie Ullman's book, 'Discourses of the Arab Revolutions in Media and Politics takes an 'innovative approach to the interpretation and evaluation of metaphors' (Ullmann 2022: 6) in media on the Arab Spring. Both studies provide a useful theoretical foundation for this thesis within discourse analysis in terms of both forming a data corpus and the use of particular tools for conducting discourse analysis on texts about political subjects (see Chapter Three).

Regarding existing research on democratisation and democratic transitions in the MENA region, including studies on the Arab Spring, there have been a number of different approaches. A history-led approach, for example, has been taken by scholars such as Samuel Huntington, referring to processes of democratisation in terms of waves whereby multiple countries would periodically make the transition to a form of democratic governance. Huntington argues for three waves of democratisation with the last one taking place in Southern and Eastern Europe at the end of the twentieth century (Huntington 1991: 13). Previous waves included the second one after World War II and the first wave in the 1820s, which 'widened

the suffrage to a large proportion of males in the USA' and helped create democracies in the West (Huntington 1991: 13). Whilst Huntington's arguments make sense with the benefit of hindsight, they do not account for the political, cultural, and geographical intricacies of to-be democracies. They also ignore the start and end points of individual democratic processes, though it provides a compact overview of what looks like a teleological process towards democracy, or *The End of History* (Fukoyama 1989). Nevertheless, similar arguments with regards to the Arab Spring have been made more recently by Elbadawi and Makdisi. They have claimed that 'the Arab world missed out on the recent democratic wave that has swept the developing world since the mid-1970s' and that 'for forty-five years it was ruled by extremely autocratic regimes' (Elbadawi and Makdisi 2016: 22). Although this statement is historically relevant with regards to the MENA region, the phrase 'missed out' assumes that democracy, or democracies similar to those in the rest of the developed and developing world, is the natural and progressive end. This suggests that it appears impossible to separate perspectives on democratisation across the world from Western ideology on democracy.

Other arguments with regards to the democratisation of the MENA region tend to be more measured and include Philip N. Howard and Muzammil M. Hussain's assertion that 'it may be premature to call these events a wave of democratisation' (Howard and Hussain: 2013 26). On the one hand, this argument contradicts generalisations about democratisation, but on the other, they refer to 'popular protests for democracy in the Middle East and North Africa', indicating their analysis of the motivations of the participants. Nevertheless, Howard and Hussain's argument is built upon Elbadawi and Makdisi's reasoning that 'political outcomes are uncertain and sustainable institutions take years, if not decades to build (Elbadawi and Makdisi, 2016: 22). Although these are empirically backed claims and will be acknowledged by this thesis, Howard and Hussain appear to conceive the process of democratisation as a linear, teleological one, rather than one which is fraught with challenges, reversals and, often failures. This following chapters will reflect the nuance of the democratisation process within the complexities of the MENA region.

Equally, there has been significant scholarly debates on the aims of protestors and other participants in the Arab Spring. Bradley, for example, suggests that the main concern of protestors in the MENA region was not freedom, but jobs, and that 'a longing for democracy has little resonance in Tunisia or Egypt' (Bradley 2013: 8). This is linked to Elbadawi and Makdisi's assertion that 'democracy is secreted out of dictatorship by economic development' (Elbadawi and Makdisi 2016: 15). Whilst Bradley adopts a rather singular interpretation of the wishes of people in the MENA region when concerning democracy in the form it takes in the

west, it would be too simplistic to generalise this for each country experiencing upheavals in the early 2010s. Data from Pew Research suggests that there was a majority preference for democracy at the time of the Arab Spring in 2011 (71%) although the figure had dropped to 59% by 2014 (Pew Research Centre 2014). A different perspective, taking Bradley's focus away from jobs is Aylin Ünver Noi's assertion that protestors in the MENA region simply demanded 'a better life' as 'they believed that the existing governments and regimes were unable to give them what they deserved' (Noi 2013). Conversely, scholars such as Güven have put forward different arguments, allowing for the possibility of the Arab Spring protestors to have demanded democracy in terms of being able to choose their own form of governance

This leads to the controversial but important academic debate about the role of religion and politics and its compatibility with democratic governance. Güven has suggested that 'if democracy is fundamentally to be the expression of the will of people, it is possible that people will choose democracy to be replaced by another rule of governing'. He points to the electoral success of Islamist governments as one such form (Güven 2015: 1). The problem for the west, however, as Professor Tariq Ramadan argues, is the place of religion in politics. In other words, the west sees democracy and Islam as being completely incompatible: 'They (Muslims) want freedom as the west wants freedom. They want dignity as the west wants dignity. They want democratisation as the west is promoting democratising' and that 'to be accepted in the west, we have to remove Islam from it (politics)' (Ramadan 2011). This is despite the fact that according to Pew Research 'by wide margins, Muslims surveyed in the spring of 2010 believed that Islam's influence in politics was positive rather than negative' (Auxier 2011). This offers a more plausible explanation of the possibilities of MENA-shaped types of democracy or other forms of governance, not limiting it to Western-led ideologies and the quantitative and qualitative findings presented in following chapters will support that conclusion.

Within these wider debates on democracy and democratisation in the Arab Spring, there has been increasing interest in the role of digital and social media in the events of the early 2010s. Questions about whether the revolutions in the MENA region would have taken place without digital media, therefore, arise. Scholars such as Mark Lynch are adamant that 'the transformations that led to the Arab uprising started with new information and communication technologies, including satellite television, the Internet, and cheap mobile phones' (Lynch 2013: 10). Similarly, Howard and Hussain have also proposed that digital media was the main driver of what they have termed to be the fourth wave of democracy. They point out that 'countries that do not have a civil society equipped with digital scaffolding are much less likely to experience popular movements for democracy than are countries with such an infrastructure'

(Howard and Hussain 2013: 13). Such arguments, however, not only place significance on a single factor in what were complex processes in a variety of different countries but are also self-contradictory. Arguing that democratisation takes place in waves suggests that it is a periodic occurrence which happens naturally and is not driven by other factors, which leaves the strong focus on digital media unexplained. Some less conclusive arguments on this side of the debate include Simon Cottle and Noi's analyses. The former points out the crucial role of social media in spreading Western ideas of democracy to young people in the Arab world and influencing the events of the Arab Spring (Cottle 2011). The latter makes a more general argument about the significance of technological developments in wider political awareness across the world (Noi 2013),

This thesis will take Noi's comparatively cautious perspective about the wider changes within and role of digital and social media and technology, more widely. Equally, many scholars have argued that the role of new media in the Arab Spring has been significantly overstated (Aday 2013; Khondker, 2011). Aday even goes as far as to argue that 'many protestors in Egypt bristle at the suggestion that their revolution was a 'Twitter revolution' and instead emphasise their organisation on the ground and physical presence on the streets' (Aday 2013). Yet, when it comes to traditional media, academics have suggested that initial research has shown that media networks, such as Al Jazeera 'were central to conveying protesters' grievances to a global audience'. (Cottle 2011; Khondker 2011; Rinke and Röder, 2011; Russell 2011). Along similar lines, Tine Usted Figenschou has suggested that Al Jazeera was 'the channel of choice to understand the massive protests across the Arab world 2011' ((Usted Figenschou 2013) and Lynch goes even further to claim that it 'transformed political discourse' (Lynch 2013). Due to the fact Al Jazeera occupies a unique position in syndicating its content between Arabic and English, it will be central to this thesis and enable insight into discourse which span two very different positions from within and beyond the Middle East.

3. Methodology and theory

3.1 Introduction and delimiting the study

This study is time limited to data sources from two three-month periods: January 1st, 2011, to March 31st, 2011, and January 1st, 2021, to March 31st 2021. It is also geographically limited to Egypt, Libya, and Lebanon, and the reasons for this are outlined in the case studies in Chapter One. To briefly restate, this is to compare countries that experienced both major and minor political changes as a result of the events of the Arab Spring. The three countries also had differing levels of democratic government prior to 2011, providing different political and cultural contexts to analyse the Arab Spring. It is limited to data consisting of articles from four newspaper websites as well as four Twitter searches from the same time period, all of which are listed in Table 1. The reasons for this are to capture the two dimensions of analysis as mentioned in the introduction. First, the chronological dimension to compare how language is used to describe concepts related to freedom and democracy as well as continuity and change over time. Second, how language used to describe concepts related to freedom and democracy is used differently in different mediums, in this case, on news websites and Twitter.

3.2 Quantitative study

3.2.1 Theoretical approach - corpus linguistics

Corpus linguistics will be used as the research method in this thesis, given its usefulness in bridging a quantitative and qualitative study whilst encompassing both a theoretical and methodological approach. As Elena Tognini-Bonelli writes in her book *Corpus Linguistics at Work*, 'many linguists working with a corpus argue that corpus linguistic goes well beyond a purely methodological approach' (Tognini-Bonelli 2011: 1). She quotes the eminent linguist Michael Halliday: 'corpus linguistics reunites the activities of data gathering and theorising and argues that this is leading to a qualitative change in our understanding of language' (Tognini-Bonelli 2011: 1). Given this thesis's aim to analyse the use of political language and the meaning of specific words, such as 'democracy' and 'freedom' and language related to them, corpus linguistics is central to this project. Further, with the meaning of specific words changing in the context of the Arab Spring and the MENA region, corpus linguistics is useful in tracking such changes in terms of both medium and chronology.

As Tognini-Bonelli writes, 'the aim of corpus linguistics can be seen as the analysis and the description of language use as realised in text" (Tognini-Bonelli 2011: 2). To explain

this further, Tognini-Bonelli takes an 'empirical approach' to data enquiry, that 'language facts lead to the formulation of a hypothesis to account for these facts' (Tognini-Bonelli 2011: 2). This approach is crucial to this thesis as the following chapters will use quantitative data to establish such 'language facts' (Tognini-Bonelli 2011: 2). This will be done by counting the number of times certain words related to the academic debate on the Arab Spring have been mentioned in the data corpus, on which this section will elaborate further.

3.2.2 The news website corpus

Table 1: The news website text corpus search methodology

Source	Based in	Dates which data is extracted from	Search Terms
The Guardian https://www.theguardian.com/international	UK	January 1st 2011 to March 31st 2011 January 1st 2021 to March 31st 2021	"Libya" + "Democracy" + "Freedom" "Egypt"| + 'Democracy' + "Freedom" "Lebanon" + 'Democracy' + "Freedom"
The New York Times https://www.nytimes.com/	USA	January 1st 2011 to March 31st 2011 January 1st 2021 to March 31st 2021	"Libya" + "Democracy" + "Freedom" "Egypt| + 'Democracy' + "Freedom" "Lebanon" + 'Democracy' + "Freedom"
Al Arabiya https://english.alarabiya.net/	Saudi Arabia	January 1st 2011 to March 31st 2011 January 1st 2021 to March 31st 2021	"Libya" + "Democracy" + "Freedom" "Egypt| + 'Democracy' + "Freedom" "Lebanon" + 'Democracy' + "Freedom"
Al Jazeera English https://www.aljazeera.com/	Qatar	January 1st 2011 to March 31st 2011	"Libya" + "Democracy" + "Freedom"

		January 1st 2021 to March 31st 2021	"Egypt| + 'Democracy' + "Freedom" "Lebanon" + 'Democracy' + "Freedom"

Two sets of searches were conducted, first for the time period 1st January 2011 to March 31st, 2011, and then January 1st 2021 to March 31st 2021. Table 1 below outlines the search terms used. Searches were conducted using either Google Advanced Search or internal newspaper archive search features for articles that contained all the words 'Libya' OR 'Egypt' OR 'Lebanon' plus 'Democracy' plus 'Freedom'. Articles were then copied and pasted in their entirety into a word document for each country and each publication, for example 'New York Times – Egypt' to create individual text corpuses that could then be searched for specific terms. Originally the term 'Arab Spring' itself was also included but this produced far more limited results.

3.2.3 Rationale - publications chosen

Four news websites were chosen, two that are western-based, The Guardian and The New York Times (NYT), and two that are MENA-based, Al Jazeera English (AJE) and Al Arabiya. However, it is important to state that neither of these are based in any of the case study countries in this study. These were chosen for several reasons: for their reach, their credibility, and the ease with which their data was accessible. Regarding Al Jazeera English, this was also chosen for its prominent role in academic debates about the relationship between traditional and social media as outlined in the literature review (Chapter Two). One challenge, however, may arise from the choice of two liberal western publications at the expense of no conservative ones. Yet, as Ullman has pointed out with regards to her own study, 'the distribution of the data shows that the quantity of text in liberal or independent sources is up to four times higher compared to conservative and state-owned media' (Ullman 2021: 53). This means that there is simply much more data available on the Arab Spring from liberal publications (for example, 72% vs. 28% in the U.S., 79% vs. 21% in the UK, 72% vs. 28% in MENA sources used by Ullman)' (Ullman 2021: 53).

The New York Times

The NYT was founded in 1851 and is the second largest US daily newspaper in print circulations (as of July 2021). It was one of the first newspapers to launch an online version in 1996 and is the fourth most popular news website in the world (as of April 2021) with 662.1 million visitors in March 22 (Press Gazette 2022). It is well-known to have a left leaning or liberal editorial bias with most of its readership sharing similar political affiliations. (Media Bias Fact Check 2022). It is widely considered to be one of the most prestigious and reputable newspapers in the world and has won more Pulitzer Prizes than any other publication. Because of this and its strong focus and depth of reporting on international as well as US domestic affairs, the NYT is particularly relevant to this study. Furthermore, due to the USA's global hegemonic role, the NYT is incredibly influential in the role it plays in political discourses of democratisation across the world.

The Guardian

The Guardian was founded in 1821 as the Manchester Guardian and changed its name in 1959. Although it has lower print circulation compared to tabloid UK newspapers, the Guardian's website is the seventh most popular news website in the world, with 344 million visitors in April 2022 (Press Gazette 2022). Like the NYT, the Guardian is also perceived to have a left leaning/liberal bias but its wide global audience and strong focus on international events make it a useful resource for the study of political language (Media Bias Fact Check 2022).

Al Jazeera English

Al Jazeera was first established in 1996 as an Arabic language cable television channel, based in Qatar. As outlined in the literature review, the role of Al Jazeera and Al Jazeera English in amplifying the protest is of interest to academics, with particular focus on its television reporting. Whilst it would have, therefore, been useful to analyse television transcripts, this would not be possible in the timeframe available for this research project. Additionally, archives for 2011 did not appear to be available online. Nonetheless, the English language website has been online since 2002 and content is syndicated from its Arabic language website. There has been much debate about the extent to which Al Jazeera is able to maintain impartiality and independence from its Qatari owners; 'in the authoritarian Qatari

political context—this independence is relative and conditional' (Usted Figenschou 2013: 27). However, 'Al Jazeera's support of democracy and modernisation in the Arab world has made it vulnerable to criticism and censorship from repressive Arab regimes' (Ullman 2022: 53). Therefore, this thesis considers it an important resource which meets its research aims.

Al Arabiya

Al Arabiya meaning 'The Arabic One' is an international Arabic television news channel, currently based in Dubai. It is operated by the media conglomerate Middle East Broadcasting Centre which is owned by the Saudi Arabian government. It first broadcast as a satellite TV channel in London in 1991 as the first TV station serving Arab audiences outside of the Arab World. It launched its English language website in 2007 which featured articles in translation from Arabic and relaunched in 2012 with a new editor Faisal J. Abbas, formerly of the Huffington Post (Al Arabiya News 2021) . Like Al Jazeera English, it aims for impartiality but has also been criticised for being influenced by its 'parent country' in this Case Saudi Arabia, for example by the long-standing MENA journalist Robert Fisk in the Independent in 2015 (Fisk 2015). Despite evident biases, this thesis will consider it in its analysis of the Arab Spring due to its wider international reach and availability in the English language.

3.2.4 The Twitter corpus

To perform the Twitter search, the author of this thesis made a research application to Twitter where the project was outlined, meeting requirements for use of academic level Twitter Application Programming Interface (API). This allows for access to raw data rather than the more limited search functions available through a standard Twitter account. Using access keys provided by Twitter, the author used Python to write a code for the search terms in Table 2. This code was then run through Spyder, an open-source, cross-platform integrated development environment for scientific programming in the Python language. Spyder simplifies the process of data collection by automatically generating Excel spreadsheets after running the Python codes giving parity with the method of analysis for the news websites.

These differ from the way the news websites searches were conducted as there are many ways to search Twitter data, for example by keyword, phrase or hashtag (#). Different combinations were tried in order to gain the maximum number of returns, because, for example, searching for tweets that contained all of the #democracy #freedom and #Libya/Egypt/Lebanon produced very limited results. A better combination was to run a search with the terms in the

box where the words in quotation marks constitute one search term and its acceptable variations. This was also the closest way to mirror the search method for the news websites in order to collect the most comparable data. For the second two searches, #ArabSpring was chosen to get the data for all tweets that people were using this hashtag for.

