Other prospective. Our next speaker. We also have our next book from our next speaker. She has a chip chapter in it's hot off the presses The People Reloaded the green movement in the struggle for Rand's future. Her name is. GOLDBERG Bashi. I have. Someone of my own Can I put this. My next speaker is our last escape. She's a professor at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and she is going to talk about the first Twitter thank you so much for the invitation. Jane and Dr. tyranny and the library services. I'm honored to be. Together with such distinguished colleagues talking about a matter that has been a lot of fun too to witness. Even though we witness these things from from far away. There is a there is an old joke that goes like this. You have freedom of speech when you demonstrate on Red Square. You just don't have freedom of speech after you demonstrate on Red Square. Perhaps share the space with two laptops. I'm not sure if it works. OK so the title of my talk is Iran the first Twitter revolution with a question mark. The most famous pro-democracy movement in the recent past has been in Iran with a nonviolent uprising named the Green Movement. It took the government to task after a questionable election results in 2009. Some of you may remember of course much has happened since 2009. I can't believe it's almost two years since June 12th when Iranians went to the ballot box and voted in mass numbers. Many voted for the progressive candidate Mir Hossein Moussavi and some voted for Ahmadinejad. The the president at the time election results were were were broadcast very soon and in a very controversial way announcing that Ahmadinejad had actually won the elections by a landslide. This infuriated and upset the protesters many of whom are young. Iran's demography just like the rest of the Middle East so-called Middle East. I don't like the term Middle East because it's middle of where Western Asia North Africa is better terms for. For these nations is young. So 80 percent of Iran's population are under 40 60 percent are under 30. So most Iranians that took that went to the ballot box
were born after the 1979 revolution. They don't remember the revolution and they were hoping that within the Islamic Republic framework they could achieve reform and and those sort of thing and not going to have another revolution like their parents where the consequences were actually quite quite bad. A dictator was replaced by even worse much much worse dictator. So the question of the social networking and Facebook and Twitter and so forth really became became one after the Iranian uprising reason why was that Twitter almost crashed during June because so many were posting news and pictures and links on on Twitter and at the night of Michael Jackson's very sad passing I'm a huge fan. Twitter actually completely went down. So that's why a lot of people equated the Iranian Post electoral movement so-called green movement with social networking and so forth. Because again Facebook is fairly new. It's been around since 2000. 6 5. That's right. Most of most of us actually joined 2007 2008 and by now nearly everyone has a Facebook account. So therefore the Iranian event brought the issue of well is social networking really a medium. Can he be trusted. Is it really a tool. What is it. So that's why these issues became of great importance for many. Now I have a picture up here which is from the is a snapshot snapshot of the Guardian newspaper. The online version where they had a live interactive map in in February with hashtags showing where possible demonstrations were going to take place in Silver then of course the Tunisian uprising and the Egyptian revolution that occurred in December January and February of this of this year. Made the issue of social networking and so forth even more vital and as my colleagues eloquently told us again social Facebook and Twitter were used by activists as as a way of informing one another and getting the word out. So lots of cartoons and such and we're now going back to 2009 again were were drawn and distributed and great importance was given again to to Twitter. As my colleagues were saying saying that this is a Twitter revolution if you google Iran Twitter revolution you'll get lots and lots of articles by very reputable news Web sites and so forth. Now in the face of the magnificent revolutions in North Africa Senator John McCain Republican senator from Arizona praised Facebook and Twitter and he said that it was the Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg who was the most popular man in the Middle East.
Now I'm just going to go forward here to. And he said the social networking cannot be underestimated in how all of these events really the driving force and how all of this transformed and took place. He said so he credited Mark Zuckerberg who is the founder of Facebook for really being the driving force for these magnificent uprisings. And I think my my colleagues have described or debunked this assumption so eloquently that I won't go into it so much. Now the facts on the ground tell us something else. Of course Facebook was used Twitter was used and so forth. But there has been a rise in the use of cell phones estimates and other Web sites such as web blogs and so forth that have mushroomed in Iran especially blogging in Persian. At a time was was one of the biggest languages on the worldwide net net even though Persian the official language of Iran isn't really a big language almost around 100 million people speak it in the world which is really peanuts compared to Arabic and Mandarin and and Spanish and so forth. But yet in mid 2000s Persian was the fourth biggest language in the in the blogosphere. So Iranians had utilized the worldwide net. First of all it's as cheap as Mike my colleague was saying if you have a computer if you can somehow manage to get online despite the filters and so forth you can write we can write you can write your heart's desire especially in context where there is a lot of censorship you can get you can write things post things that you didn't really have an opportunity to voice. So Iranians have been very good like the rest of the region it at utilizing the worldwide net World Wide Web. W WW. Right. So this is the skyrocketing of of these of these mediums was of course very important in the election campaign and the post electoral crisis in Iran. Now the Iranians didn't bank on cyberspace. They didn't have a strategy to use it. It just happened to be that it was a was a tool some use that not everyone. Most people actually who demonstrated in the streets and activists spend most of their time in meeting rooms and phoning each other and perhaps has a message and so forth rather than actually being online. It's very difficult to get online and in places like Iran where you have heavy heavy censorship and and so forth. So the premise of my argument is that it's not OK. And in fact it's factually incorrect to call progressive revolutions that are unfolding in the Middle East including Iran for. For Twitter or Facebook it really diminishes their importance
