

Power, the State, and the Social Media Network

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In a 1936 article entitled “Technology and Governmental Change,” William Fielding Ogburn presciently called attention to what would evolve into one of the most pressing political issues of our time: “Some governmental structures are. . .an unusual obstacle to change,” wrote Ogburn, “Meanwhile, technology develops, is let loose on society, sweeping all before it.”¹ In other words, the sovereign state is antithetical to the flux of technological progress; one must inevitably succumb to the pressures of the other. Whilst the state, Ogburn claimed, was cemented in time as an impasse, or a beacon of stability in a world increasingly engulfed in social, political, and economic transition, the technological wave permeating and coursing through its sovereign borders eschewed tradition, wrought social progression, and fostered political instability. The state, in short, was a bastion of familiarity, sheltering citizens from the destabilizing encroachments of technology. Ogburn warned, however, that the state risked failing its own domestic populace and society if it did not balance against this new technological flux; constant augmentation, adjustment, and administrative and political evolution, were all required by the state to prevent it from becoming engulfed and overcome. “Technology rolls on like a huge tidal wave,” he concluded, “while governmental structures stand like the rock of ages in a world of disorder. . .If governmental structures won’t change and technology can’t be stopped, what will happen?”²

This edition of *St Antony’s International Review* seeks to shed light upon this question, by inquiring into the contemporary relationship between

Scott Hamilton, Benjamin Martill, and Katharine Millar, “Power, the State, and the Social Media Network,” *St Antony’s International Review* 8, no. 2 (2013): 2–11.

power, the state, and what is perhaps the most pronounced and widely disseminated digital social technology the world has as of yet encountered: *the social media network*. As the existence of (and, as we believe, the *necessity* of) such a volume testifies, an answer to Ogburn's question is more urgently needed today than it was when first uttered some seventy-seven years ago. What is happening to the state as it becomes engulfed and permeated by modern technology? How has the spread of the social media network to billions of people around the globe altered or affected national, international, and global politics? Within Western states it appears as if a virtual truism has developed, which assumes that social media networks facilitate political communication and discussion through their remarkable speed, ease of accessibility, and openness. They eliminate the barriers previously wrought by unassailable factors such as geographic distance, press and state censorship, and the brutal violence that can be unleashed upon citizens to stifle public meeting, discussion, deliberation, and planning. Today, undergirding and affecting political movements as far apart as New York's Zuccotti Park and Egypt's Tahrir Square, "Facebook revolutions" and "Twitter revolutions" are conceived of as borne out of social media networks; they oscillate between the Charybdis of an anarchic freedom and the Scylla of surveilled repression, utilized by both citizens and the state. With such power, social media now holds the potential to both empower and propagandize, secure and surveil, to *create*, and to *destroy*.

Naturally, the greater the stakes involved in any type of politics, the greater the debate that ensues. The question surrounding the state and social media networks is no different. Commentators discussing the power of social media technology tend to adopt some form of either cyber-utopianism, emphasizing "how digital technologies and global interconnectivity rendered the internet a new public sphere, spearheaded by social media, in which transformational politics and democratic values evolve unhindered," or a cyber-scepticism, emphasizing the opposite, i.e. that social media networks exhibit "technological hype as another exaggerated expression. . . eventually [being] used for authoritarian purposes, thus tempering their democratizing potential."³ Perhaps the most public exchange between these two perspectives occurred in 2011, between cyber-utopian Clay Shirky, and cyber-sceptic, Malcolm Gladwell. Embracing the perspective of the former, Shirky claimed that "As the communications landscape gets denser, more complex, and more participatory, the networked population is gaining greater access to information, more opportunities to engage in public speech, and an enhanced ability to undertake collective action."⁴ Social media, in short, channels domestic sentiment into a new form of power that can challenge that of the

state. Embracing the latter position, however, Gladwell poignantly noted “that just because innovations in communications technology happen does not mean that they matter.” Social media, in other words, perhaps lies most visibly at the periphery of a political movement, but that does not mean that the movement would never have occurred in its absence.⁵ Indeed, citizens have discussed, debated, and rebelled against their state, long before this most recent wave of social media technology washed up onto the shores of contemporary politics. What the debate between these two thinkers signifies, however, stretches beyond their work, reaching all the way back to Ogburn’s concerns, and perhaps forward to future generations: what is the relationship between power, the state, and the social media network?