Table 2: The Twitter corpus search methodology

	Dates which data is extracted from	Search parameters
Search 1	January 1st, 2011, to March 31st, 2011	"Democracy" "Freedom" + Egypt/Libya/Lebanon
Search 2	January 1st, 2011, to March 31st, 2021	"Democracy"/ "Freedom" + Egypt/Libya/Lebanon
Search 3	January 1st, 2011, to March 31st, 2011	#ArabSpring
Search 4	January 1st,2021, to March 31st,2021	#ArabSpring

3.2.5 Rationale for using Twitter

Why is Twitter useful for a study like this? As Dhiraj Murthy argues 'Twitter has simple yet powerful methods of connecting tweets to larger themes, specific people, and groups' (Murthy 2013: 3) and 'more than many web spaces, it is event-driven' (Murthy 2013: 33). Though its downside is that its content is mostly unregulated and, therefore, there is a lot of low-quality information. However, it is also an open forum where all viewpoints and perspectives can be found, unlike the limitations of a news website article. Twitter, therefore, is one of the most democratic spaces in which to explore discussions on democracy. Twitter 'can be thought of as a megaphone that makes public the voices/conversations of any individual or entity (with the requisite level of technological competence)' (Murthy 2013: 33). Finally, it has an immediacy that captures in real-time people's reactions to significant events, such as the Arab Spring, both from those witnessing events 'on the ground' and those responding to them anywhere else in the world. However, a note of caution should be added in that it is not a public service but a private corporation that can also ban or limit its users if they are deemed to have broken its code of conduct. Furthermore, it also requires resources such as internet connection and mobile devices.

It is also worth mentioning why Twitter, but not Facebook, was chosen for this study since the two are often discussed in tandem as part of academic debates on social media and the Arab Spring.[2] Although it is possible to have a private Twitter account, most accounts are

[2] And indeed, Facebook features in the title image for this thesis.

public, some of them using pseudonyms or nicknames, and hashtags are only searchable on public accounts (Pew Research Centre, 2019). For Facebook, the reverse is largely the case and individuals usually limit the visibility of their accounts to people they know rather than people with whom they share interests. Therefore, Twitter's data is much more publicly available despite the possibility to look at specific public Facebook pages and events organised around specific topics.

3.2.6 Data analysis and limitations

Analysis

Following data collection and analysis, this thesis formulated multiple hypotheses in line with the corpus linguistics approach, born out of the quantitative data and addressed through the qualitative analysis. It did this by quantifying the language used in the corpus and detailing the total number of times the search terms 'democracy' and 'freedom' occur as well as ten other selected terms, detailed in Table 3. These search terms are informed by the literature review and background reading and include both 'Twitter' itself and 'Facebook' to capture the debate on the role of social media within news media articles. It should also be noted, that unlike with the newspaper articles, in which the 'Arab Spring' term was excluded from the search, #ArabSpring was used to capture Twitter data for both 2011 and 2021. For Twitter, it is important to also capture the hashtag (#) versions of search terms as this is a way in which tweets can be linked to a topic which allows users to follow it and engage with it. The Twitter corpus also captured data on tweets which contain the names of the three case study countries, Egypt, Libya, and Lebanon, as well as their hashtag versions. The news article corpus had already been sub-divided into articles related to each country.

Table 3: Terms for analysis following data collection

News article corpus	**Twitter corpus**	
	"Egypt" "Libya" "Lebanon"	#Egypt #Libya #Lebanon
"Democracy"	"Democracy"	#Democracy
"Freedom"	"Freedom"	#Freedom
"Facebook"	"Facebook"	#Facebook
"Twitter"	"Twitter"	#Twitter

"Internet"	"Internet"	#Internet
"Middle East"	"Middle East"	#MiddleEast
"Western"	"Western"	#Western
"Arab"	"Arab"	#Arab
"Arab Spring"	"Arab Spring"	#ArabSpring
"Revolution"	"Revolution"	#Revolution
"Protest"	"Protest"	#Protest
"Human Rights"	"Human Rights"	#Humanrights

Limitations

For the news websites, there is some, but limited duplication in the data corpus of articles that mention any combination of two or all three countries within the study. For example, some articles only mention a country in passing as part of an article featuring the terms 'democracy' or 'Freedom' that is primarily about one of the other countries, but these are still counted. For Twitter, geo-data can be used to find the locations that individual tweets are sent from. It would have been useful to understand whether the tweets were sent from inside or outside the case study countries which would have given more insight into the demographics of the users of the English language. It is important to note that some of the tweets within the data corpus are replies, spam tweets, retweets, or nonsensical fragments, making them less useful for analysis. Some tweets are also in two or more languages and are captured due to the use of hashtags or terms in English.

3.3 Qualitative study

3.3.1 Theoretical approach one– Political discourse analysis

The first theoretical approach this thesis will use in its qualitative analysis is political discourse analysis. Given that this study is one of discourses on political events, 'we need a method for analysing their discourse…since ontologies communicated by political speakers is of interest' as argued by Chilton (2004: 54). It is also worth noting the significance of the concept of democracy within political discourse analysis with 'the word *democracy* involves context; the meaning of the word cannot be plausibly entertained independently of context' (Chilton 2004: 48). This thesis will employ linguistic tools based on Chilton's theory of analysing political discourse and the reason for their use and their applicability are set out in

Table 4. In addition, they have been used in previous relevant studies of political discourse such as the use of metaphors in Ullman (2020) and the use of pronouns in Abidi (2021).

Table 4: Selected political discourse analysis tools from Chilton

Tool	Examples	Reason for use
Use of metaphors	*Coming to a crossroads* *Crossing the Rubicon*	'Metaphor has long been recognised as important in political rhetoric' (51) '…political action is often conceptualised by movement or journey metaphors' (52)
Use of metonymy	*Westminster – metonym for the UK Government* *The White House – metonym for the US administration*	'Analogy and metonym are also types of intra-discursive relations between spaces. These relations may be inferred rather than explicit' (61)
Use of pronouns	*We the Egyptian people* *They want freedom*	'…in processing any discourse 'position' other entities in their world by 'positioning' these entities in relation to themselves along at least three axes, space time and modality' (57-58) (See figure 1 for further explanation)
Use of modal verbs (and related linguistic expressions)	*Good will triumph over evil* *We must never give in to terrorism*	'Many instances of political discourse seem to build meanings that closely associate the Self with truth and righteousness, the Other with their opposite' (60) (See figure 2 for further explanation)

Figure 1: Chilton's dimensions of deixis (Chilton 2004: 58)

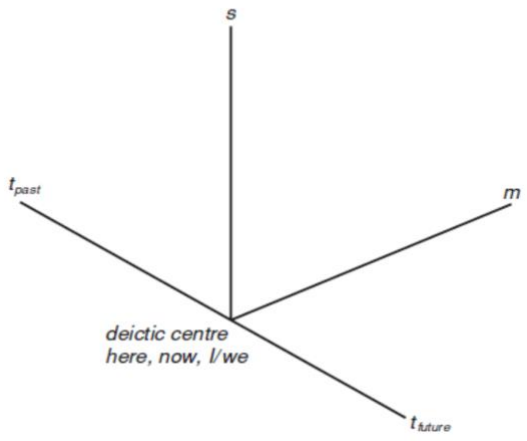
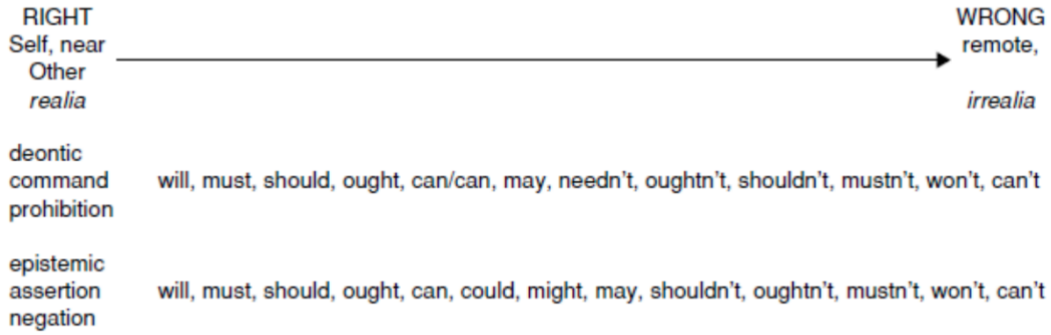


Figure 2: Chilton's rightness-wrongness scale (Chilton 2004: 60)



To give further explanation of Figure 1 in addition to that given in Table 4, Chilton writes that 'the deictic centre' (the self that is, *I* or *we*) is the 'origin of the three dimensions' (Chilton 2004: 58). To paraphrase the rest of his explanation, second and third person pronouns are situated along this 'S' axis to indicate proximity to the speaker and at the far end is the 'Other'. This distance can be geographical or metaphorical, for example Britain and the US may be more geographically distant than Britain and Egypt but in the metaphorical context of 'western allies' they are closer. The 'T' axis positions the deictic centre as 'now' and events can be placed on the axis of in the near, medium, or distant past or future. This is particularly relevant for this study which compares texts from two specific time periods, 2011 and 2011. Finally, the 'M' axis stands for modality, both 'epistemic' which refers to degrees of certainty and 'deontic' referring to permission and obligation and relating to the speaker's beliefs systems (Chilton 2004: 59). The 'M' axis is expanded in Figure 2 which Chilton calls the 'rightness-wrongness' scale where 'Self' is always right or in the right, the 'Other' always wrong, or in the wrong; (Chilton 2004: 60). These are commonly used in discourse in relation to individual or collective conceptualisations of identity that posit him/her/themselves (Self)in opposition to an 'out group' or Other.

Both figures were used in a previous study analysing tweets in a paper entitled 'The 'Vehicle' of Deixis in Trump's Tweets: Does It Hold the Load? by Hejer Abidi in 2021. The authors are interested in the use of pronouns 'as tools of analysis to uncover the writer's ideological drives attitudes towards opponents, immigrants, allies and rivals' (Abidi 2021: 20). Deictic expressions such as those included in tweets indicates the location, time and/or situation of the speaker at the time of speaking. As this thesis is looking at discourse in the context of

tweets, this study is a practical example of how to apply political discourse analysis to text from Twitter, and so this is the dominant theoretical approach for the Twitter analysis of the qualitative findings.

3.3.2 Theoretical approach two -Thematic analysis

The second theoretical approach this thesis will employ in its discussion of the qualitative findings is thematic analysis. Like corpus linguistics in its application to quantitative data, thematic analysis is helpful for bridging quantitative and qualitative research as it looks for patterns and themes within the data corpus. This research project will use Braun and Clarke's guide to thematic analysis which, although based in the field of psychology, is a useful tool for thematic analysis more generally (2006). This paper will use it 'a method for analysing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyse, and report repeated patterns' (Braun and Clarke 2006: 79). Within this approach, there is an important distinction between data corpus(es) and the data set(s) which is of crucial relevance to this thesis. While the term data corpus refers to all the data which has been collected for a given research project, the term data set refers to the corpus data which is being used for particular analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006: 79). All news articles and tweets collected from the six searches form the data corpus and are analysed in the Quantitative Findings chapter (Chapter Four). Based on the quantitative findings, news articles and tweets have been selected for qualitative analysis, forming a new data set for the Qualitative Findings chapter (Chapter Five). The six-phase thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke, can be seen in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Braun and Clarke's Phases of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006: 87)

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

A simplified version of Braun and Clarke's Phases of thematic analysis was used for this thesis that omits the coding process as no software is used to automatically parse the data, as outlined in the data limitations section. Data has, however, been transcribed into Excel spreadsheets, allowing for tabulation of numerical data and graphs to illustrate key trends. Rather than developing themes from codes, they were instead developed by looking at the frequency and distribution of the search terms (Table 3), as well as other metrics such as average mention per news article. Once the themes were defined and named, they were then used to structure the qualitative analysis for both the news websites and Twitter sections. The extracts from parts of news articles and tweets in full were then chosen to provide compelling examples of the themes and the final analysis relates back to the research questions and the literature review. This method is useful for identifying linguistic patterns can be found within texts used by respective groups, such as western media articles on the 'Arab Spring' that are rooted in the values systems of western political thought as already discussed.

4. Discussion of results - Quantitative findings

4.1 Introduction

The two searches of news websites and four searches of Twitter, conducted in January 2022 produced the data that forms the two data corpuses. Those have been analysed in multiple ways to give insight into the frequency and distribution of word usage relevant to the theoretical and academic debates outlined earlier in the thesis. This insight helps to support the main argument of this project that while the English language was a useful tool for protestors in the Arab Spring, this does not mean they wanted political outcomes observed in western democracies. To show this, the data has been divided in different ways such as by year, by country and by publication and cross-referenced in multiple combinations. From there, the quantitative findings have been presented in the tables in this section in way most relevant to answering the research questions. First, this chapter will discuss the research findings of the news websites data, allowing for the identification of hypotheses and themes following corpus linguistics and thematical and political discourse analyses, respectively. The same process will be followed for the discussion of the research findings for Twitter before a summary discussion of all the findings.

4.2 Quantitative findings - news websites

4.2.1 Introduction

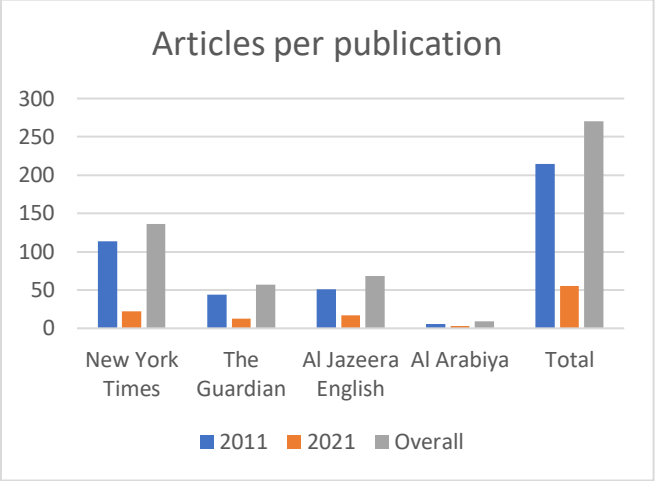
For the news website data corpus as outlined in the methodology, two Excel spreadsheets were created. The first was for the period between January 1st, 2011, to March 31st, 2011, and second one for the period between January 1st, 2021, to March 31st, 2021. The files contain the numerical data from 22 Word documents from searches grouped by publication, year, and country. The key terms and other selected terms, set out in Table 3, were searched for within these files, establishing their frequency in the news web articles data corpus. Overall, the two searches resulted in 270 news articles, forming the news articles data corpus. Given that the Arab Spring occurred across multiple countries, there was also some but limited duplication of articles that mention any combination of two or all three countries within the study.

4.2.2 Distribution of articles by publication and country

Table 5: Articles per publication in 2011, 2021 and overall based on the search parameters

Articles per publication	*2011*	*2021*	*Overall*
New York Times	114	22	136
Al Jazeera English	51	17	68
The Guardian	44	13	57
Al Arabiya	6	3	9
Total	**215**	**55**	**270**

Figure 4: Articles per publication 2011, 2012 and overall



As Table 5 shows the two searches of online news websites for four publications in 2011 and 2021 produced 270 results, although within this, some articles are duplicated as mentioned in the introduction to this section. 215 articles, over three-quarters (79.6%) of the total are from the 2011 search and only 55 from the 2021 search (20.4%). However, this is not a surprising finding as the 2011 search was from the three months at the start of the Arab Spring when there was widespread international attention. In 2011, the two western-based websites made up most of the articles with 158 of 215 (73.5%), 114 from the New York Times (NYT) (53%) and The Guardian (20.5%). Only 57 in total were from the MENA based websites (26.5%), with 51 from AJE (23.7%) and 6 from Al Arabiya (2.8%). This suggests that both observers and protestors used the English language to draw attention to the Arab Spring at the time it was happening. Yet, it is difficult to establish any cause-effect relations with the desired political outcomes, especially given the comparatively small input from MENA-based media.

