

***Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest.* Tufekci, Zeynep. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017, 325.**

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The advent of internet and social media has changed the nature of connectivity and state of affairs across the globe. The highly interconnected societies turned out as an engine of global change and innovation that not only transformed the institutions, ranging from giant conglomerates to micro entrepreneurs but also altered the basic definitions of personal choices and values. Humankind is not only witnessing a technological transition but also a historic revolution in the fields of politics, civics, culture, society and structures of protest movements. It is a beginning of a new era where the connectivity through social media is playing a key role in modern uprisings against the authoritarian regimes.

With this background, Zeynep Tufekci explored the major transformations brought about in the course of social movements by the new digital technologies in her book, *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. She used Capacities and Signals theory to examine the role of social media in shaping the three basic components of protest movements i.e., making a movement, tools of protestors and aftermath of protest. A human being possesses certain capacities and the actions he performs are basically the signals of those capacities. Similarly, all social movements possess certain set of capacities and signal these capacities in the form of protests, marches, occupations, sit-ins, rallies etc. These signals derive their power from what else the activists can do like massive disruption, institutional change etc.

In her view, the digital revolution in the 21st century drastically altered the relationship between the signals and the underlying capacities of networked social movement and transformed its core mechanisms of collective decision-making, proportional organisation, tactical innovation, building unwavering resilience and ideological foundations. The

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participants of social movements as well as the regimes in power have not yet completely adjusted to this transformation.

The first section of the book entitled “Making a Movement” consists of four chapters. This section addresses the change in the traditional formation mechanisms and how it effects the take-off and future trajectory of the modern networked movements. The core hypothesis here is that “attention” is a crucial and distinctive feature of these movements, which can now be obtained through multiple digital platforms and no longer controlled by the censor regimes. She defined this censorship as “the denial of attention.” Furthermore, there are multiple challenges also along with the strengths of the interaction between authoritarian regime and the adhocratic and leaderless networked movements. The empirical strength and introduction of interesting terminologies like “square spirits,” “globalisation from below” and “tactical freeze,” in this section, invites the readers.

The second section, titled “A Protester’s Tool” consisting of three chapters, is all about the interaction of technology with people. Tufekci adopted a theoretical approach towards technology and discussed the multi-pronged and multi-layered dynamics of technological materiality and sociological exchanges. There is a dominance of few platforms like *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *YouTube* and *Google* in digital spheres, which she referred as the “networked gate keeping.” The author terms the news feed of these platforms “a world with its own laws.” The algorithms, business models and users terms of these platforms are designed in such a way that smooth out the path for the emergence of massive protest movements. Although the features like anonymity and affordability are advantageous in various ways but also leads to constitutional and political crisis in many countries.

Last section discusses the future of these movements in the wake of evolving power and countermeasures of authoritarian regimes. She identified three types of capacities of these movements: narrative capacity, the electoral and institutional capacity and disruptive capacity. In addition to denial of attention through content blocking, Tufekci identified new types of censorship while exploring the responses by the authoritarian regimes. Flooding the social media with fake news and rumours is a modern form of censorship. Governments are using expanded armies to perform this task, which resulted into the emergence of huge profit generating propaganda industry.

Tufekci participated in almost all the leftist anti-authoritarian movements of last five decades like Zapatista movement in Southern Mexico, the Iraq War protests, the Battle in Seattle, Egypt's Tahrir Square uprising, protest against North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Gezi Park protests and the Occupy Watt Street. This book is an unusual yet a remarkable blend of Tufekci's first-hand personal experiences of these protests, technical knowledge and deep qualitative insight, which is further substantiated by the right usage of analogues with clarity, precision and style. She provided an extensive analysis in all three themes through an effective utilisation of knowledge from communication studies, politics, economics, sociology, development studies, history, psychology, journalism and computer sciences. This book is highly recommended for the social activists, politicians, journalists and academics. It also serves the purpose of a basic manual for the students interested in conducting research on the leftist social movements against authoritarian regimes.