and it doesn't really tell us much about these these countries history their struggles and their potential future. Almost a century before Facebook gave a new cyberspace meaning to the term social networking and his web of group affiliations 1922 George smell 1958 nineteen eighteen suggested that while social groups of Nineteen 18 1958 suggested that what social groups are composed of individuals it is through those groups affiliations that we become and are defined as a social persona. So human beings as my colleagues suggested have always used whatever tool is at you know that is available to them. So Iranians are one of the few nations in the world that waged two revolutions in one century won 19 0 6 nineteen eleven and 1979 revolution. So they know how to do these things. And the reason for it is they learn how to communicate. And this is something they did through the printing machine through simplifying language and and through literacy projects. So just like the Obama campaign for example that was very successful because it managed to communicate with people through YouTube and songs and and utilizing the Web. Iranians have also commute use communication through various means for mobilizing for social change so my question is. Why is it why is it that we call the the recent progressive uprisings and social networking issues and and so forth would we call the British protest again tuition fees that are happening right now and they've been happening for the past few months. A social network revolution or phenomenon. There are many Facebook pages and Twitter hashtags for the British student movement. Would we call the Italian women’s anti Berlusconi movement for a cyberspace phenomena. Again a lot of these movements now in Europe are you know they have Facebook pages and they’d communicate a lot through Facebook. Would we call the Madison Wisconsin. Protest for a cyberspace phenomena. Again if you go into Facebook or Twitter and you search under Wisconsin Madison you get tons and tons and tons of results. Now so if if you're. If the answer to those pictures from Europe and the United States is no then you can apply the same rationale behind saying no to the Middle East the Muslim North African revolutions as being a cyberspace phenomena phenomena and to credit for example Mark Zuckerberg and so forth for really being the hero of these of these events. Now Iran's history as I just mentioned earlier
has provided guidance for the current uprising against the theocracy in Iran not Facebook no matter how many status updates you may get. Telling you to go into the streets or to do this and that unless you have been you are wary of your long history and you're confident in in your society's ability to to demand an exact change you're not going to go out and do anything. So here I have some pictures from from 20th century Iran. This is 1953 pro Mossadeq. Demonstrations as many of you I'm sure know. Mohammad was said that was the nationalist prime minister of Iran democratically elected. And he managed to nationalize Iran's oil which was a really big deal it still is. It infuriated the British BP Beyond Petroleum actually was British Petroleum British Petroleum it's actually a Oh I see Anglo Iranian Oil Company. So Iranians went out in the streets in defense of their prime minister. He was eventually ousted in a CIA engineered coup. The way I explained this to my students here at Rutgers is to say Imagine if there would be a CIA engineer coup and would bring back Ben Ali to Tunisia because he would would he. He was easier to deal with or bring back Hosni Mubarak to Cairo. What what that would mean. So this is what Iranians did when they were wary and rightly so that their democratically elected prime minister was going to be ousted and he was through the CIA led coup that brought back the Shah because the Shah was much easier to deal with the United States and he became a huge huge ally of the US and pretty much reverse the nationalization of oil. Effort by giving again concessions to American British French companies and giving them great great great benefits as as it had been before. So here we have Iranians demonstrating you see a lot of women who see you see men. Here's pictures from the same demonstration people rallying outside in defense of their prime minister Here's pictures of the 1979 anti Shah demonstrations of the people's movement against the Shah a multifaceted movement Islamists socialists nationalists and so forth it was obviously hijacked as we know after the success of overthrowing the Shah and unfortunately took a turn for much much worse than anyone could have anticipated. But again Iranians were out in the streets demonstrating and 1979. There was no such thing as cyberspace or so not even cell phones. So the word of mouth reading communicating and the will and desire for change here are women protesting. This is after the
revolution has been victorious. And one of the first things that Ayatollah Khomeini the founder of the Islamic Republic did was to revoke women's rights in Iranian law and making veiling mandatory. So you have both veiled and unveiled women protesting against this mandatory law. Picture from 1979 now in the 2000s. Well it began really in the 1990s when Iran elected a slightly more liberal president named Mohammad Khatami. He was voted again by it by the mostly young and female electorate based on his promise for change. And he opened up Iran to the Internet and so forth. And women especially were one of the groups that were very good at using it. So they set up these sorts of feminist Web sites. This one is a stop stoning forever campaign which is based on a coalition of feminists and they post news and and they gather signatures and so forth. This is signed for change. I don't know how many times have had to change their domain name because they get filtered so they've gone from sign for change dot com to dot org to net to dot everything because they constantly get filtered blocked and their writers and administrators have been imprisoned and questioned and