In 2021, although the sample size is significantly smaller, there was more balance between the western and MENA based websites with 35 out of 55 (63.6%) of articles from the two western based sites compared to 20 out of 55 (36.4%) from the MENA based media. This also reflects established retrospective narratives about the Arab Spring as well as the fact that AJE had much mor prolific content in 2021 when compared to 2011 when it had existed merely for nine years. There was also a more equal spread amongst publications overall, with the New York Times still the largest with 22 articles (40%) followed by AJE with 17 (30.9%), 13 for The Guardian (23.6%) and 3 for Al Arabiya (5.5%). However, for both searches there were more articles from AJE than The Guardian, which is important as it gives more balance to ensuring a sufficient spread for the qualitative analysis. Overall, 71.1% of all articles are from western-based media and 28.9% from the MENA based media.

*Table 6: Articles per country 2011, 2021 and overall based on the search parameter*s

Articles per country	*2011*	*2021*	*Overall*
Egypt	140	22	162
Libya	54	17	71
Lebanon	21	16	37
Total	**215**	55	270

Table 6 gives insight into the geographical spread of the articles, showing that Egypt dominated the data corpus with 162 out of the 270 articles (60%) followed by Libya 71 (26.2%) and then Lebanon 37 (17.8%). To break this down into the two respective searches, in 2011 of the three countries, articles about Egypt also dominated, with nearly two-thirds, 140 out of 215 (65.1%). This is followed by Libya, with 54 (25.1%) and finally Lebanon with 21 (9.8%). Although it was expected for Lebanon to produce a small proportion of the search returns due to only having minor protests, it was surprising that Libya, the only country in which the west intervened, did not return more news articles. This can, however, be explained by the fact that NATO interventions began in the middle of March 2011, which is at the end of the data search period for this thesis. Meanwhile, protests in Egypt were well underway by the beginning of January with Mubarak being a close US ally, explaining why the country may have received so much attention in the NYT. In 2021 there is a much more even distribution of articles, with Egypt still the most with 22 (40%) followed by Libya (31%) and Lebanon (29%). This is because of the sequential ‘domino effect’ of the revolutions means that it is much more likely

that the three case study countries would be grouped in collective pieces about the Arab Spring. The qualitative section of this thesis will explore the similarities and differences in the way the English language was used to talk about the potential and failed democratisation in 2011 and 2021, respectively.

4.2.3 Wordcount by publication and country

Table 7: Wordcount per publication 2011, 2021 and both years based on the search parameters

Publication	**Year**		
	2011	**2021**	**Both**
New York Times	107594	41843	149437
Al Jazeera English	89663	36434	126097
The Guardian	50144	24216	74360
Al Arabiya	5287	2503	7790
Total	**252688**	**104996**	**357684**

Table 8: Wordcount per country 2011, 2021 and both years based on the search parameters

Country	**Year**		
	2011	**2021**	**Both**
Egypt	154393	49247	203640
Libya	67301	30253	97554
Lebanon	30994	25496	56490
Total	**252688**	**104996**	**357684**

Tables 7 and 8 give an overview of the wordcount of the entire new website corpus for both searches by publication and country, which in total is comprised of 357,684 words, 252,688 for 2011 (70.6%) and 104,996 for 2021 (%). This is significantly smaller than the two previously mentioned studies, which contain 27 million (Haider 2016) and 11 million (Ullmann 2022). However, as a master's thesis, it is also a much smaller study with a much shorter timeframe for data gathering and analysis. In terms of total wordcount per publication, the NYT has the largest number of words at 149,437 in total or 41.8% of the entire data corpus, followed by AJE with 126,097, (35.2%), The Guardian with 74,360 (20.8%) and Al Arabiya with 7790 (2.2%). Comparing this to the findings in Section 4.2.1 for 2011 articles by

publication this gives greater balance between western based media (62.6%) and MENA based media (37.4%) in terms of the overall wordcount. This is important as it means when selecting extracts for qualitative analysis there will be sufficient material from all four publications, leading to stronger arguments and more robust conclusions.

To cross-reference with Table 5 which shows that there are twice as many articles from the NYT as the second-largest body of articles, AJE when compared with Table 4 this shows, in terms of total wordcount these are much closer, (149,437 in total for the NYT vs 126,097 for AJE). This is because NYT and Guardian 'live blogs' which mostly contained factual reporting as it happened were filtered out. Instead, the 'opinion' filter was selected for the searches and therefore there are lots of shorter opinion pieces in the corpus.

In terms of the overall total wordcount per country this logically follows a similar pattern to the distribution of articles per country as set out in Table. With most words written about Egypt 203,640 (57%), followed by Libya with 97,554 (27%) and then Lebanon with 56,940 (16%). However, this is somewhat skewed by the 2011 data (252,688 total words) in which Egypt 154,393 (61%) accounts for more than Libya 67,301 (27%), and Lebanon 30,994 (13%) put together. In the 2021 data (104,496 total words) data there is a much more even spread between all three countries. Although Egypt still the largest, with 49,247 (47%), it is by a smaller margin with 30,252 words for Libya (29%) and 25,495 for Lebanon (24%).

4.2.4 Frequency and analysis of key search terms

Table 9: Frequency of key search terms 'Democracy' and 'Freedom' by publication and year.

Publication	**Year**		
	2011	**2021**	**Both**
New York Times	(Articles) 114	(Articles) 22	136
"Democracy"	466	86	552
"Freedom"	225	53	278
Al Jazeera English	(Articles) 51	(Articles) 17	68
"Democracy"	151	40	191
"Freedom"	187	53	240
The Guardian	(Articles) 44	(Articles) 13	57
"Democracy"	68	23	91
"Freedom"	59	27	86
Al Arabiya	(Articles) 6	(Articles) 3	9
"Democracy"	6	9	15
"Freedom"	7	8	15

Table 9 above sets out the frequency of the key search terms ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’ as they are mentioned in each news website publication for both 2011 and 2021. By cross-comparing with Table 6, interesting insights emerge. For example, despite the similar overall wordcount between NYT and AJE, the term ‘democracy’ features almost three times as often in the NYT than in AJE. By comparison, ‘freedom’ featured less than half as often as ‘democracy’ in the NYT but significantly more than ‘democracy’ in AJE, which is almost as many as the 278 mentions in the NYT. This finding touches upon the issue of the different contextual meanings of these terms, with ‘democracy’ occurring more frequently in western-based media and ‘freedom’ occurring more frequently in MENA-based media. This is in line with the argument this thesis makes that while the English language was a useful tool to protestors and observers, this was unrelated to the desired political outcomes of the Arab Spring participants. This can, however, be challenged by the fact that the articles from The Guardian featured ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’ in almost equal frequency. Al Arabiya featured them the same number of times although it is too small of a sample size to be statistically significant. This is where further qualitative analysis is required to understand the arguments that are being made in the respective publications around ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’ and what words they are collocated with.

Table 10: Average mention per article of key search terms by publication in 2011 and 2021 (rounded to the nearest decimal point)

	Publication			
	New York Times	The Guardian	Al Jazeera English	Al Arabiya
Number of articles - 2011	114	44	51	6
"Democracy"	4.1	1.5	3	1
"Freedom"	2	1.3	3.7	1.2
Number of articles-2021	22	13	17	3
"Democracy"	3.9	1.8	2.4	3
"Freedom"	2.4	2.1	3.1	2.7

Table 11: Average mention per article of key search terms by publication in 2011 and 2021 (rounded to the nearest decimal point) (AA is Al Arabiya)

	Egypt			
Publication	NYT	The Guardian	AJE	AA
Number of articles - 2011	73	29	32	6
"Democracy"	4	2.3	3.1	1
"Freedom"	2	2	3.3	1.2
Number of articles-2021	7	6	8	1
"Democracy"	5.1	1.8	2.5	1
"Freedom"	2.4	2.7	3.5	3
	Libya			
	NYT	The Guardian	AJE	AA
Number of articles - 2011	29	13	12	0
"Democracy"	3.7	2	2	0
"Freedom"	1.6	2.1	2.8	0
Publication	NYT	The Guardian	AJE	AA
Number of articles - 2021	7	4	5	1
"Democracy"	4	1.8	1.8	1
"Freedom"	2.7	1	4	3
	Lebanon			
	NYT	The Guardian	AJE	AA
Number of articles - 2011	12	2	7	0
"Democracy"	5.4	1.5	3.9	0
"Freedom"	2.6	2	6.7	0
	NYT	The Guardian	AJE	AA
Number of articles - 2021	8	3	4	1
"Democracy"	2.8	1.7	2.8	7
"Freedom"	2.1	2.3	2.3	2

Table 10 shows the average mention per article of ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’ by publication for both 2011 and 2021. The much smaller amount of news website data for 2021 and the overall lack of data from Al Arabiya makes for a comparatively less reliable metric. With regards to the argument this thesis makes, it would, therefore, be too simplistic to make frequency-based inferences about the viewpoint of any of the publications when concerning the intention behind the use of the English language in the Arab Spring. For ‘democracy’ the lowest average mention is once per article for Al Arabiya in 2011 and the highest is 4.1 mentions per article in the NYT in 2021. The lowest average mention of ‘freedom’ per article

is 1.2 for Al Arabiya in 2011 and the highest was AJE in 2011. Although the broad trend is that the higher number of articles, the higher number of average mentions, The Guardian has significantly lower average mentions for both 'democracy' and 'freedom' than AJE in both 2011 and 2021 despite having a similar number of articles.

Table 11 gives more granular detail, by showing the average mention per article of 'democracy' and 'freedom' by publication and by country for both 2011 and 2021. This may also be one of the less reliable metrics as at this level of granularity many of the combinations (country plus publication plus year) have fewer than ten results. For example, the overall highest average mention was 6.7 for 'freedom' about Lebanon in AJE in 2011. However, this was from only seven articles and the lowest (other than for some of the zero articles for some countries and years in Al Arabiya) was one across several of the smallest sub corpuses. Nevertheless, there are some interesting findings, such as that in 2011 'democracy' featured twice as frequently as 'freedom' on average for NYT articles about Libya, whereas for all other publications they were roughly equivalent. This was the same for the NYT articles about Libya in 2011. Meanwhile, in The Guardian and AJE, 'freedom' had marginally more average mentions and in 2021 'freedom' featured twice as frequently as 'democracy' in articles about Libya in AJE, whereas the NYT margin had narrowed. This shows the importance of examining the context of the individual case study countries and the way western and MENA-based news outlet reported on revolutions there. It also demonstrates that despite the availability of data, it is difficult to make any strong conclusions on the intentions behind the use of the English language in the Arab Spring.

4.2.5 Frequency and analysis of selected search terms to develop themes

Table 12 presents detail on the frequency of the key and selected search terms by publication and by year. The key search terms are 'democracy' and 'freedom', as previously discussed, and the ten other terms (Table 3) have been selected for their relevance to the literature review and debates around the Arab Spring. This table is central to this section as it forms the first of two parts for Phase three of Braun and Clarke's guide to thematic analysis (see Figure 3). The data will be used in the division of themes part of the thematic analysis and used to answer the research questions in the qualitative analysis chapter. The data has been split into three distinct themes: (1) **'media'** which contains 'Facebook', 'Twitter', and 'Internet'; (2) '**geography'** which contains 'Middle East', 'western', and 'Arab' and (3) '**events'** which contains 'revolution', 'protest' and 'human rights'.

Table 12: Frequency of key and selected search terms by publication and year (AA is Al Arabiya)

	2011						**2021**					
Publication	NYT	Guardian	AJE	AA	**Total**		NYT	Guardian	AJE	AA	**Total**	**Overall**
Number of articles	114	44	51	6	**215**		22	13	17	3	**55**	**270**
Search term												
"Democracy"	466	68	151	6	691		86	23	40	9	158	849
"Freedom"	225	59	187	7	478		53	27	53	8	141	619
"Facebook"	50	19	27	0	96		12	12	26	0	50	146
"Twitter"	35	10	11	0	56		14	6	16	0	36	92
"Internet"	36	24	38	1	99		6	16	6	0	28	127
"Middle East"	177	41	77	1	296		18	29	31	0	78	374
"Western"	86	56	100	1	243		24	20	13	1	58	301
"Arab"	518	129	177	14	838		108	57	236	18	419	1257
"Arab Spring"	9	3	1	0	13		39	18	80	4	141	154
"Revolution"	276	102	164	13	555		30	36	79	4	149	704
"Protest"	144	195	209	30	578		57	50	213	0	320	898
"Human Rights"	32	19	56	0	107		8	31	43	1	83	190

To start with '**media',** the three related search terms 'Facebook', 'Twitter' and 'Internet' are the three lowest frequency terms in the group of ten additional search terms. Only 'Facebook' reaches 100 mentions in either 2011 or 2021 while 'Twitter' only features 92 times in total. This is interesting as it relates to one of the key debates outlined in the literature review as to whether the importance of social media was overstated in relation to the Arab Spring. However, while news websites may have not wanted to promote other forms of media due to business interests, by 2011 social media content was already regularly used on traditional media platforms. For example, section live blogs with embedded social media content are a regular feature of newspapers such as the NYT and The Guardian but as mentioned in the previous chapter, they were filtered out for the purposes of this study. The fact that all three terms have a much higher average frequency in 2021 than in 2011, suggests that as with the term 'Arab Spring' that there is a historical evaluation of the role of social media in the protests which the qualitative analysis will discuss further.

Turning to the theme of '**geography'** the term 'Arab Spring' itself only appeared 13 times in 215 articles in 2011, supporting the decision to revise the key search terms and use just 'democracy' and 'freedom' as explained in Chapter Three. This can be attributed to the fact that the term had only just been coined in 2011 (see Chapter One for historical context)

and unsurprisingly nine of the 13 times it features are from the NYT, perhaps due to Marc Lynch's contributions to the newspaper. In 2021, by contrast, the term appears 141 times in 55 articles, ten times as frequently and over half of these mentions are in AJE (56.7%). This supports the rationale for this thesis to be a comparative study of the period exactly ten years on from the start of the Arab Spring, offering a contemporary as well as a retrospective point of view. AJE's frequent use of the term 'Arab Spring' can be attributed to the fact that it is aimed at an international audience and so using a term which is in circulation internationally makes sense. This idea is explored further in the qualitative analysis. The terms 'Middle East and 'western' appear with very similar frequency which is fascinating as the subject matter is events which took place entirely in the MENA region. Yet, there is almost an equal number of references to an entirely separate geographical, political and media sphere of the west. This relates to earlier debates about the US's hegemonic power and influence which are dominant in the conceptualisation of the west. The term 'western', however, is most frequent in AJE, appearing 113 times compared to 110 in the NYT, posing a question on whether discourses around democracy and freedom in relation to the Arab Spring are dominated by a western framing of these concepts.

Finally in relation to the theme of '**events'** the terms 'revolution' and 'protest' and their derivatives are two of the most frequent terms in Table 12, appearing with similar frequency overall (704 for 'revolution' 898 for 'protest'). However, the term 'protest' appears over twice as frequently in 2021 as 2011 (320 vs. 149). This suggests that what were expected to be regime changes in 2011 have, with hindsight, been scaled back to the status of protests with no resulting structural changes anticipated from the Arab Spring. This lack of correlation in the perceived political outcomes of the Arab Spring and the uses of the English language in discourses surrounding it are in line with the main argument of this thesis.

4.3 Quantitative findings- Twitter

4.3.1 Introduction

For Twitter, four files were created for the two searches for January 1st, 2011, to March 31st, 2011, and two searches for January 1st, 2021, to March 31st, 2021. This was done using the Python code run through Spyder, which automatically creates Excel spreadsheets. Overall, the four searches resulted in 11,667 tweets, forming the Twitter data corpus. However, a significant number of these are almost identical except for a number being substituted for a letter (for example 4 for four). As with the news websites data, the Twitter data can be divided

in multiple ways, although there are some major differences resulting from both the way the searches were conducted (see Chapter Three) and the medium of Twitter itself. One main example is use of hashtags which allow tweets to be grouped by topics. For example, the hashtag #Arabspring which was the basis for two of the four searches, groups related tweets on the same topic together. A substantive part of this section is dedicated to the analysis of the hashtag versions of search terms and how they can be used to develop hypotheses for qualitative analysis.

In addition, the hashtag #ArabSpring searches have some tweets that are out of scope as they are unrelated to either of the three countries within the study. However, by using this hashtag as a stand-alone search term, it produced all the tweets within the two, three-month search periods that use it and the individual countries can then be searched within this data. Second, unlike news articles which can be attributed to a journalist or contributor and a publication, many tweets are anonymous, posted only under usernames or pseudonyms (although there are also some tweets by journalists). Third, a significant number of tweets contain fragments of words, non-English words, or non-alphabetical symbols and therefore word count data was not collected. Finally, some tweets are replies, quote tweets, retweets, or nonsensical fragments making them less useful for analysis. However, given the overall large quantity of tweets these issues do not negate insightful quantitative analysis. Where possible, direct comparisons are made with the news website data, but it is also important to make best use of the different nature of the data by analysing it on its own merits.