The works in this edition continue this contentious exchange, drawing knowledge both from a variety of social science disciplines, and the practice of governmental and societal institutions. Together, the contributions depict the complex interrelationships between the binary categories brought to mind by processes of technological and societal change: utopia versus dystopia, hope versus disappointment, progress versus failure, and domination versus emancipation. Each of the contributions to this volume grapple with these thorny normative and explanatory issues, and each has a different take on the subtleties of their interrelation. The authors in this edition utilize both the cyber-utopian and cyber-sceptic perspectives to answer questions about how power, the state, and the social media network *intertwine* in unpredictable ways. Detangling their symbiosis is indeed not an easy task. What unifies each contribution in this special edition, however, is not simply a focus on social media networks, but an implicit establishment, or recognition, of a new ontological plane of discussion on which politics can now occur: the *digital-political*, in which technology affects, and is in turn being affected by, the *materials*, bodies, and politics, of the citizens living within the state. For better or for worse, these digital networks have become a real and impactful manifestation of politics. As such, when viewed as a whole, the contributions in this edition establish a middle ground between the utopian and sceptic dichotomies of substantive social and political change vs. empty digital rhetoric and window-dressing; progress vs. repetition, substance vs. fluff. Spanning regions of the world as disparate as the networks they discuss, authors move from Bahrain, to Singapore, to Washington D.C., their geographical and regional variation matching the contending theoretical and philosophical perspectives embodied within each separate article. If each article is conceived as a networked node that combines to form this edition of *St Antony’s International Review*, they represent and act as a

testament to the variegated, multileveled, and multitudinous nature of the social media network itself.

However, it is not simply the meeting of many minds on the ontological plane of the digital-political that makes the articles in this edition of *STAIR* both timely and nuanced; it is their differences, and disagreements, that illustrate the subtleties and difficulties in pinning down social media. Whether considering new forms of political praxis, or emphasizing the subtle surveillance of a digital Big Brother, there are three common trends which emerge from the contributions that are worth highlighting here. The first is the importance of social media. In contrast to much "mainstream" scholarship, each of the contributors here argues persuasively for recognition of the impact that recent technological changes so often labelled as peripheral to "high politics" have on political processes and events. A second trend is the tendency to eschew extreme positions on the twin dimensions of liberal versus illiberal and revolutionary versus transformative. All the authors share a certain scepticism towards attempts to label the impact of social media as progressive or regressive, adopting as they do a more nuanced shared conception of the nature of change and the normative conclusions which follow. Finally, all the contributions share a desire to push the debate forward in new directions, whether this is by asking novel questions, combining insights from different theoretical traditions, or applying existing accounts "out of area" to those policy areas, institutions and geographical regions where our understanding of the impact of social media has been heretofore limited. In the conclusion to his 1936 article, Ogburn warned that "Time on the clock of technology cannot be turned back."⁶ Let us hope, then, that this edition heeds his warnings, by casting some much-needed light on both our present circumstances, as well as the shadow of our future.

The first article in this edition by Pamela Shearing looks at just how "the clock of technology" is affecting international norms through social media networks. Shearing cleverly gauges how deeply permutations within the discourse of social media reverberate on the international stage by turning to the doctrine of "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P). Can the ebb and flow of debate surrounding the invocation of R2P be used as a means through which to gauge the effect of social media upon international norms? Can social media make a substantial enough impact within powerful states, that an international consensus justifying intervening in another state's sovereign territory develops? Is social media limited to the confines of the online community, or can it create a sense of awareness that not only transcends the state, but the digital realm, as well? Shearing juxtaposes international responses to crises in Libya and Syria in order to gauge whether social media in each case served as an

effective medium through which to justify invoking R2P. Though noting that social media is a double-edged sword that serves, depending on the user, both freedom and justice or tyranny and oppression, Shearing's ultimate conclusion is perhaps more optimistic than other authors in this volume: through establishing a mechanism for the creation of collective discussion that would otherwise be prohibited, social media networks can serve as a voice to the voiceless, calling for international assistance in crises that would otherwise go unheard.