harassed. This is a very successful campaign one million signatures campaign where Iranian women gather signatures out in the street. But they had a Web site where they had the information about the campaign that would go out and ask people to sign a statement that they wanted to deliver to the through the parliament asking for all the gender discriminatory laws to be revoked. These were these began in the 1990s but took momentum in the 2000s. So lots and lots of campaigns online. But again I know a lot of these women's rights activists are very good friends of mine and they said they spend most of their time in each other's homes in meetings and workshops. And reading and discussing and things that would have Web sites that would have an administrator that would update the Web sites and post things. But a lot of the actual activity and work was happening in real life not in virtual life. So what we saw we saw in the green movement the uprising was an extension of Iranian especially young people students women's rights activists of using the Internet for communicating and and so forth. I guess what was really interesting about 2009 was the pictures that we got to see from Iran because if we rely on mainstream media we don't always get to see the real the real picture even though we have
lots of alternative media these days. I love Jon Stewart. I watch him religiously. I get all my information. Most of my information from him democracy now is wonderful. The real news network is great. The nation magazine and and so forth so I mean we're not stuck with Fox News and and so forth anymore. But again these pictures the intimacy of the pictures because they're most of them are taken by immature people just not you know Getty Images or a f images they're taken by ordinary people on their cell phones or on their digital cameras. So these were interesting in that sense that we got to see very close pictures because if you compare it to the pictures from the 1953 they're long shots right there taken by by professional journalists and photographers a lot of them BBC foreign correspondents that couldn't really get into the crowds. But what was wonderful about 2009 was that the pictures that people were taking on their digital cameras and cell phones were so intimate we actually got to see grandmas and grandpas and veterans and close ups close ups of people. Again this must most probably is taken by her by her friend because you can't really get this close to someone especially in the context of of countries that are severely repressive. People would run if they saw a professional journalist. These images more than anything have inspired people and have created a sort of a transnational solidarity one of the nicest things that I witnessed on on Facebook was the immense solidarity that Iranian green activists showed towards their North African counterparts. It was quite moving in terms of the artwork that was being produced by Iranian kids in solidarity with their Tunisian brothers and sisters and with their Egyptian brothers and sisters and they would most probably not really known about them as much had it not been for Facebook and that sort of thing and then on Al Jazeera especially also played a huge role in getting the information out and providing us with. Some more accurate picture. These are posters produced by. Iranian green activists we are united. A lot of them are in English Arabic and Persian. The same activist did this. Drew this poster you have the classic the victory sign which was just supposed to represent Iran and then you have all these fists. And also victory signs with the Lebanese and the Egyptian that the Tunisian and the Palestinian. There is a wonderful artist. I recommend you checking her out her her artistic name is tell me.
She doesn't reveal her real name. She has done magnificent posters. That have become the sort of iconic image of the Green Movement in Iran. But she also has has recently done immediately because I'm Facebook friends with her my claim to fame and so immediately with the Tunisian uprising and so forth she started drawing these beautiful pictures of. Egyptians Tunisians with Iranians. Together demanding change. This is another one of her posters Cairo Tehran. People are aware. This one is actually from 2009. This is before the recent uprising in the Arab world. This is Jerusalem Day. This is a poster she she made for the Jerusalem Day Jerusalem Day as is a date that the Islamic Republic has used as a as a propaganda tool to show great opposition to Israel and to show pro Palestinian solidarity and so forth. And what green activists did and tell me really defined that was to take Jerusalem Day and make it about people solidarity and not Islamic Republic versus the Israeli state but about people's solidarity that Iranians and Palestinians perhaps not in exactly similar way get Iranians at least have a nation. Palestinians don't but they're together in the struggle for freedom and dignity. So she did this beautiful poster. It's supposed to be a Iranian green activist and a Palestinian they're both holding the doves and it says in Hakimullah manners this is my land in Tehran to to Jerusalem. So. Passing on the torch. Beautiful artwork that is produced and we are we can easily get hold of it because of the because of the web so and I'll finish here with my references that I've used and I wanted to just quickly if I if I may. And with a beautiful quote by Tarek by Cui who wrote a fantastic piece in Aljazeera net the English Web site for Al Jazeera titled The Globe like globalization of revolution. He says this is the globalization of revolution and these are the histories within which the Tunisian examples belongs. The example that's so inspired the Egyptian people news of it might as well have arrived in Egypt by caravan as by fiber optic cable. It would still have been electric. The very idea that the solitary stand of a fruit seller could bring down a big big. I'm sorry I'm ruining it. The very idea that the solitary stand of a fruit seller could bring down the big men. The agency was human. The act political. I think that really sums up you know the Iranian position as well that this is not about the Internet and the Internet as a tool just like telephone. Just like the printing machine. And it's really the will of the people. It's the it's the
long history of peoples in a region of the world that has been vilified. And we're lucky to have Professor Kumar here at Rutgers who's a world renowned expert in this field. So thank you so much and I'm sorry I went over my time and thank you.