Table 13 shows that in total for all four searches, there were 11,667 tweets as mentioned. These are distributed with 9204 for 2011 (78.9%) and for 2463 (21.81%), which almost mirrors exactly the distribution of new website articles (79.6% for 2011 and 20.4% for 2021). However, there is a much greater discrepancy between the first set of searches to find tweets with the key search terms ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’ with over 15 times as many tweets in 2011 (7959) as in 2021 (517). This compares to just under four times as many for news website articles (215 in 2011 to 55 in 2021). This signifies one of the major differences between Twitter and news websites as a medium. The immediacy factor is much more significant in generating momentum and a cluster effect of more coverage as more people tweet about something, but this momentum can quickly fade once the news agenda moves. This demonstrates the importance of studying language use in different media and within different contexts as aimed by this thesis.

Table 13: Number of tweets by search and year

Search Term(s)	**Year**	**Number of tweets**
"Democracy" + "Freedom" + Egypt/Libya/Lebanon	2011	7959
"Democracy" + "Freedom" + Egypt/Libya/Lebanon	2021	517
#ArabSpring	2011	1245
#ArabSpring	2021	1946
	Total	11667

For the second search using the hashtag #ArabSpring, the 2021 results showed a greater number of tweets compared to 2011. This mirrors the finding in the previous section that the term 'Arab Spring' was used much more frequently in news websites in 2021, also observed on Twitter. This poses a hypothesis that whilst there was still a strong interest in the Arab Spring ten years afterwards, there was a consensus that it had failed to bring democracy and freedom to the countries involved in it.

4.3.2 Frequency and analysis of tweets by country (all searches)

Table 14: Countries by mention in searches for "Democracy" + "Freedom" + Egypt/Libya/Lebanon) 2011 & 2022

	Year		
	2011	2021	Total
Egypt	4009	213	4222
#Egypt	3885	39	3924
Total	**7894**	**252**	**8146**
Libya	749	255	1004
#Libya	1094	31	1125
Total	**1843**	**286**	**2129**
Lebanon	11	38	49
#Lebanon	77	19	96
Total	**88**	**57**	**145**

Table 15: Countries by mention in searches for #ArabSpring in 2011, 2021 and overall

	Year		
	2011	2021	Total
Egypt	58	236	294

#Egypt	187	430	617
Total	**245**	**666**	**911**
Libya	53	36	89
#Libya	233	86	319
Total	**286**	**122**	**408**
Lebanon	0	5	5
#Lebanon	5	17	22
Total	**5**	**22**	**27**

Tables 14 and 15 show mentions of all three countries within this study for all four searches, grouped by search type into two tables. It is important to note that the number of mentions exceeds the overall number of tweets. This is because a single tweet can contain the country name repeated as many times as the 140- or 280-character limit allows. This also depends on whether the tweet was published in 2011 or 2021 as the limit was doubled in 2017. A country can also be mentioned both with and without the hashtag within the same tweet. The first obvious finding is that both tables reflect the findings from the news websites data with Egypt being by far the most mentioned country. Although, Egypt is the most populous country in the MENA region with over 100 million people, far greater than Libya and Lebanon, this does not necessarily reflect the number of Twitter users in the country. In fact, quite the opposite is true, 'in Egypt at the time of the unrest there were approximately 12,000 registered Twitter users (which amounts to roughly 0.00014% of the population)' (Murthy 2013: 94-5). Together with the quantitative results produced by the news websites data, this poses a question on the role of social media in the Arab Spring given the low levels of use in the three countries. This suggests that whilst the English language was certainly a useful tool to observers and participants in the Arab Spring, as claimed by the main argument of this thesis, this was not necessarily because of social media or desire for a specific political outcome.

4.3.3 Frequency and analysis of tweets by key search terms

Tables 16 and 17 present findings on the overall mentions of key search terms, enabling some comparisons to be made with both the country findings (Tables 14 and 15) and the news websites data. While the country findings produced a larger number of tweets when each country was searched with a hashtag, this is not the case for the key terms of 'democracy' and 'freedom' for both 2011 and 2021. This is likely to be because hashtags enable users to see all relevant tweets on a particular topic and many tweets during the Arab Spring in 2011 would be

specifically about events in these countries. The terms ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’, however, could be about both events but also a general discussion and do not immediately orientate the reader to a specific situation. The fact that some Twitter users from the case study countries were tweeting about the uprisings in their countries without reference to democracy or freedom in 2011 demonstrates that they merely employed the English language as a communication vehicle. The absence of messaging related to particular political outcomes supports the main argument of this thesis.

Table 16: Key search terms within searches “Democracy” + “Freedom” + Egypt/Libya/Lebanon 2011 & 2022

Overall mentions of terms	2011	2021	Both
"Democracy"	6896	439	7335
#Democracy	1476	17	1493
"Freedom"	5871	369	6240
#Freedom	1411	12	1423

Table 17: Key search terms in searches for #ArabSpring in 2011 & 2022

Overall mentions of terms	2011	2021	Both
"Democracy"	37	147	185
#Democracy	6	65	71
"Freedom"	404	107	511
#Freedom	19	40	59

4.3.4 Frequency and analysis of selected search times to develop themes

This sub-section should be read in conjunction with section 4.2.4 which features the equivalent data analysis for the news websites in Table 12. In Table 18, however, the three countries have been added in both free text and hashtag format. As explained in Chapter Three, this is because the news article corpus has already been sub-divided into articles related to each country. Unlike other tables which have separated data by the different search methods, Table 18, instead, separates them by years. The left half of the table captures data for the searches for ‘democracy’ + ‘freedom’ + Egypt/Libya/Lebanon’ and #ArabSpring in 2011. The right half of the table, on the other hand, captures data for the searches for ‘democracy’ + ‘freedom’ +

‘Egypt/Libya/Lebanon’ in 2021, as well as the respective totals for 2011, 2021 and overall for each of the 30 terms.

As with the news website data, Table 18 is central to this section as it forms the second part of Phase three of Braun and Clarke’s guide to thematic analysis (Figure 3). It gathers data into themes that can be linked to the research questions which will be answered in the qualitative analysis chapter. What makes the Twitter data distinct from the news website data is the use of hashtags, both in terms of two of the four searches using a hashtag as part of the coding to return the data (i.e., #ArabSpring). Additionally, within the data corpus itself, it is worth focusing on the detail of the hashtags when looking to develop themes. As 30 search terms is a lot of data to examine closely, two further data tables have been produced out of the data from Table 18. This has been done in order to compare the five most and five least used hashtags, again combining the two different search methods for 2011 and 2021.

Table 18: Egypt, Libya and Lebanon, key search terms, and selected search terms in both free text and hashtag form for all four searches

	2011				**2021**				
	Democracy + Freedom + Egypt/Libya/ Lebanon	#ArabSpring	**Total**		Democracy + Freedom + Egypt/Libya/ Lebanon	#ArabSpring	**Total**		Overall
Number of Tweets	7959	1245	9204		517	1946	2463		11667
Search term									
“Egypt”	4009	58	4067		213	236	449		4516
#Egypt	3885	187	4072		39	430	469		4541
“Libya”	749	53	802		255	36	291		1093
#Libya	1094	233	1327		31	86	117		1444
“Lebanon”	11	0	11		38	5	43		54
#Lebanon	77	5	82		19	17	36		118
"Democracy"	6896	37	6933		439	147	586		7519
#Democracy	1476	6	1482		17	65	82		1564
"Freedom"	5871	40	5911		369	107	476		6387
#Freedom	1411	19	1430		12	40	52		1482
"Facebook"	112	27	139		1	11	12		151
#Facebook	6	3	9		1	4	5		14
"Twitter"	57	17	74		4	62	66		140
#Twitter	10	0	10		0	13	13		23
"Internet"	123	36	159		1	13	14		173
#Internet	9	0	9		0	1	1		10
"Middle East"	156	44	200		15	69	84		284
#MiddleEast	30	10	40		1	154	155		195
"Western"	37	6	43		23	31	54		97
#Western	1	1	2		0	3	3		5
"Arab"	408	1451	1859		83	2660	2743		4602
#Arab	116	1283	1399		2	2114	2116		3515
"Arab Spring"	2	29	31		35	1960	1995		2026
#ArabSpring	3	1249	1252		2	135	137		1389
"Revolution"	401	153	554		3	404	407		961
#Revolution	101	17	118		28	72	100		218
"Protest"	383	138	521		19	277	296		817
#Protest	41	5	46		1	34	35		81
"Human Rights"	138	6	144		37	29	66		210
#Humanrights	57	0	57		4	53	57		114

Table 19: Five most used hashtags for 2011, 2021 and overall

Most used # 2011	**Most used # 2021**	**Most used # Overall**
Egypt (4072)	Arab (2116)	Egypt (4541)
Democracy (1482)	Egypt (469)	Arab (3515)
Freedom (1430)	Middle East (155)	Democracy (1564)
Arab (1399)	Arab Spring (137)	Freedom (1482)
Libya (1327)	Libya (117)	Libya (1444)

Table 20: Five least used hashtags for 2011, 2021 and overall

Least used # 2011	Least used # 2021	Least used # Overall
Western (2)	Internet (1)	Western (5)
Facebook (9)	Western (3)	Internet (10)
Internet (9)	Facebook (5)	Facebook (14)
Twitter (10)	Twitter (13)	Twitter (23)
Middle East (40)	Lebanon (36)	Lebanon (118)

These tables present some very interesting insights when compared with the data in Table 12 of the news website section and the subsequent themes chosen in that section. '#Internet', '#Facebook' and '#Twitter' are the second, third and fourth least overall used hashtags and these all correspond to the 'Media' theme chosen from the news website quantitative analysis section. Whilst it might seem obvious that it is not necessary to talk about Twitter whilst using Twitter itself, or other social media, it is still an interesting finding given the academic debate around the role of social media in the Arab Spring. As reported in Section 4.2.4, these are also the three lowest search terms from the news website corpus of the additional ten terms. With the exception of Twitter, however, there was a decrease from 2011 to 2021, whereas for the news website corpus there was an increase from 2011 to 2021. This was in terms of average frequency, hence the rationale for making 'Media' a theme for qualitative analysis.

The least used hashtag for 2011 and overall is '#western', also having less than 100 mentions in free text, compared to 300 in the news website corpus. Nevertheless, it should be noted that overall wordcount was not collected for the Twitter data, as previously discussed.

Equally, it is not possible to compare what percentage of the overall wordcount this constitutes as, for example, if there are three times as many words in the news website corpus, only then it would be roughly comparable. This could, therefore, suggest that journalists were more interested in comparisons between 'western' ideas of democracy and freedom, situating their arguments within the current geopolitical contexts. Meanwhile, the tweets could suggest that people were more interesting in focusing on the events in the individual countries or the region without reference to external actors. This, again, shows the role of using the English language as a means of communication rather than its association to western liberal democratic forms of government, supporting the main claim of this research project.

Another notable finding is that none of the terms grouped under the 'events' theme for the news website corpus ('revolution' 'protest' 'human rights') feature in neither the five most nor five least used hashtags. They are used more frequently in free text form, meaning that there is still significant discourse on this theme, but even in this form each is featured less than the top five hashtag terms. These are, overall, 'Egypt' (4541), 'Arab' (3515), 'democracy' (1564), 'freedom' (1482) and 'Libya' (1444), so therefore two of the three countries chosen for this case study and the two key search terms. Lebanon is the overall fifth least used hashtag and this mirrors how there is also significantly less news website data on this country. This was an expected finding due to there being no major political of governmental changes during the Arab Spring. It also underlines the decision to include Lebanon in this research study given the fact the events of the Arab Spring in the country have been widely understudied. Interestingly, 'democracy" and 'freedom; have almost identical number of hashtag mentions, suggesting a conscious use of the terms on Twitter in relation to the Arab Spring. Yet, this raises questions on whether the two terms 'democracy' and 'freedom' were used interchangeably on Twitter and on the importance attached to each other them in relation to the Arab Spring. This reflects the nuanced argument made by this thesis and shows the complexity in ascertaining intention on any political outcome of the Arab Spring.

Based on the most used hashtags, three themes emerged from the Twitter data corpus for analysis. The first is to compare tweets about each of the three countries from 2011 and 2021, despite Lebanon being amongst the least used hashtags. It is important to include it for consistency as it one of the three countries chosen as case studies for this thesis. The second is to compare tweets specifically mentioning both 'democracy' and 'freedom' in 2011 and 2021 since the core of this thesis centres around the use of these terms in discourses on the Arab Spring. Finally, as both '#Arab' and '#ArabSpring' feature in the most used hashtags, and two

of the four searches captured tweets that specifically used #ArabSpring, the third theme is to compare tweets from 2011 and 2021 that use '#ArabSpring'.

4.4 Summary of quantitative findings

The purpose of this section has been to set out in full the quantitative findings for the two searches of the online news websites, The New York Times, The Guardian, Al Jazeera English, and Al Arabiya, and the four searches of Twitter. This section has reaffirmed the main argument taken by this thesis that the English language was merely a useful tool to observers and participants in the Arab Spring and this use cannot be correlated with any intended political outcomes.

For the news websites, it provided a detailed overview of the data corpus in terms of total numbers of articles and word counts. It did so for 2011 and 2021, showing the findings of the different levels of discourses on 'freedom' and 'democracy' with most data from the corpus being from 2011. The chapter proceeded to a more focused analysis of the data distribution, divided in different ways, including by year, publication and concerning a case study country. Although anticipated, it was still staggering that the most covered country, Egypt, dominated the data corpus, covering 60% of it. Similarly, the NYT accounted for over 50% of the entire data corpus, speaking to the degree of US media power and the relationship to its global hegemony and linguistic representations of the Arab Spring. Perhaps due to the expansion of MENA-based publications by 2021, there was a significantly more even distribution of results ten years after the Arab Spring. This supports the methodological decision to choose the period exactly ten years on from the start of the Arab Spring to investigate its usage to capture the historicity of the events of 2011.

In addition, the findings from the frequency of the two key search terms and ten other terms led to the emergence of themes, outlined below. They will be used to compare narratives on democracy and freedom in 2011 and 2021 through qualitative analysis of news website articles.

- **Theme 1: Comparing narratives on the use of terms related to media in 2011 and 2021.**
    - Whether the low frequency of terms related to social media suggests its role in bringing democracy and freedom in the Arab Spring has been exaggerated.

    - Whether there has been historical revisionism around the impact of social media in the Arab Spring.
- **Theme 2: Comparing narratives on the use of terms related to geography in 2011 and 2021.**
    - Whether western-based media was more focused on ‘democracy’ whereas MENA-based media was more focused on ‘freedom’ in relation to the Arab Spring.
    - Whether the high frequency of derivates of the term ‘west’ in MENA-based media shows that discourses around democracy are still dominated by a western framing of these concepts regarding the Arab Spring.
- **Theme 3: Comparing narratives on the use of terms related events in 2011 and 2021.**

    Whether the use of the word ‘protest’ twice as frequently as ‘revolution’ in 2021 suggest a re-evaluation of the scale and impact of the Arab Spring.

For Twitter, this section provided an overview of the total number of tweets for both 2011 and 2021 to give insight into the discourses on topics surrounding ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’. The findings from the Twitter data corpus closely mirrored those from the news websites, with most of the data being from 2011 (79.6%). However, the major difference was that the searches for ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’ plus either of the three countries returned 15 times as many tweets in 2011 as 2021. This highlights the comparatively transient nature of the Twitter discourse. This section then looked at the data at a more granular level, looking at the distribution by year, by country and by key search terms. These findings also mirrored the news data corpus, with Egypt being the most frequently mentioned country in tweets. Finally, this section undertook in-depth analysis of the frequency of the key search terms, alongside ten other terms as well as the three case study countries. Further, it sub-divided the analysis into the use of hashtags, underlining one of the most distinctive differences when compared to the news data corpus. By examining data patterns in terms of the frequency of the hashtag forms of search terms, the following hypotheses, which will be addressed in the next chapter, have emerged:

- **Theme 4: Comparing narratives on tweets about Egypt, Libya and Lebanon in 2011 and 2021.**

- Whether the attribution of social media in terms of its role in the Arab Spring in bringing democracy and freedom is overstated in relation to the real number of users within the three individual countries.
- Whether Twitter users were more interested in focusing on democracy and freedom within an individual country or region without reference to external actors (compared to news articles).