Our second article by Vicente Chua Reyes highlights the tension alluded to by Ogburn, between the maintenance of tradition and the modernizing effects that the wave of social media technologies has upon the cultural stasis of some states. At what level, if any, is it normatively acceptable for a state to intervene in order to *prevent* the dissolution of its culture or tradition? Are social media networks implicit mechanisms to facilitate a technological, or Westernized, homogeneity? Is "political space" determined by the state's physical boundaries, or by a discursive consensus established by citizens thinking and discussing politics within it? Reyes's article is a timely contribution that highlights how Singapore's use of "tactical globalization," or the attempt at funnelling technological flows of communication associated with modernity through state-approved channels, meets resistance at the level of its citizenry. Reyes expertly illustrates how social media networks have the potential to act as "liberation technologies" by facilitating free and anonymous discussions around political events, during crucial periods such as elections, that would otherwise go unreported. When Singapore blocks access to social media networks on the grounds of maintaining the cultural purity of its state, yet, becomes impure in turn when those same banned technologies expose wrongdoing in a "politics of scandal," what becomes of free speech and national identity? Reyes' article treads the line between freedom and tradition, eventually culminating in the conclusion that perhaps the latter can no longer exist without the former.

Our third article by Cara Robinson inquires as to where the *values* undergirding the democratic sentiment proffered through social media networks arise. Are social media networks tools for free speech, functioning as deliberative spaces in which enlightened discussion surrounding policy and politics can occur? Or, can social media become as segmented, exclusionary, and as hegemonic, as she claims the mainstream mass media can be? Robinson skilfully answers this question by weaving into the psyche of US Internet and media culture during the run-up to the 2012 Presidential elections. She discovers that online discussion boards, supposed havens and incubators of free speech, discussion, and even political education, are in actuality not the bastion of

freedom that their adherents claim. In fact, they are prone to ominously and subtly replicating dominant and hegemonic American values, without users even being aware that they are becoming instilled with particular and partitioned types of thought. Robinson's piece serves as a cautionary tale, to remind us that even in a state that claims to be as free as the United States, social media networks can embody and entrench a restrictive and narrow neoliberal hegemony.

Our next article by Eric Novotny addresses the relation between social media and the state from both a scholarly and a policy-making perspective, which allows for a detailed and insightful account of governmental responses to social media mobilization. Novotny addresses three cases where social media has been important in fermenting the mobilization of the political opposition; Iran, Egypt and Tunisia. For each case he charts the initial conditions which provided for the emergence of social media as a catalyst for opposition, the impact the use of such technologies had as the course of the protest unfolded, and both the short- and long-term strategies adopted by governments in attempting to control the use of social media. Novotny argues that a focus on four distinct analytical lenses access, anonymity, awareness, and advocacy allows us to understand the differentiated impact which social media had in each case, and the subsequent ability of governments to contain and constrain this influence. The empirical record suggests, he argues, that the role of social media in supporting and maintaining political opposition should not be underestimated, concluding that regimes have had to learn the hard way of the power social media networks can bring to bear against the state apparatus.