- **Theme 5: Comparing narratives on tweets that use both 'democracy' and 'freedom' in 2011 and 2021.**
  - Whether the terms 'democracy' and 'freedom' were used interchangeably on Twitter.
  - What importance was attached to one or the other of these terms in relation to the Arab Spring in any of the tweets.
- **Theme 6: Comparing narratives on the use of the hashtag '#ArabSpring' in 2011 and 2021**
  - Whether the issues which arose in discussions of the Arab Spring in 2011 remained the same or changed by 2021.
  - Whether there was a consensus that the Arab Spring would or had failed to bring democracy and freedom to the countries involved in it.

5. Discussion of results - Qualitative findings

5.1 Introduction

How were the news article extracts and tweets selected?

As outlined in the previous section, the six searches, two for the news websites and four for Twitter, produced a data corpus of 270 news articles from the four selected publications, and 11,667 tweets. This was a large amount of data to choose from to form data sets for qualitative analysis. This is particularly the case for the news articles which are high-quality journalism that is structured, proof-read, meaning that any of the articles could be used for analysis to answer the research questions. For Twitter, this was made somewhat easier because a large quantity of tweets which were spam, fragmentary, or irrelevant could be filtered out.

A second consideration is that most of the content in both corpuses is from 2011, with 78.9% and 79.6% for the Twitter and news data corpuses, respectively. There is, therefore, a lot more content to choose from for 2011. However, as this thesis is a comparative study of the two time periods, an equal number of news article extracts, and tweets have been selected from both 2011 and 2021. These are eight news article extracts and 18 tweets, as the latter are a maximum of 280 characters, meaning that overall, there were fewer words to analyse in the tweets.

To return to Braun and Clarke's guide to thematic analysis and the process of refining and narrowing down data sets, these extracts and tweets were selected from a larger data set of 14 news articles and 30 tweets. They were chosen in their relevance to the six themes that emerged from the quantitative findings, providing compelling examples of the themes, enabling to answer the research questions. This chapter will analyse the research findings from the news articles and tweets in turns, according to the relevant theoretical approaches. These discussions will address the hypotheses raised by the quantitative research as per the requirements of corpus linguistics.

5.2 Qualitative findings - news websites

5.2.1 Introduction

Thematic analysis will be the primary theoretical approach used in this section, undertaking analysis under the three themes. It will then address the research questions in turns and relate them back to the hypotheses which arose from the quantitative research section, as outlined by corpus linguistics. When presenting the data, Table 21 below shows the colour

coding system used to highlight the search terms within the news website articles to complement the quantitative data and provide context for the analysis. Although the data was not coded as strictly as per Phase Three of Braun and Clarke's guide to thematic analysis, the coding system below was developed for the purposes of this thesis. In addition to the thematic analysis, political discourse analysis will be the secondary theoretical approach, using tools developed by Chilton. This presents a useful tool for close reading of syntax, word usage, and placement, enabling the analysis to be linked to the scholarly debates outlined in Chapter One.

Table 21: Guide to the colour coding of news website article extracts

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Theme: Democracy and freedom

Highlighted in light blue: "Democracy" (or any derivations) in a two or more-word phrase
Highlighted in green: "Freedom" (or any derivations) in a two or more-word phrase</td></tr>
<tr><td>Theme: Media

Highlighted in purple

"Facebook" "Twitter' and "Internet in any one or more-word phrase or related terms</td><td>Theme: Geography

Highlighted in red

"Middle East" "Western" and "Arab" "Arab Spring" or any derivations in a one or more-word phrase or related terms</td><td>Theme: Events

Highlighted in grey

"Revolution", "Protest" and "Human Rights" or any derivations in a one or more-word phrase or related terms</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Highlighted in yellow: Egypt, Libya, Lebanon, or any derivations plus cities or people related to these countries</td></tr>
</table>

5.2.2 News article extracts for analysis

Extract 1- The New York Times, Feb 10th 2011

Egypt's Victory of Values by Roger Cohen

> This is a seismic event in a long-dormant Arab world, reflecting at last the modernizing urges of the region's overwhelmingly young populations. They are questing, Facebook- and Twitter-empowered, to become citizens rather than cowed subjects; they have learned that the utopias proposed by fanaticism are empty.
>
> President Barack Obama, after his hesitations, after entertaining the unworkable idea that the anti-democrat Mubarak could somehow deliver democracy, must now put all America's influence to work to try to ensure that a society worthy of these people's aspirations for freedom and representative government emerges in Egypt. Once the vibrant hub of the Arab world, a country at peace with Israel, Egypt can assume once again a pivotal role in the region.
>
> There are dangers, of course — of a vacuum, of a new form of authoritarianism, of Islamist extremism. But the tired binary view of the Arab world where only despots can hold off

fanaticism is exhausted. The Muslim Brotherhood, no fanatics, can be part of the fabric of Egyptian society, like religious parties and organizations in other democracies.

Extract 2- Al Jazeera English Feb 11th 2011

The resurrection of pan-Arabism by Lamis Andoni

The Egyptian revolution has resurrected a new type of pan-Arabism, based on social justice not empty slogans.

We are now witnessing the emergence of a movement for democracy that transcends narrow nationalism or even pan-Arab nationalism and which embraces universal human values that echo from north to south and east to west.

This is not to say that there is no anti-imperialist element within the current movement. But the protests in Egypt and elsewhere promote a deeper understanding of human emancipation, which forms the real basis for freedom from both repression and foreign domination.

Unlike the pan-Arabism of the past, the new movement represents an intrinsic belief that it is freedom from fear and human dignity that enables people to build better societies and to create a future of hope and prosperity. The old "wisdom" of past revolutionaries that liberation from foreign domination precedes the struggle for democracy has fallen.

Extract 3 – Al Jazeera English 8th March 2011

The pen versus the sword by Larbi Sadiki, Professor of Arab Democratization, Qatar University.

The Gaddafi's enjoyed a political facelift from the West whilst carefully avoiding blowback – until now

Where did the West go wrong? Let's reverse this standard question Orientalists have traditionally asked in reference to Arabs and Muslims. Arabs are today knocking on the doors of tyrants to seek their own answers locally.

The collaboration of those Western global actors driven by self-interest or self-importance with authoritarianism warrants this question. Regimes like those ousted in Tunisia and Egypt survived because they were brutal – and the technology of violence at their disposal was Western. Many Western governments may have practised democracy for longer, but they also did so via support of autocracy

Extract 4 – The New York Times, March 26th 2011

Every Revolution Is Revolutionary in Its Own Way By Simon Sebag Montefiore

"Very pleasing commencements," wrote Edmund Burke, observer of the French Revolution's spiral from freedom to terror, "have often shameful, lamentable conclusions." Look at Lebanon's Cedar Revolution against Syria and its ally Hezbollah, which has ended with a Syrian-backed, Hezbollah-dominated government. The first success of revolution creates the exuberant dizziness of democratic freedom that we saw in Cairo and Benghazi. In Europe in 1848, in Russia in 1917, there were similarly exhilarating springs.

Whatever happens next in the Arab world, it will not simply be a reversion to Mubarak-ish military pharaohism. After the upheavals of 1848, strange political hybrids, modern yet authoritarian, emerged from the uncertainty: first Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, the so-called

prince-president and later emperor, in France; and, later, in the 1860s, Otto von Bismarck in Prussia. In complex Egypt, the result of the Arab revolutions is likely to be a similar hybrid, a new democracy, with the military in a special role of Turkish-style guardianship; in repressed Libya, it may simply be a return to tribal rivalry.

Extract 5 Al -Jazeera English 27th January 2021

The social media myth about the Arab Spring by Haythem Guesmi

Social media networks did not trigger the Arab revolutions, but they did contribute to the counter-revolutions.

Although the January 6 riots took almost everyone by surprise, we, in the Arab world, have known for a while that these social media platforms are a threat to democracy. For far too long, Big Tech companies have been allowed to be the ultimate arbiters on free speech online and a haven for hate speech and disinformation. They have piggybacked on the idea that they helped trigger the Arab Spring and are therefore are a force for freedom and democracy.

Ten years after the onset of the Arab revolutions, Facebook, Twitter, and Google have turned into powerful enablers of vast disinformation campaigns, harassment, censorship, and incitement of violence against activists, journalists, human rights defenders and any dissenting voice.

Far from a revolutionary or even a democracy tool, social media in the Arab world has now become a powerful and dangerous political medium. And despite repeated complaints and calls for action from Arab activists and civil organisations, none of the Big Tech companies behind these social media platforms has made any major efforts to stem these abuses and change their policies.

Extract 6 – Al-Arabiya February 4th 2021

The Predicament! By Mohammed Al Rumaihi, Professor of Sociology at Kuwait University

In a country like Egypt, which carries a great demographic and strategic weight in its region, we hear from some writers that "the Arab World was hijacked" and that the nearly year-long rule of the Muslim Brotherhood is the aspired model. Others see that American intervention is what ruined matters and incited the military to a coup. And in a country like Libya, a decade onward things are still not settled, and they do not appear to be settling any time soon for many reasons including external interference, a weak political process, and also the tribal and regional demographic makeup of Libya.

I think the time has come for us to look at the causes of failure, if possible, in our own culture. Perhaps the causes of failure are the absence of a clear program of what is aspired to combined with the absence of a leadership that has a clear method and a large support base. The interplay between these two factors has created a "braking" factor, and has not been addressed or dealt with on an intellectual level. Slogans like "Freedom" or "Social justice" are empty slogans.

Nobody wanted the existing regime to continue, but nobody knew what they wanted instead. If the unspoken desire is an independent and democratic civil state based on a strong economy, then that is a pipe dream, because our Arab culture, so far, does not tolerate pluralistic democracy, and because the organized and semi-organized forces are closed with a select group of members who have pledged blind obedience to the leader, president, or imam!

Extract 7 – The Guardian 11th February 2021

Ten years on from the Arab spring, Sisi has made life in Egypt hellish by Amr Darrag, former Egyptian minister of planning and international cooperation

> With the benefit of hindsight, everyone now knows that supporting the military coup of 2013 was a mistake. What we needed most of all then was to unite, as a nation, to restore democracy in Egypt, regardless of political difference. Before anything else, we needed to take the democratic path together, arm in arm. And we did not.
>
> But the hope that we all had on the evening of 11 February 2011, when Mubarak was forced to step down, remains. It might look small, but it is there, beneath the surface, in the hearts of the Egyptian people. Given an opportunity, it will one day make itself known, and I believe that day is coming soon. The desire for freedom is strong. It can never be extinguished. This is what history has always told us.

Extract 8 – The New York Times February 14th 2021

Autocrats Still Rule the Mideast by Ben Hubbard and David D. Kirkpatrick

> The hope for a new era of freedom and democracy that surged across the region has been largely crushed. The United States proved to be an unreliable ally. And other powers that intervened forcefully to stamp out the revolts and bend the region to their will — Iran, Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates — have only grown more powerful.
>
> The biggest hope voiced by intellectuals in Washington and the region is that the Arab Spring at least gave people a taste for the possibility of democracy. And that if the underlying inequality and oppression that led to the revolts have only gotten worse, uprisings are likely to return, as they have recently in Sudan, Algeria, Lebanon and Iraq.

5.2.3 Theme 1: Comparing narratives on the use of terms related to media in 2011 and 2021

Based on thematic analysis, this section will focus on the theme of ‘ media’ in its analysis, focusing on the role of media in the Arab Spring. This theme emerged from both the findings from the quantitative data but was also anticipated from existing debates, discussed in the literature review of this thesis. Following from corpus linguistics, the hypothesis which emerged from the quantitative data relates to whether the low frequency of terms related to social media suggest that its role in bringing democracy and freedom has been exaggerated and suffered historical revisionism.

First, this thesis will examine Roger Cohen’s article ‘Egypt’s Victory of Values’ in the NYT from February 10th, 2011 (Extract 1). In his article, Cohen asserts that ‘Facebook’ and ‘Twitter’ ‘empowered’ the ‘young populations’ to become ‘citizens’ rather than ‘cowed subjects’, linking the role of social media to democratisation. With the word ‘subjects’ having negative associations, implying subjugation and hierarchy, Cohen contrasts it with the positive connotations of the word ‘citizens’, implying participation and representation. This can be

linked back to his description of the 'long dormant' Arab World and ideas that it is waiting for 'western' technology to awake it from its slumber. This is further reinforced by the attribution of these technologies to 'modernising urges' which have arrived 'at last' in the Arab World. Such assessments are comfortably placed in traditional western understandings of the MENA region and the Arab Spring, failing to challenge western bias, in line with Ferit Güven's argument about framings of the Arab Spring through the lens of western teleology (Güven 2015). Rhetoric such as Cohen's, unconsciously have the aim of encouraging non-western countries to catch-up with the process of democratisation. While this may be the case for observers from western-based newspapers, such as the NYT, this argument cannot be applied to all English language reports on the Arab Spring, some of which clearly found the language a useful tool for expression.

In this light, this is highly contrasted by Professor of Arab Democratization Larbi Sadiki's AJE article 'The pen versus the sword', published on February 11th, 2011 (Extract 3). In this article Sadiki talks of the western nature of 'the technology of violence' at the 'disposal of regimes ousted in Tunisia and Egypt'. While the phrase 'technology of violence' may be referring to military rather than digital technologies, its attribution to the west is significant. Such strong statements can be attributed to the contradictions in western words and actions. For example, the US military aid to Egypt has covered the cost of as much as 80% of its weapons since 1987 (Farrow 2018, 230). This demonstrates that despite using the English language as a communication tool, observers of the Arab Spring in the MENA-region also did so to criticise western democracies. It suggests that there is no evidence of a relationship between the use of the English language and a desire for this specific model of governance, affirming the main argument.

Yet, going back to Cohen's argument, it is fair to say that it is not without foundation given the increase in the use of social media engagement during the Arab Spring and the demographic using it. A 2013 study by Wolfsfeld et. al. found there was both a 'rapid growth in the number of users and uses of Facebook and Twitter during the first four months of the Arab Spring' and an increase in the Google searches for the term 'Facebook' in several countries including Egypt. Similar to the methodology used in this thesis, Wolfsfeld et. al. found that 'significant increase in the use of the new media is much more likely to follow a significant amount of protest activity than to precede it' (2013:120). This view challenges Cohen's argument, suggesting that rather than being the cause of the 'urge' to 'modernise' which 'empowered' young protestors, it was merely a tool to reflect on these events. This is supported by some of the findings in the quantitative section of the thesis, including the fact

that there were many more mentions of the term ‘Arab Spring’ after the events had occurred. In other words, the increased use of new media is not in itself a signified of democratisation, but democratisation itself can include increased use of new media. This aligns with the central argument of this thesis that observers and protestors in the Arab Spring used the English language as a tool to express themselves and attracting attention to their cause, rather than to demand a particular type of governance resembling western models of democracy.

In his AJE article ‘The Social Media Myth of the Arab Spring’, published on January 27th, 2021 (Extract 5), Haythem Guesmi also directly contradicts Cohen’s views expressed ten years earlier. While admitting that he is ‘writing, of course, with the benefit of hindsight on events ten years previously’, Guesmi goes as far as to call social media ‘a threat to democracy’. This a stark contrast to Cohen’s idea that they ‘empowered citizens’ with Guesmi condemning social media as ‘powerful enablers of disinformation campaign’. Here, the adjective ‘powerful’ is used in a very negative sense for malignant purposes as opposed to the positive descriptive verb ‘empowered.’ Unlike Cohen, who clearly links discourses on democracy and freedom with technological advance, Guesmi is explicit in his criticism. He argues that they (‘Big Tech companies’) have falsely claimed credit for helping ‘trigger the Arab Spring’ as a ‘force for freedom and democracy’. Further to this, he goes on to specifically name ‘Facebook’, ‘Twitter’ and ‘Google’ as ‘powerful enablers of vast disinformation campaigns, harassment, censorship, and incitement of violence’. The repeated use of the adjective ‘powerful’ is seen again in the phrase ‘powerful and dangerous political platform’, in line with the negative tone used to talk about social media as a ‘threat to democracy’ and ‘the technology of violence’. Guesmi goes on to state that social media’ is far from a ‘democracy tool’ which clearly acknowledges the well-established narrative of its role in the Arab Spring, despite arguing that it should be considered a myth. To illustrate this, Guesmi references the Capitol Hill riots on January 6th, 2021, providing evidence that social media can have a destabilising effect on existing western democracies. Guesmi’s article, therefore, resonates the main argument of this thesis, pointing that regardless of the use of the English language by protestors and observes, there is no linear effect on democratisation or a relationship with any desired political outcomes. This challenges narratives on ‘waves of democratisation’ and democracy being a linear process on which countries in the MENA region have missed out. It shows that despite of the encouraging and positive language used by writers such as Cohen when talking about social media and democratisation in the Arab Spring, the process is not a linear, but rather a very fragile one.

5.2.4 Theme 2: Comparing narratives on the use of terms related to geography in 2011 and 2021

Based on thematic analysis, this section will focus on the theme of 'geography' in its analysis, focusing on the role of geography in the Arab Spring. This theme emerged from both the findings from the quantitative data and following from corpus linguistics, the hypothesis which emerged from the quantitative data are two-fold. The first is whether western-based media focused more on 'democracy' while MENA-based media focused on 'freedom' in relation to the Arab Spring. The second is whether the high frequency of the term 'west' and its derivates in MENA-based media suggest that discourses around democracy and freedom in relation to the Arab Spring are still dominated by a western framing of these concepts.

An interesting starting point is to return to Larbi Sadiki 'The Pen Versus the Sword' in AJE (Extract 3) which he opens with 'Where did the West go wrong?' Let's reverse this standard question Orientalists have traditionally asked in reference to Arabs and Muslims.' Here we can return to Chilton's definition of the 'west' as a proper noun (Chilton 2004) although here it is used metonymically rather than geographically to mean the US-led liberal democratic system. This can be related to intra-discursive spaces (Chilton 2004: 610), one of them being between the west and the MENA-region. Sadiki makes this rather explicit by using the term 'Orientalist'. This is a term that is rooted in colonialist ideas of the 18th and 19th century, formalised into study by Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism*. Sadiki acknowledges this lineage by prefixing it with the adverb 'traditionally' that still resonates in 21st century political discourse. Such arguments demonstrate that despite the use of the English language in MENA-based news outlets, there is no relationship with the west's conceptions of the Middle East and in fact, they are often challenged. Yet, the ways in which 'the west explains and deals with the cultural and political reality of the Orient' is through neo-colonialism as seen through the challenges provided by authors such as Sadiki (Sandikcioglu 2003: 318). In fact, Sadiki provides a linguistic framework of orientalism, based on Said's study. An example of this is the 'conceptualisation of the asymmetrical power distribution in the relationship between the Orient and the West' (Sandikcioglu 2003: 302). This is exemplified by the use of the words 'power' and 'powerful' in discourse on western technology and democratisation in the Arab Spring. Sadiki further unpacks and expand the metonym 'the West' to include 'western global actors' and 'western governments' in opposition to 'Arabs' and 'Arabs and Muslims'. Sadiki's tone is one of strong cynicism, arguing that whilst 'western governments have practiced democracy for longer, they have done so in support of autocrats'. This shows that political

language and political actions are interrelated but also separate, in line with the central argument made by this thesis. Sadiki brings a unique and arguably provocative perspective in his commentary on 'intra-discursive' spaces between western and non-western discourses on democracy. He does so through his use of the term 'Orientalist' and references to 'Western global actors' and 'western governments'. This shows that despite communicating his ideas through the medium of the English language, the author's desired political outcomes of the Arab Spring cannot be linked to systems of government observed in western anglophone countries.

In Extract 6 'The Predicament' from 11th March 2021 by Mohammed Al Rumaihi, Professor of Sociology at Kuwait University, a different perspective is offered. Al Rumaihi makes the argument that although it is easy to blame the west for the failure of the Arab Spring ('American influence') its failure was the fault of the 'Arab World' itself which needs to examine 'our own culture'. Al Rumaihi discusses both Egypt and Libya, the former which he describes as carrying a 'great demographic and strategic weight'. This echoes Cohen's descriptor of it as the 'vibrant hub of the Arab world' and his similar point about the young population in reference to their social media empowerment. Focusing on the phrase 'Arab World', it is interesting that in addition to Cohen (who uses it three times in the extract), both Al Rumaihi and Guesimi use it in MENA-based publications. Writing of Libya, Al Rumaihi states 'in a country like Libya, decade onward things are still not settled, and they do not appear to be settling any time soon.' To make an etymological leap, the concept of 'unsettled' links to instability. 'Stability vs. instability' is another Orientalist frame that contrasts 'unbalanced, unpredictable and uncontrollable with the 'balanced, reliable, and controlled westerners' (Sandikcioglu 2003: 316). Whilst it is a stretch to say this is even subtextual and is just an association, a more solid example from Sandikcioglu's discourse on orientalist frames can be found in the descriptor of 'Arab culture' as a 'pipe dream'. She argues that pan-Arabism is conceived of as an 'Arabian Dream that - unlike its America equivalent will not come true, as Arabs 'lack the kind of unity that would enable them to act as one' (Sandikcioglu 2003: 316). The semantic connection with Cohen's 'long-dormant Arab World' further reinforces this trope. If the phrase 'Arab World' implies a simplified singularity of a large group of people across the MENA region, the phrase 'Arab culture' is even more of a reduction of complexity to homogeneity, especially surprising from a writer within this group. This 'pipe dream' was for a 'democratic civil state' and 'strong economy' which Al Rumaihi believes 'Arab culture' cannot enable because it does not enable 'pluralistic democracy'. This is a highly critical view that does not differentiate the individual political cultures of different countries and the

individual nature of their protest movement, a lack of differentiation more common from western commentators. A ‘pluralistic democracy’ enables freedom of expression, to return to Dahl’s polyarchy, so it surprising that Al Rumaihi dismisses those who gathered to claim their right for freedom to expression. In fact, he states that ‘slogans like ‘freedom’ or ‘social justice’ are ‘empty slogans’, affirming arguments of unfulfilled ‘social contract’ required to ensure cohesion (Ianchovichina and Devaraja 2020). This underscores the main argument of this thesis, demonstrating that the English language was merely a useful tool in fostering discussion, rather than tangible political change.

Lamis Andoni ‘s AJE article (Extract 2) ‘The Resurrection of Pan-Arabism’ from February 11th, 2011, opens by stating that ‘the Egyptian revolution has resurrected a new type of pan-Arabism, based on social justice not empty slogans’. This underscores the main arguments made by this thesis on the relationship between political language and political outcomes, or the lack thereof. In 2011, Andoni is optimistic that social justice is possible and not just an empty slogan, although, as seen, this is dismissed by writers such as Al Rumaihi by 2021. A second point of interest in this extract is the concept of ‘pan-Arabism’. This presents an alternative, more measured view to Sadiki’s anti-westernism and Al Rumaihi’s internalised criticism of the Arab World. To first give a definition, ‘the prevailing idea of pan-Arabism had been based on anti-colonialism and revolutionary socialism’ (Noi 2013: 14). Andoni, whilst acknowledging the ‘anti-imperialist’ roots of the movement, advocates for a ‘new’ form of ‘pan-Arabism’ based on ‘freedom from both repression and foreign domination’ and ‘freedom from fear.’ Whilst simultaneously arguing for a distinct break from both past forms of Arab nationalism and from western ideas, Andoni rhetorically invocates US President Theodore Roosevelt’s famous ‘four freedoms’. This shows that discourses on democracy and freedom in relation to the Arab Spring are, indeed, very complex. Although it appears that a lot of them are still dominated by a western framing of these concepts, there is not as much clarity as to the desired political outcomes. This affirms the made argument made by this thesis that the English language was used as a tool to the traditional and social media observers of the Arab Spring, rather than as a mechanism of bringing about a particular type of change.

5.2.5 Theme 3: Comparing narratives on the use of terms related to events in 2011 and 2011

Based on thematic analysis, this section will focus on the theme of ‘events’ in its analysis, focusing on the role of events in the Arab Spring. This theme emerged from both the findings from the quantitative data which showed that the word ‘protest’ appeared almost as

frequently as ‘revolution’ in 2011, but twice as frequently in 2021. Following from corpus linguistics, the hypothesis which emerged from the quantitative data relates to whether there needs to be a re-evaluation of the scale and democratisation impact of the Arab Spring.

Simon Sebag Montefiore’s NYT article ‘Every Revolution is Revolutionary in its own way’ (Extract 4) from March 26th, 2011, is a good place to start the discussion as all three case-study countries are mentioned. Montefiore argues that ‘the first success of revolution creates the exuberant dizziness of democratic freedom that we saw in Cairo and Benghazi.’ Cairo, in this instance, stands for Tahir Square which became a focal point for anti-regime protestors while Benghazi refers to the rebel-held city where the coup to overthrow Gadaffi was launched from. The hyperbolic language of ‘exuberant dizziness’ alliterated with ‘democratic freedom’ paints an optimistic, romanticised picture of events in Egypt and Libya in 2011. The phrase ‘democratic freedom’ is also of note, as although ‘democracy and ‘freedom’ are frequently collocated together as nouns by using ‘democratic’ as an adjective to describe freedom. The assertion of uniqueness in the article’s title is somewhat undermined by the direct comparisons to events in Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries, which he labels as ‘similarly exhilarating spring’. The events in Egypt and Libya are, therefore, placed in historical context against past European revolutions, applying a European teleology to the use of the term ‘Spring’. Montefiore’s use of phrases such as ‘military phaorism’ also reinforces the neo-colonialist credentials of his arguments, showing a disconnect from MENA-based authors on the same topic. The only, rather simplistic, attempt to add nuance to Montefiore’s analysis is his categorisation of Egypt as ‘complex’ and Libya as ‘repressed’ with reference to both European and Turkish ‘hybrid models’. This demonstrates that when speaking of events in the Arab Spring, western-based media outlets follow traditional western-centric narratives.

Such expectations of easy progress into democracy, as seen in arguments presented by writers such as Montefiore and Cohen, are clearly contrasted by Extracts 7 and 8 from 2021. The first article was written by Amr Darrag for The Guardian and titled ‘Ten Years from the Arab spring, Sisi has made life in Egypt hellish’. Darrag is the former Egyptian minister of planning and international cooperation thus providing an insider’s viewpoint on the events in his country. In the first paragraph his tone is one of regret and missed opportunities writing ‘in hindsight’ about the ‘mistake’ of supporting the ‘military coup’ and not taking the ‘democratic path’. Interestingly, he also talks about not ‘restoring democracy’ although it is unclear as to whether he means from the brief period following the deposing of Mubarak until the military coup of 2013 or more broadly in Egypt’s history. If the latter, it is a reminder to western audiences that democracy movements in the MENA did not begin in 2011 and the Arab Spring

is just a small part of many countries' histories, especially in the struggle for independence from colonial rule. His second paragraph strikes a more optimistic tone as he writes of the 'hope' that the momentum of the events of a decade earlier is not lost, that the 'desire for freedom' is 'strong' and 'can never be extinguished'. His language is lyrical and emotive, talking about the 'hearts of the Egyptian people' and what 'history has always told us'. This is inspiring and moving but vague and devoid of any tangible call to action, as political rhetoric often is. It should be noted that Darrag is writing in The Guardian, for a predominantly western audience and therefore the language he uses is likely to reflect this. This diversity of views, therefore, demonstrates that while it is difficult to ascertain what the collective wishes of Arab Spring participants and observers were regarding the outcomes of the protests, English language was a useful tool in voicing opinions.

Structurally, Extract 8 written by Ben Hubbard and David D. Kirkpatrick for the NYT is very similar to Darrag's, with both paragraphs centring on the concept of hope which are compared below:

> 'The hope for a new era of freedom and democracy that surged across the region has been largely crushed' (Hubbard and Kirkpatrick para 1)
>
> 'The biggest hope voiced by intellectuals in Washington and the region is that the Arab Spring at least gave people a taste for the possibility of democracy' (Hubbard and Kirkpatrick para 2)
>
> 'But the hope that we all had on the evening of 11 February 2011, when Mubarak was forced to step down, remains.' (Darrag para 2).

Each sentence above also collocates 'hope' with a particular period both specific to 'the evening of 11 February 2021' and very broad 'a new era of freedom and democracy' and 'the Arab Spring'. Like Darrag's elevated, emotive prose, Hubbard and Kirkpatrick also use vivid descriptions of democracy 'surging' and people 'tasting the possibility' of democracy as if it is something ephemeral and fleeting rather than a laborious and attritional process. From these extracts, it is obvious that is not just the 'power of social media' in relation to the Arab Spring that was mythologised but also the concepts of 'freedom' and 'democracy'. For example, Darrag writes about taking 'the path to democracy' which is an example of a journey metaphor which is used commonly in political rhetoric to conceptualise political action (Chilton, 2004:58). However, there is a surprising lack of detail in what this action constitutes, not just in this extract but across all the articles about what is required to enable these concepts to be

realised. There is, for instance, no mention of the institutions and social apparatus that are required to establish democratic and free societies Dahl's polyarchy sets out (see Chapter One). The analysis of newspaper articles has, therefore, supported the main claim made by this thesis that the use of the English language in discourses on the Arab Spring is not related to a particular form of intended political outcomes of the uprisings.

5.3 Qualitative findings - Twitter

5.3.1 Introduction

The primary theoretical approach applied to this section will be political discourse analysis, based on Chilton's political discourse analysis tools which were also used in Chapter Three to analyse the Twitter corpus. This section will closely analyse the use of pronouns in relation to the 'deictic centre' (Figure 4). This is because tweets are often in the style of short, informal statements of personal opinions compared to the formal writing style of newspaper articles, even within opinion pieces. The tweets have, however, still been grouped by themes (Table 22) and will be analysed in thematic sub-sections, mirroring the ones in the news article extract section and using thematic analysis as the second theoretical approach. This section will answer the research question surrounding how narratives around democracy and freedom on the Arab Spring are challenged. It will do so by using discourse analysis to compare tweets in the English language from both 2011 and 2021, whilst addressing the hypothesis which arose in the quantitative section, following the requirements of corpus linguistics. This chapter will support this thesis's main argument, demonstrating that the English language was useful in a variety of ways to a range of people, including journalists, former politicians, academics, but also ordinary people. It will provide analysis of a diversity of opinions and point that whilst the English language was a helpful tool to attract attention to one's views on the Arab Spring, its use has no correlation to the desired political outcomes of the revolutions.

When presenting the tweets of analysis, the figures have been presented in the form of screenshot images, rather than text. Although it is not possible to use the same schemata and highlights as with the news article extracts, screenshot images provide a useful visual medium. This is especially helpful with regards to the use of hashtags, likes and retweets, showing the engagement with the tweet as well as giving more detail on the tweets through their username and profile pictures. The dates are also included in the screenshot images to put the tweets in context compared to the key events. While the screenshots do not show the biographies of the

tweeters, those will be discussed in order to understand the background of each tweeter. With Twitter having a number of other interactive functions, making it a more versatile medium than traditional media, a guide has been included to explain its terminology and purpose (Table 24).

Table 22: Explanation of Twitter terminology

Term	**Explanation**
Tweet	A short blog post type statement with a maximum of 280 characters (previously 140 until November 2017)
Retweet	A re-posting of a tweet verbatim onto an individual's timeline. An indicator of engagement from other users.
Likes	Individuals can like a tweet which usually indicates agreement. Also used to save it to likes for future reference. An indicator of engagement from other users.
Hashtag	Denoted by the # symbol and used to indicate that a piece of tweet relates to a specific topic or belongs to a category
Quote tweet	Similar to a retweet but allows a user to add their own commentary and engage in debate with the original tweet
Thread	A series of tweets to make a longer argument. Indicated by the position in the thread and the overall number of tweets e.g. 1/6, 6/6.
Timeline	A twitter user's 'page' that features all their tweets, retweets and quote tweets.
Username	The name on a Twitter account, can be real or pseudonymous.
Verified account	An account that has been verified by Twitter as having an official capacity signified by a blue tick next to the username

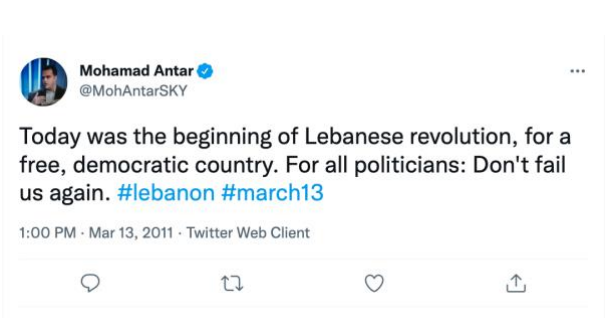
5.3.2 Tweets for analysis

5.3.3 Theme 4: Comparing narratives on tweets about Egypt, Libya and Lebanon in 2011 and 2021

2011 2021

Egypt

Lebanon



Libya

This section examines discourses surrounding democracy and freedom on Twitter for the three countries selected as the case studies. Although the news article section included them

in its broader thematic analysis, it is important to focus on the case study countries in isolation and this will be the longest of the three sections of this chapter. This section will also address the hypotheses which emerged from the quantitative analysis as per the requirements of corpus linguistics. First, it will examine whether the attribution of social media in terms of its role in the Arab Spring is overstated when compared to the number of users within the three case study countries. Second, it will assess whether Twitter users were more interested in focusing on events in an individual country or region alone, without reference to external actors when compared to the news articles. This section will support the main claim made by this thesis that the English language was a useful tool for observers and participants in the Arab Spring. It will do so through its analysis of tweets, meaning that while it remains difficult to make any firm conclusions, the voices of multiple ordinary people will be included in the analysis.