In our final article of this themed section, Kristen Meredith examines the role played by social media in Russia's "white revolution" which began in 2011. Meredith argues against the "cyber-utopianist" view that social media engagement promotes democracy and political liberalization. In utilizing the Russian example, she demonstrates how the state has expanded its presence within social media, and is continuously devising new strategies of engagement. In this manner, the euphoria which emerged from the initial usage of social media to help co-ordinate protest in Russia was met with an increased desire on the part of the state to utilize such technological innovation for its own ends. She suggests that social media is now a "battleground" between the state and civil society. The sobering reality of the state's ability to counteract, immobilize and hijack the workings of social media networks steers Meredith into recommending Russian citizens adopt a more realistic view of the promises and possibilities of social media for political mobilization. Rather than seeing social media as a solution for a broken civil society and the threat

of political repression, she recommends viewing it in a more purposive, instrumental sense, as a tool for increasing the organization, interaction and collaboration between citizens.

Together, the contributions featured here under the theme of “Power, the State, and the Social Media Network” display varying levels of consensus and disagreement. It is perhaps the disagreements that, from a scholarly point of view, stand out as the most interesting and consequential. Broadly speaking we can distinguish variation along two dimensions of the relation between social media networks and international politics. The first concerns the extent of their impact: is social media a revolutionary transformation which fundamentally shifts the prevailing ontology of global politics? Or are the effects of social media transformative in a more subtle manner, remaining contained and constrained by pre-existing forms of social and political organization? Here Reyes is closer to the revolutionary side of the “equation,” so to speak, in stressing the fundamental changes wrought on by the emergence of social media for the foundational underpinnings of the state and the practices which sustain its existence. This is in contrast to Robinson and Novotny, whose contributions focus on the more transformative, intervening role that social media plays within existing political arrangements. A second distinction concerns the nature of the impact social media has, a question more normative than explanatory. Here the principal divide is between those contributors who acknowledge the emancipatory and liberalizing tendencies which accompany shifts in communicative technologies, and those stressing the extent to which power-relations based on domination are sustained, reproduced and intensified by these changing modalities. Shearing’s contribution is perhaps the most liberal interpretation of this relationship, and she demonstrates the ways in which under certain conditions engagement with social media can help to strengthen international liberal norms surrounding the protection of individuals. Novotny too outlines a broadly liberal account of the positive role social media networks can come to play in buttressing movements for political reform, although he is more cautious of the various strategies states may use to “push back” and insulate itself against these pressures. Meredith, in contrast, is concerned with problematizing the “cyber-utopian” assumption that the emergence of social media naturally promotes liberal outcomes, pointing to the potential for state-dominated strategies of disempowerment to work through social media technologies.

That the accounts diverge at points should not be surprising, and we would hasten to point out that often these disagreements are of a mild nature. They are, however, important to recognize: it is only by foregrounding the different interpretations of the nature, role and extent of

social media's impact on political structures that we can begin to open up new avenues of debate, asking new questions, which hold out the promise of exciting new answers. Though the differences between the contributions matter for the development of the field, however, the commonalities are also important: they provide the requisite level of consensus which bounds the field and assures us that intellectual progress is being made. By highlighting these intellectually progressive moves we hope to illustrate to the reader the importance of engaging with the theoretical and empirical arguments contained within this edition, which each in their own way push forwards the boundaries of scholarship and help us address fundamental and prescient changes in the global political environment.

STAIR's commitment to excellence in interdisciplinary scholarship is similarly reflected in the general section. The three articles featured in this edition display diverse understandings of international affairs, encompassing research from the fields of development studies, foreign policy analysis, and international public health policy. Each piece highlights the importance of considering the iterative interaction between the international and the domestic in the analysis of global politics, from the influence of the Millennium Development Goals on changing attitudes toward education in rural Pakistan, to the personal relationships existing between the American and Russian presidents, to the foreign aid partnerships between China and African states. In keeping with its founding mandate, *STAIR* is pleased to provide a forum where works of such cross-cutting interest, produced by both established scholars and young academics, may be considered jointly.