To begin with Egypt, the tweet selected from February 11th, 2011, captures one of the themes that was explored in-depth in the news article section, the role of social media in the Arab Spring. The author, Allison Harries is a White House correspondent for NewsNation, a US subscription television network owned by the Nexstar Media Group which described itself in its Twitter biography as 'fact-based, unbiased news for all America'. She makes two claims in her tweet, the first that 'demonstrations that started with Facebook and Twitter resulted in Freedom in Egypt' and the second 'can't deny citizen journalism advances democracy'. To unpack the first claim, this thesis challenged arguments which have placed a lot of emphasis on the role of tech-platforms in enabling freedom, rather than merely amplifying, and facilitating existing movements. Murthy argues that it is more likely that 'global news media hype', such as Harries's tweet, about the role of social media, rather than the use of it itself had more of a 'causal effect' in bringing its potential dangers to the regime's attention (Murthy 2013: 33). This is in line with the main argument made by this thesis, rather than using the English language and social media to bring about change, both were merely useful tools for voicing opinions and messages. This is especially important in the context of this tweet, coming from outside the MENA region, tweeting without the fear of repercussions and persecution for being critical of their governments and advocating regime change.

Using the 'rightness-wrongness' scale from Chilton's political discourse analysis tools, it is important to point out the use of 'can't' as being at the far end of the scale of epistemic assertion to imply absolute certainty that 'citizen journalism advances democracy'. In fact, the term 'citizen journalism' itself is part of an ever-changing lexicon which also includes 'citizen production' and 'user-generated content' (Gillespie 2013: 97). These are highly contested notions which encompass diverse practices across multiple technologies, genres, and formats

(Gillespie 2013: 97). There are multiple reasons for this contestation including authority, credibility, accuracy, and veracity of information. When used in 'crises' and 'catastrophes' it can also pose a risk to those reporting and others in their association. It is good at 'challenging power' in the short-term but whether it can effect long-term change is more difficult to ascertain (Gillespie 2013: 95). Nevertheless, a word like 'advances' is much less absolute than 'resulted in' and so this claim is the more measured of the two. This is in line with this thesis's argument on the complexities of those involved in the discourses surrounding freedom and democracy, their opinion. and intentions. It is, therefore, difficult to ascertain the intentions of any of the observers of and participants in the Arab Spring beyond the appropriation of the English language for their messaging.

The language used in Harries's tweet can be directly comped with the tweet from the Arab Center Washington DC from March 5th, 2021. It defines itself in its biography as a 'nonpartisan research organization dedicated to furthering the political, economic, and social understanding of the Arab world in the United States'. Whilst Harries, writing at the time of the Arab Spring describes 'demonstrations' the Center calls them 'revolutions' countering the hypothesis that they were less likely to be described thus way in 2021. It does, however, concede that a 'fair and free democracy' was 'not established', which is reflected in the decline in democratic indexes for Egypt (Economist Intelligent Unit's Democratic Index). Like the 'ten years on' news article extracts assessments, its tone is not entirely pessimistic, speaking of 'pride' and of a 'historic achievement'. The image that is used is also very interesting as it features a line of military police facing off against protestors with symbols of both ancient Egypt and a modern office or apartment block in the background. Preview text of a longer article and link are also included, which highlights the multi-functional, multi-modal and information density of Twitter as a medium. This, however, demonstrates the main argument of this thesis in the usefulness of the English language in social and online media for different purposes from different actors.

Turning to Lebanon, unlike Egypt and Libya, the country received comparatively less attention in the news article section, reflecting its tiny share of the data corpus, this is also the case for the tweets. Nevertheless, this is exactly why the inclusion of Lebanon is important with regards to the Twitter discourse as well. Mohamad Antar, a news producer for Sky News Arabia is also a 'verified' tweeter but unlike Harries he has included 'views my own' on his biography to express opinions in a personal capacity. He uses the hashtag #March13 so that his tweet is connected to all other tweets about the protest or event that has been organised for that day, following similar usage for hashtags for specific dates in Egypt and Libya. Hashtags on

Twitter can have the function of serving metonymically, for example, in this case a day that symbolises protests and opposition to the regime. They are 'inferred' as Chilton writes as they rely on assumed knowledge about specific events and movements. Antar writes of a 'Lebanese revolution' for a 'free, democratic country' and creates an opposition between 'politicians' and 'us' placing himself on the side of the people, with a direct plea 'do not fail us'. As Chilton sets out, 'the first-person plural (*we, us, our*) can be used to induce interpreters to conceptualise group identity…either as insiders or outsiders' and this is a device that will be seen frequently in this analysis of Twitter (Chilton 2004: 56). This is a good demonstration of the multitude of voices on Twitter, being able to highlight the situation in Lebanon which has been relatively neglected. It is in line with the main argument of this thesis that the English language was a useful tool for observers and participants in the Arab Spring to voice their concerns and opinions, rather than bring democracy and freedom.

Ten years later on February 9th, 2021, there was no regime change, as can be seen from the tweet by Hassan Chamoun who describes himself as an 'editor and filmmaker' located on the 'Mediterranean sea'. This is the first tweet from someone writing in a personal capacity rather than representing an organisation, making it a more candid depiction of views. Opening a tweet with 'thus' as an adverb to introduce a conclusion to an argument suggests that this tweet is part of a larger body of text and indeed it is the last in a five-tweet thread. Unlike previous texts analysed, Chamoun is very specific about what needs to be done to enable 'freedom' and 'democracy', which, he believes, is the removal of Hezbollah, the Islamist political party and militant group. Importantly, Chamoun ranks 'freedom of expression and assembly' above 'democracy'. He prefaces it with the use of the intensifier 'most importantly', suggesting the paramount significance of freedom of expression, returning to Dahl's polyarchy required for the ideal of democracy.

The first tweet about Libya from March 15th, 2011, is by Ahmed Sanalla a UK and Libya based doctor who tweets in English and Arabic. Sanalla uses a date specific hashtag, #Feb17 alongside one for a place #Misurata where fierce battles were fought between pro and anti-Gaddafi forces. The tweet refers to February 17th, 2011, which was a 'day of rage' when protestors took to the streets, but the tweet itself is from March 25th, 2011. This shows how hashtags for places as well as dates are used metonymically to continue the momentum of specific events that can be associated with protests for freedom and democracy. His Tweet has an interesting construction in that he writes of the 'plight' of the 'Libyan people' which uses a second person pronoun to depict a singular national identity in terms of what this group is *for,* 'freedom and democracy' and what it is *against* 'the rule of tyranny' in effect creating an

in group that is 'good' (the Libyan people) and out group that is 'evil' (the tyrannical regime headed up by Gadaffi). This tweet, again, highlights the importance of analysing data from social media, such as Twitter, providing a platform for a larger pool of people giving own commentary and opinion.

The tweet from March 8th, 2021, by 'T.R Okuna', a Kenyan blogger, provides a directly contrasting view to the idealisation of freedom and democracy in Libya ten years after the Arab Spring. It is the only tweet in this section in which the author repeatedly uses the first-person pronouns 'I' what Chilton calls the 'deictic centre' which positions the speaker against 'space, time and modality'. He writes of 'trading prosperity for occidental democracy' which is interesting as the occident is the direct opposite to the orient ties in with debates from Sandikcioglu. This is an example of a tweet that does situate its discourse on freedom and democracy with reference to external actors, in this instance to western or 'occidental' democracy. His tweet is the most popular of all 18 in terms of likes, receiving 574, in addition to 55 retweets (which indicate agreement) and five quote tweets (which people use to add their commentary to a tweet). This suggests that there is a significant and receptive audience to discourses that are highly critical of western narratives on freedom and democracy in relation to the Arab Spring. In this, Twitter is crucial as it enables tweeters to express more polemically and add their own voices to the discourse on a particular topic. Therefore, while these tweets do not always indicate intent with regards to the political outcomes of the Arab Spring, the use of the English language, both at the time of the revolutions and retrospectively, is crucial and aligns with the main argument of this thesis.

5.3.4 Theme 5: Comparing narratives on tweets that use both 'democracy' and 'freedom' in 2011 and 2021:

This section compares tweets which contain the terms 'democracy' and 'freedom', with three tweets from each 2011 and 2021. Like in the previous section, the screenshot images of the tweets are arranged chronologically, starting with the earliest at the top. This section will address one of the hypotheses which arose from the quantitative analysis as per corpus linguistics. It will examine whether the terms 'democracy' and 'freedom' were used interchangeably or whether there was more importance attached to one or the other in Twitter discourses in relation to the Arab Spring.

In the first tweet from February 11th, 2011, another hashtag with a date is used, #Jan25 which was the date of a huge protest in Cairo or 'the day of revolt'. The tweeter is a Dubai-

based travel blogger, and she poses the question ‘how is military rule compatible with democracy and freedom?’ followed by the hashtag #Justasking. This is most likely a rhetorical question, suggesting that the two are, of course, incompatible, reinforced by the sarcastic use of the hashtag #Justasking. It is the only tweet in this section in terms of word order that puts ‘democracy’ first and ‘freedom’ second but is a good example of how they are regularly collocated.

2011

2021

The second tweet from February 2011 by 'alexpk2' is another account which uses the first-person pronoun to relate the events of the Arab Spring to their personal views. In this case, the author expresses gratitude that they 'have' 'freedom' (used with a hashtag) which people in Libya are fighting and dying for. The tweet finishes simply with the hashtag '#democracy' with no further explanation, suggesting that the author believes that discussions of the Arab Spring are part of discourses on democracy. The author also appears to believe that '#democracy' is also what Libyans are fighting and dying for. This demonstrates that there was no one dominating discourse on issues surrounding democracy and freedom in the Arab Spring. It also suggests that while observers who already lived in democratic societies and 'have freedom' often assumed that the protestors wanted the same thing, there is no firm evidence that this was the case, supporting the main argument of this thesis.

The final tweet from 2011 strikes a much more positive tone and is from February 25th by Wael Ghonim, Head of Marketing, Google Middle East, and North Africa. Ghonim has over three million followers, suggesting a global audience due to the very small number of Twitter users in Egypt, as discussed earlier. This is also reflected in the high number of retweets and likes. Ghonim's tweet was written after military rule had taken over Egypt and yet he paints a picture of celebration, using the hashtags for Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. This is with the intention to create a pan-Arabic sense of collectivism, encompassed in the 'we' that 'all deserve' 'freedom' and 'democracy'. Arguably, this is where social media creates a kind of digital pan-Arabism and 'strong sense of shared experiences and aspiration' of which print media was sceptical (Elbadawi and Makdisi 2016: 163). This points out at the important distinction between how discourses can differ between more traditional and newer forms of media, suggesting that the use of the English language is a tool rather than a means to an end.

Turning to 2021, the first two tweets can be read with a reference to Chilton's *t* axis, conceptualising the distance between the time of speaking and the events that are being spoken about. The first from the January 26th, 2021, by Ahmad E, a Canadian-based student journalist, talks about the collective Egyptian experience 'ten years ago yesterday' again 'fighting' for 'something different'. However, he distances himself with the use of the second person plural 'they' which is somewhat bolder to then make definitive assertions such as 'they wanted democracy'. He also writes 'they wanted 'bread, freedom, and social justice' 'and it is important to note the single quotation marks which are most likely a reference to slogans that were written on placards at protests. This can be related to earlier arguments, such as those of Bradley, suggesting that economic factors, not western ideals of democracy, were the primary

concern for protestors. Yet, the tweet's reference to 'something different' does not refer to anything specific, making it very difficult to ascertain the intention behind it, supporting the main argument of this thesis. Interestingly, Ahmad E also mentions the term 'social justice' as a reason for the revolutions, aligning with Lamis Andoni's arguments, previously explored in the news article section. In addition, Ahmad E uses an inspiring image of Tahir Square at sunset filled with protestors carrying many banners and flags, giving a visual representation of the power of mass participation. This demonstrates the use of the English language to provide commentary of differing ideas of the retrospective outcomes of the Arab Spring, allowing it to reach a wider, in this case, Canadian audience. The lack of concrete demands beyond 'something different' and undefined ideas of 'social justice', however, make it difficult to point at the author's desired political outcome, supporting the main argument of this thesis.

The second tweet from February 16th, 2021, by Ahmed El Gamaty, a Libyan business consultant, uses a first-person narrative to paint a vivid picture of the revolution ten years previously. He uses his father as a kind of everyman figure, with the idiom 'worked day and night' like 'many others' to 'see the revolution succeed'. He writes of 'freedom' and 'democracy' as a 'dream' that 'Libyans' had longed for, which echoes Ahmad E's tweet in making the same assertion for Egyptians. Gamatv's tweet returns the discourse to the idea of the Arabian dream and its comparison with the 'American dream' fitting in with theories on 'orientalist framing' which were previously discussed. The use of the English language in this tweet allows for a much more personal and nostalgic representation of the Arab Spring and the likening it to the American dream shows the multitude of perspectives.

The final tweet from March 1st, 2021, by 'PalBint' (a pseudonym) takes a totally contrasting tone with a highly critical and cynical summary of western involvement with MENA countries. It is the third tweet in this section to use 'freedom and democracy' collocated in this way. Additionally, PalBint uses the rhetorical tool of personification in describing western countries that 'love to boast' about 'bringing freedom and democracy to Arab/Muslim' countries as something simple and quick. However, the very use of the forward slash, between Arab and Muslim demonstrates a causal lack of differentiation, undermining the anti-colonialist sentiment of the tweet. For example, neither Turkey nor Pakistan are Arab countries despite being majority Muslim. Unusually for Twitter, the tweet is split into two paragraphs, separating the two points the author is making, though they are linked. The second, long paragraph beings with 'in reality' to distinguish it from unfounded belief of the west in bringing democracy to other parts of the world. The second paragraph also talks about 'these wars' from 'Libya' to 'Syria', making a second generalisation about the situation in the region. It is unclear

whether the author thinks that the wars are the responsibility of the West and who is doing the ‘stealing of resources’ but it is heavily implied that the west profits from this misery in some way. This tweet quote tweets another that expresses similar sentiments, ‘they will take Gadaffi back in a heartbeat’, the use of ‘will’ another epistemic assertion on the definite ‘right’ side of Chilton’s rightness-wrongness scale. Given that PalBint’s biography reads ‘citizen of the world’, it is possible that the author is based outside of Libya. This would put the author in the category of observers outside of the MENA region making assertions about the intentions of those involved in the Arab Spring regarding democracy and freedom as political outcomes.

Furthermore, PalBint’s tweet is the clearest example of the linguistic difference between the medium of news articles and Twitter, with much more use of hyperbolic language such as ‘steal resources’ and cliches such as ‘the script remains the same’. While journalists are associated with standards, objectivity and impartiality, Twitter users compete with missions of others for attention, using controversy and provocation to increase engagement. In fact, research suggests that negative online stories spread much quicker than positive (Bellovary et all 2021: 11). This can be linked to the debate on whether Twitter allows for more democratic discourse discussed earlier in this thesis. Although the social media platform certainly allows for more voices and perspectives to be heard, this is no guarantee that the highest quality ones rise to the top. Similarly, the use of the English language as a tool in discourses on the Arab Spring merely shows its usefulness in broadcasting opinions and ideas, rather than being a cause of change or indicative of the truth, supporting the main argument of this thesis.

5.3.5 Theme 6: Comparing tweets that use #ArabSpring in 2011 and 2021

2011 **2021**

Like previous sections, the following one will compare six tweets which use the hashtag '#ArabSpring' and will address one of the hypotheses which emerged from the quantitative findings based on corpus linguistics. First, it will discuss whether the issues which arose in discussions of the Arab Spring in 2011 remained the same or changed by 2021.Second, it will examine whether there was a consensus that the Arab Spring would or had failed to bring democracy and freedom to the countries involved in it.

The first tweet from March 8th, 2011, by 'Lebanese-Venezuelan-American' singer Elizabeth Ayoub was chosen for two reasons. First, it brings into the debate the role of women in the Arab Spring protests and second, it links all three countries in this study and Tunisia, reinforcing the argument made in the previous section about digital 'pan-Arabism'. Looking at the latter first, as with previous tweets it uses hashtags metonymically. Therefore, #January25th symbolises the Egyptian revolution as does #SidiBouzid in Tunisia[3] although Ayoub just uses #Libya rather than a date or place (such as #Feb17 or #Misurata as in a previous tweet). This may be because the chronology of protest in Libya happened later. By placing all three together, it creates a narrative of cohesion and momentum, the 'domino effect' of revolution in one country leading to another that has been discussed in earlier chapters, what Ayoub describes as the '2nd phase of the Revolution. It is important to note that Ayoub has chosen to capitalise the R to emphasise its importance.

[3] This was the city where market seller Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire and the first protests against the regime ensued (see Chapter One for historical context)

Returning to the second aspect, Ayoub writes that this revolution will be led' by Arab women, which invites a direct comparison with the tweet from the Wilson Center Middle East Program from February 4th, 2021. This is another Washington-based think tank but quoting Anas El Gomati, the Director of the Sadeq Institute, branded as Libya's 'first think tank'. Where Ayoub used the future tense 'will be led' expressing certainty about future events, El Gomati is using the past 'was' to express an equal degree of certainty to describe past events. He repeats the same syntax, 'it was women that sparked the revolution', 'it was women outside the courthouse' and in doing so moves from the general to the specific. This suggests that there is an ongoing interest and historical evaluation of the Arab Spring with research focused on the role of specific groups of people. The use of the English language, therefore, suggests that those involved in discussions around the Arab Spring saw it as a useful tool both in 2011 and ten years later in 2021, supporting the main argument of this thesis.

To link this analysis to the role of women in the Arab Spring protests and Muslim societies more generally, Howard and Hussain argue that digital media played an import role for this specific group (Howard and Hussain: 2013 60). Digital media allowed women to circumvent political elites trying to control discourse on gender relations and exposed them to liberal cultural values elsewhere in the world (Howard and Hussain: 2013 60). Although Ayoub does not mention 'democracy' or 'freedom' in her tweet, the phrase 'full rights' relates to another of Dahl's tenets for a polyarchy in which 'all adult citizens have the right to vote'.

While the topic of the March 29th, 2011, tweet by Walter Rhett, an American 'writer', could itself be the subject of a thesis, it offers a more nuanced western perspective on the Arab Spring. Unlike Ayoub, whose use of hashtags unifies all countries equally under one revolutionary moment, Rhett underlines the distinct nature of their separate identities. This provides a challenge to previous exemplifications of western narratives generalising the nature of and participation in the Arab Spring. Nevertheless, Rhett's tweet still presents a distinctly US-centric perspective as he questions the interest the revolutions stirred in the US, rather than the events in the MENA-region themselves. Nevertheless, findings from the quantitative data used in this study confirm there was significantly more interest in Egypt within an English-language context, with most of the data corpus of this thesis relating to Egypt. This reinforces the main argument made by this thesis that the English language was a tool used to voice opinions, question events and broadcast messages, rather than to bring about political outcomes.

The final tweet from 2011 by Omarmso (Omar) on March 30th can be addressed by two elements of Chilton's tools for analysing political discourse. The first places 'the Arab people'

at the deictic centre (Arab used as a hashtag) so that Omar, as the speaker, identifies with them, 'the Arab people', instructing for the best course of action. Second, he says that they, the Arab people, 'must' 'rise up against all tyrants' using the modal verb 'must'. This is another example of the use of a term from the definitive right axis of Chilton's 'rightness-wrongness' scale. This time, it is used as a deontic command rather than epistemic assertion. It is worth noting that he also uses the hashtag for Al Jazeera, demonstrating that Twitter users would have been aware of its power, through the medium of the English language, to amplify their voices, aligning with the main argument of this thesis. Additionally, the use of the hashtag for Al Jazeera demonstrates the role the media outlet played in representations of the Arab Spring. In fact, one of the reasons Al Jazeera was praised for its coverage was its innovative use of incorporating social media into its broadcast coverage (Howard and Hussain 2013, Lynch 2013).

This process also works in reverse, in terms of Twitter being used to engage with discourse from news websites. This is shown in the tweet by the veteran diplomat Gordon Gray from February 16th, 2021, who provides a link to the article from the NYT 'A Decade after The Arab Spring, Autocrats Still Rule the Mideast'. Given that this article is part of the news data set, and its author is yet another white man from the US commenting on the Arab Spring, it is crucial that research includes a wider range of voices discussing the subject. Therefore the analysis of tweets is crucial to this thesis, allowing for perspectives from beyond the usual sources of discourse on international affairs. Interestingly, despite using the hashtag form of 'Arab Spring', Gray also uses the term 'uprisings', probing into the debate on the perceived political outcomes of the Arab Spring, or lack thereof. The semantics are important as if we accept the western teleology associated with the term 'Spring'. It suggests a definitive political outcome whereas uprisings are more related to sporadic and ongoing confrontations with an existing political regime, as previously discussed. While Twitter users often use absolutes, as outlined by Chilton's scales, and demonstrated in this section, Gray expresses an opinion which is not his own but that of 'Arab Spring veterans'. He suggests that those 'veterans argue' that 'pro-democracy movements are bound to return'. The term 'movement' implies more permanence compared to 'protest', 'revolution' or 'uprising', although it does not necessarily suggest stability. Gray's tweet demonstrates a continuing interest in the Arab Spring whilst also promoting 'veterans' with similar pro-democracy opinions to his, suggesting that the events of 2011 are unfinished. This points at the fact that western observers and commentators of the Arab Spring have used the English language as a tool to present their vision of the future of the MENA-region. Yet, it does not necessarily show a consensus on neither an accepted

narrative of the revolutions nor the intended political outcomes desired by those participating in it.

The final tweet from February 15th, 2021, by Khalil Jahshan who also works for the Arab Center Washington DC, like Grey's tweet, points at the fact that the events of the Arab Spring continued to resonate ten years on. However, unlike Gray's hopeful and optimistic tone, Jahshan makes a very sober statement on the human cost of the Arab 'uprisings', providing statistics of those who were displaced or died as a result. The very mention of millions of deaths is aimed at making these human losses more tangible and real to the reader and evoke a response whilst de-romanticising nostalgia around the Arab Spring. In line with the main argument made by this thesis, the English language was a useful tool to demonstrate the range of analyses, opinions, and thoughts on the Arab Spring. People's stories and views told through Twitter show that the revolutions were often about life and death rather than merely about democracy and freedom.

5.5 Summary of qualitative findings

This chapter has used political discourse analysis and thematic analysis to qualitatively example the news article and Twitter data corpuses through six distinct but interrelated themes. Based on corpus linguistics, this chapter has focused on addressing the hypothesis arising from the quantitative findings in order to compare narratives surrounding freedom and democracy in relation to the Arab Spring in both 2011 and 2021. The findings from this chapter have supported the main argument of this thesis which is that while the English language served as a useful tool to observers and participants in the Arab Spring, it cannot be correlated to the desired political outcomes of the revolutions in concrete terms.

The first section of this chapter focused on analysis of the news articles data set from both 2011 and 2021 and the ways in which they challenge narratives around democracy and freedom through the themes of 'media', 'geography' and 'events'. The theme of 'media' saw challenges on narratives on 'waves of democratisation' and the fragility of democracy. While western news outlet commentators appeared a lot more positive about the role of social media in enabling freedom and democracy, MENA-based opinions were much more critical and damning of such arguments. By 2021, the narrative had changed to the notion that social media did not lead to greater democratisation but actively undermined it. This supported the main argument of this thesis that the English language was merely a useful tool, rather than a means to anticipate or bring about democracy and freedom.

For the theme of 'geography', the findings in this chapter demonstrated that although western media appeared more fixated on concepts of democracy and democratisation, it is inconclusive whether MENA-based media placed a greater emphasis on freedom. Through discussions of 'orientalist framing', this theme showed the ways in which western media approaches the MENA region. This was often done by using negative terms regarding the Arab World, describing it as unstable, unpredictable, unpredictable, ungovernable, and, therefore, *undemocratic* to directly contrast with the stable, orderly, *democratic* west. The theme of 'geography' demonstrated the complexity of the existing discourses on democracy and freedom in relation to the Arab Spring. Given that it seems that a lot of these narratives remain dominated by western frameworks of democracy, this is not to say that this indicates a preference for intended political outcomes. The theme on 'geography', therefore, supports the main argument of this thesis that the English language was used as an amplification tool in traditional and on social media, rather than as a mechanism of regime change in the Arab Spring.

With regards to the theme of 'events', this chapter showed that there was a re-evaluation of the scale and the democratisation of the Arab Spring, especially with regards to the application of western teleology. This theme found that whilst there were mixed discourses on the Arab Spring in 2011, by 2021 both western and MENA-based media articles agreed that the revolutions had failed. In their use of the English language, however, the tone in western-based media was a lot more optimistic and hopeful, compared to the relative disappointment and frustration exhibited by some MENA-based commentators. The romantic mythologising, on one end of the spectrum, and the lack of an alternative for the future, on the other, demonstrate the diversity of discourses. Yet, they do not point at the English language being employed as anything more than a useful tool to draw attention to their opinions, rather than effect a certain type of political change.

The second section of this chapter focused on the analysis and comparison of narratives on democracy and freedom in tweets from both 2011 and 2021. This section sought to highlight challenges to existing narratives by specifically focusing on the three case study countries, representations of democracy and freedom and tweets that use the term Arab Spring through the medium of Twitter.

The first part focused on tweets referring to Egypt, Libya, and Lebanon and continued to support findings from both the quantitative and qualitative chapters of this thesis that the role of social media in the Arab Spring was overstated. In fact, the findings demonstrated that some of the more enthusiastic cheerleaders for its influence on democracy and freedom in the

MENA region were observers in the west, stirring a 'global media hype' (Murthy 2013: 95). This part of the chapter also showed that Twitter discourses referred to democracy and freedom both within the individual countries and the MENA region without reference to external actors in both 2011 and 2021. As with previous findings, the section focusing on tweets on case study countries found that there were tones of optimism and hope, strongly contrasted with ones of sadness and defeat, but also pride in reminiscing. The findings from tweets focusing on the three case-study countries demonstrate the multitude of English language discourses on the Arab Spring. The contrast in those views, however, show the language being used as a tool rather than as constructing a unanimous narrative geared to bring about democratic political outcomes, supporting the key argument of this thesis.

The second of the qualitative analysis of tweets focused on tweets which contained both 'democracy' and 'freedom' from both 2011 and 2021. This part of the thesis addressed the corpus linguistics-based hypothesis whether the two terms were used interchangeably in reference to the Arab Spring, or one had more importance than the other. While there was inconclusive evidence on whether there was greater emphasis on either of these terms and related concepts, the diverse Twitter discourse on the Arab Spring was further unravelled. It showed the same juxtaposition between positivity and hope and despair and disappointment observed in earlier analyses. It demonstrated that much of the neo-colonialist rhetoric employed in 2011 had not changed by 2011 and this was used by MENA-based observers as a vehicle for broader criticism of the west's approach to geopolitics and involvement in the Global South. Highlighting the contrasting and competing discourses in the English language, this supports the main claim of this thesis on the usefulness of English as a tool whilst demonstrating that its use was not related to a specific political outcome.

The final part of this chapter's qualitative analysis of tweets concerned itself with tweets which used the hashtag '#ArabSpring' from both 2011 and 2021. This part of the thesis was two-fold in addressing hypothesis which emerged from the quantitative findings. First, it examined whether the issues which arose discussions of the Arab Spring in 2011 remained the same or changed by 2021. Second, it looked at whether there was a consensus in 2011 that the Arab Spring would fail to bring democracy in 2011 or had failed by 2021. The former lens of analysis found that Egypt remained of strong interest to commentators ten years on from the Arab Spring and that the role of women across the MENA region also persisted to be of interest. The latter lens presents, yet again, a broad range of views, both optimistic and pessimistic in tone for 2011 and 2021. While there seems to be agreement on the lack of political change

resulting from the Arab Spring, some narratives remained hopeful in 2021, pointing at consistency in findings previously observed and supporting the main claim.

The overall findings, discussions and issues raised in this chapter have supported the main argument taken by this thesis. They have shown the usefulness of the English language as a tool of communication with regards to the Arab Spring whilst also demonstrating that this cannot be correlated to the desired political outcomes of the MENA region uprisings.

6. Conclusions

This thesis has demonstrated that the relationship between language, politics, and identity is complex, yet a closely intertwined one. By providing a highly contextual, in-depth analysis,

this thesis has argued that the English language was a useful tool for some of the participants and many of the observers of the Arab Spring. It has demonstrated that while many of the narratives on both traditional and social media used or were shared by the English language, there is no correlation with the intent of the protestors, despite some of them reflecting western liberal democratic values. It has also taken a postcolonial approach, critical of hegemonic ideas of democracy to show that western models of liberal democracy cannot be used as simple templates for other political and cultural contexts. Furthermore, this thesis has argued that those based in the MENA region used the English language to merely amplify their messaging while not necessarily seeking to mirror western liberal democracy in their home countries.

This research project presented a quantitative and qualitative analysis of English language coverage of the Arab Spring, comparing two distinct time periods: the first three months of 2011 at the time of the revolutions and the first three months of 2021, ten years later. It used data from two textual mediums: news websites and tweets from the social media network Twitter. The authors of the sources included journalists, historians, former politicians, academics, and ordinary people, providing a range of perspectives. While corpus linguistics led to the emergence of hypotheses and research questions based on the quantitative data corpus, the qualitative section sought to answer them in turns by analysing the news articles first and tweets second. Despite the fact that this master's thesis is limited in terms of its scope, time, and the author's inability to speak Arabic, it has still successfully challenged western narratives on democracy and freedom in the MENA region. Most importantly, it has provided an original contribution to existing scholarship by including a diverse range of voices in its analysis, especially through its analysis of tweets but also non-western news website articles.

Starting with Chapter One, this thesis focused on discussing the main definitions and key concepts whilst providing a background overview of the political, historical, and social context of the MENA region. This chapter also laid out the two research questions this thesis addressed. Chapter Two, on the other hand, moved on to provide a comprehensive literature review from the disciplines of linguistics and political science on the topics of traditional and digital media, democratisation, and the Arab Spring, more specifically. It particularly challenged western teleology and debates surrounding the democratising role of social media during the Arab Spring through a discussion of neo-colonialism and pan-Arabism. This chapter helped to identify gaps in academia, place this thesis's contribution within them and explain how this research project will build on existing scholarship, especially Haider's PhD thesis. The fact that no research had previously combined the issues of the use of the English language in traditional and social media and representations of democracy and freedom with regards to

the Arab Spring shows the important and original contribution this research project makes to existing academic debate. Chapter Three moved on to outline the methodology and theoretical approaches employed by this thesis, including corpus linguistics, political discourse analysis and thematic analysis as well as the reasoning behind their use. Additionally, it gave detail on the data collection, including search methods, source material and the method application of both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data corpus. This chapter also laid out the research questions for this thesis. Chapter Four moved on to the detailed presentation of the quantitative findings whilst applying corpus linguistics theory to their discussion, leading to the emergence of several hypotheses. From this, therefore, Chapter Five went onto address these hypotheses through the means of political discourse analysis and thematic analysis to the qualitative data from news articles and Twitter. This chapter provided further nuance to the multitude of discourses on the Arab Spring from both western and MENA-based news outlets. However, most crucially, Chapter Five highlighted the importance of providing analysis of grassroots opinion found on Twitter, enriching our understanding of the media representations of the Arab Spring.

This thesis has made original contributions to scholarship on the Arab Spring through both linguistics and political science. It has utilised previously unused data and focused on three case study countries, demonstrating the importance of understanding specific political, historical, and cultural contexts. However, future research would benefit from using data in Arabic as well as using a broader range of newspapers, other types of social media, as well as television reports transcripts. With regards to using Twitter in future academic projects, they would benefit from having geographical data of the tweeters. There also needs to be more research into the role of 'citizen journalism', as well as marginalised groups such as women and LGBTQI+ people. All of this would enable for even a fuller picture of discourses on the Arab Spring than those contributed to by this thesis.

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Annex A- Dahl's full seven principles for a democracy

Seven institutions in particular, taken as a whole, define a type of regime that is historically unique:

1. Control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in elected officials.

2. Elected officials are chosen in frequent and fairly conducted elections in which coercion is comparatively uncommon.

3. Practically all adults have the right to vote in the election of officials.

4. Practically all adults have the right to run for elective offices in the government, though age limits may be higher for holding office than for the suffrage.

5. Citizens have a right to express themselves without the danger of severe punishment on political matters broadly defined, including criticism of officials, the government, the regime, the socioeconomic order, and the prevailing ideology.

6. Citizens have a right to seek out alternative sources of information. Moreover, alternative sources of information exist and are protected by law.

7. To achieve their various rights, including those listed above, citizens also have a right to form relatively independent associations or organizations, including independent political parties and interest groups.