In the first article of the general section, Willy Oppenheim provides a critical analysis of the motivations underlying the decisions of parents in villages in rural Pakistan to send their daughters to school. In doing so, he challenges the conventional wisdom of international development policy—encapsulated in the Millennium Development Goals—that decreasing disparities in primary and secondary school enrolment will inevitably lead to an improvement in gender equality and the empowerment of women. Oppenheim argues that the “demand” for girls’ education should be understood not as a simple binary variable, but as a complex of differing—and often contradictory—ways members of a community understand the reasons girls should or should not go to school. Crucially, he finds that while some parents valued girls’ education in economic terms, others valued schooling because it taught Islam, manners, and personal traits such as obedience. The depth of his analysis is amply demonstrated by the author’s fieldwork, which included daily informal observations, basic questionnaires, and thirty-seven interviews

conducted over a period of six weeks. Oppenheim concludes that the demand for girls' schooling is best understood qualitatively, as a multifaceted process that not only shapes but also reflects broader social attitudes towards education and gender. Overall, his piece is a welcome reflection upon both the feasibility and advisability of evaluating international development interventions—such as those envisaged in the Millennium Development Goals—simply through the use of large statistical metrics. This article is thus essential reading for those interested in international education policy, global women's empowerment, and, more broadly, the trade-offs between quantitative and qualitative social scientific research.

Next, in an extremely topical piece, Kari Roberts evaluates the future of Russian-American relations in the context of the Obama and Putin presidencies. In 2009, under US President Obama and Russian President Medvedev, the two states worked to “reset” their relationship, creating a friendlier context for co-operation in areas of shared interest, and more constructive diplomacy in cases of disagreement. Roberts provides an insightful analysis of the effect of Vladimir Putin's 2012 return to the Russian presidency upon the future of such co-operation. In a twist of perspective uncommon in international relations which, in reference to the relationship between Russia and the United States, tends to focus on macro-systems analyses of great power politics reminiscent of the Cold War, Roberts focuses on the importance of internal political structures in influencing foreign policy. More specifically, she puts forward the proposition that domestic political structures—ranging from institutional arrangements to opposition parties—are best understood as either facilitating or constraining the agency of key foreign policy players. Roberts argues that due to the “super-presidential” nature of the Russian constitution and political institutions, the Russian president enjoys far greater autonomy in forging foreign policy than his American counterpart, who is constrained by stronger institutional checks and balances. As such, she concludes, the future success (or failure) of the “reset” between the United States and Russia lies more with President Putin than President Obama. Given Putin's past hostility toward the West and habitual indulgence in Cold War-esque rhetoric, Roberts is ultimately pessimistic about the future of co-operation between Russia and the United States. Benefitting from Roberts' in-depth knowledge of the history of relations between these two nations and internal political structures, this article will be of interest to experts in comparative constitutionalism, foreign policy, and area studies.

Finally, Paul Kadetz considers an under-examined yet fascinating aspect of China's foreign policy, that of international health assistance and diplomacy, toward various African states. Confronting the common-sense

assumption, prevalent throughout the academic literature, that all health diplomacy is inherently beneficent, Kadetz calls for a more specific evaluation of the efficacy of health diplomacy in terms of the context-appropriateness and form of proffered aid, as well as the political and economic ideologies inherent to such transfers. Through the examination of three key components—ideology, technology, and structure—Kadetz demonstrates that all health diplomacy is not created equal. The strength of the author's analysis derives from his unique empirical data, consisting of thirty unstructured interviews with African and Chinese health practitioners possessing first-hand knowledge of the local African application of Chinese health diplomacy. Overall, while acknowledging the potential weaknesses of the Chinese approach, Kadetz argues that not only does the Chinese model fundamentally differ from that of the West, but that it is often more effective. Given China's unique framing of such South-South interactions as a mutually-beneficial partnership, rather than traditional donor-recipient relationship, Kadetz's discussion of the ideological foundations of China's health diplomacy has relevance far beyond the field of international public health policy. Scholars from a wide range of fields, from foreign policy analysis to post-colonial studies, should take note.

Together, the articles of the social media themed section and the general section constitute an original and compelling body of work. We hope you find them as enjoyable and enlightening as we have. ■

Notes

¹ William Fielding Ogburn, 'Technology and Governmental Change', *The Journal of Business of the University of Chicago* 9, no. 1 (1936): 13.

² *Ibid.*, 13.

³ Vasileios Karagiannopoulos, 'The Role of the Internet in Political Struggles: Some Conclusions from Iran and Egypt', *New Political Science* 34, no. 2 (2012).

⁴ Clay Shirky, 'The Political Power of Social Media', *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 1 (2011): 28-41.

⁵ Malcolm Gladwell, 'An Absence of Evidence', *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2011): 153-154.

⁶ Ogburn, 'Technology and Governmental Change,' 13.

POWER, THE STATE, AND THE SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORK

Has Social Media Revolutionized Awareness of Humanitarian Abuses and the “Responsibility to Protect”?

PAM SHEARING

ABSTRACT

In 2001, the foundations of the international concept, the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P) were laid following a period of humanitarian abuses, catastrophic inaction, and failed interventions during the 1990s. At the same time, media communications were fundamentally changing with the birth of social media websites. During the Arab uprisings in 2011, these concepts came together as the international community witnessed a series of revolutions across North Africa and the Middle East, as civilians called for democracy, the protection of human rights, and the overthrow of political leaders. The speed at which the protests crossed the region was momentous. Some even labelled the protests the “Twitter Revolution” as online citizen journalists increased awareness of humanitarian abuses, encouraged fellow countrymen to protest, raised international interest in the region, and in some cases, called for the implementation of R2P. Until this time R2P had remained an unpractised concept, but it was soon pushed to centre stage as the international community debated whether the Arab uprisings presented a precedent-setting opportunity for its implementation. As events have subsequently shown, R2P was only implemented in Libya; the protests in Egypt and Tunisia were resolved without recourse to military force, and although questions about the implementation of R2P in Syria persist, its implementation there is somewhat unlikely. This essay therefore seeks to explore the relationship between these concepts during the Arab uprisings, questioning whether social media has revolutionized the world’s awareness of humanitarian abuses and R2P.

Social media websites and the Internet offer an important check upon the international community's response to international crises and humanitarian abuses. They open another window through which the world can witness humanitarian disasters, share opinions, discuss international intervention, and highlight international failings when a response is inadequate, slow to take place, or altogether absent. Other news reporting methods such as television, radio, and newspapers, are all still integral parts of the transmission of information. The development of citizen journalism, through the power of iPads and smart phones, however, raises the possibility of a new generation of civilian reporters that possess the capacity to invite the world into their communities, thereby unveiling a world which otherwise might not be seen.¹ This provides a forum through which complete strangers in remote places can debate, and engage in, the worldwide court of public opinion.²

Certainly the number of Facebook members, Twitter users, and YouTube postings demonstrates the sheer scale of social media usage and Internet access, but to what extent has this raised awareness of humanitarian abuses around the world? How much has it contributed to defining the international community's response and, in particular, its application of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine? This paper will consider these questions in the context of the recent Arab uprisings, exploring the influence of social media in popularizing events and its contribution to the protests, whilst also considering its influence in raising awareness of R2P within the international community.

An Emerging Norm

Over the years the world has witnessed a growing number of internal conflicts and humanitarian abuses as rival groups struggle for power. It is often hard for neighbouring states to ignore such events, not only owing to the high levels of suffering and human rights violations that take place, but also due to the significant numbers of refugees seeking asylum across borders, and the fear that these events may encourage internal dissent within their own population. Such states have therefore often speculated about intervention, through the use of sanctions or military force, to stabilize their neighbours. This, however, violates established principles of state sovereignty, which regard states as possessing the ultimate authority for acts taking place within their borders, and has

raised speculation whether foreign interventions are simply pretexts for unsanctioned military action.

This is not a new problem. In 1965, the UN sought to provide clarity to the ongoing debate on when to intervene in a sovereign state by confirming that:

No state has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason, whatsoever, in the internal or external affairs of any other state. Consequently, armed intervention and all other forms of interference or attempted threats against the personality of the state or against its political, economic, and cultural elements are condemned.³

This position was reiterated in 1970 when the UN stated that:

Every state has a duty to refrain from organising, instigating, assisting or participating in acts of civil strife or terrorist acts in another state, or acquiescing in organised activities within its territory which directed towards the commission of such acts gave support or sustenance to such civil conflict.⁴

Nevertheless, during this time a number of international treaties and laws were emerging that demanded protection for human rights, thereby catapulting to the forefront of the international agenda the human rights of the private citizen.⁵ They demonstrated that respect for state sovereignty would no longer be tolerated as a viable defence when states refused to protect their own citizens' human rights. In the words of former UN Secretary General Boutros-Boutros Ghali, "the time of absolute and exclusive sovereignty...[had] passed."⁶

The Rwandan genocide, the crisis in Darfur, the suffering in Somalia, and the Srebrenica massacres are just some of the internal conflicts experienced during the 1990s that highlighted the practical difficulties of reconciling the principle of state sovereignty with individual human rights. The traditional concept of absolute state sovereignty was being eroded so that "no legal principle—not even sovereignty—...[could] ever shield crimes against humanity."⁷ Accordingly, whilst it was accepted that "the defence of humanity and the defence of sovereignty are principles that must be supported," there was crucially no agreement as to "which principle should prevail when they are in conflict."⁸

The UN Charter provides no further clarity. It states both that the use of force is prohibited against the "territorial integrity or political independence" of any state,⁹ and that states are required to protect civilians from "the scourge of war."¹⁰ Furthermore, the use of force is only acceptable when authorized by the UN in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter in the event of a "threat to international peace and

security". The Charter, however, provides no guidance as to what constitutes such a threat, which has hindered the UN's credibility as the "conscience of humanity."¹¹

The haphazard and unsatisfactory nature of the interventions during the 1990s highlighted the need for a legal definition of humanitarian intervention, with clearer guidance as to when and by whom it should be applied. The task of resolving this difficulty fell to the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), which concluded that primary responsibility for civilian protection lay with the state. If that state was, however, unwilling or unable to protect its people, then the state effectively abrogated its sovereignty, thereby allowing the international community to intervene. This effectively shifted emphasis away from the sovereign rights of the state, to the human welfare of its individuals, under the principle not of a 'right to intervene' but rather a 'responsibility to protect.' It sought not to trample on state sovereignty, but to deliver "practical protection for ordinary people, at risk of their lives, because their states are unwilling or unable to protect them."¹² Such responsibility incorporated three strands: the responsibility to prevent, to react, and to rebuild.¹³

Just as R2P was gathering support, 9/11 and the 2003 Iraq invasion overshadowed its development, and the world became pre-occupied with international security and counterterrorism.¹⁴ The ill-use of R2P terminology by politicians as they sought to justify the presence of troops in Iraq became "devastating to the responsibility to protect agenda" and increased fears that R2P had become a "smokescreen" for powerful states to use military interventions as a pretext to encroach upon the sovereignty of smaller states.¹⁵ This quickly exacerbated "suspicions about humanitarian justifications for the general use of force."¹⁶

The 2005 World Summit helped to rebuild support for R2P as 170 states deliberated on the concept and language of R2P. Whilst the Summit's text was a slightly watered down version of that produced by the ICISS, it nonetheless acknowledged that the international community had a responsibility to protect individuals in certain situations when their states failed to provide such protection. Action became dependent upon UN Security Council support, with states agreeing that they were:

Prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII, on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate, should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.¹⁷

Following the Summit, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1674 which committed the UN to “protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.”¹⁸ R2P was emerging as a clearly defined duty, and a failure to act upon its principles was, therefore, starting to be seen as a dereliction of an international obligation, although how this was to be enforced was still an open question.

The Rise of Social Media

As R2P entered its second decade, the popularity of digital communication was dramatically expanding.¹⁹ In 2000, global Internet access stood at approximately 360 million, but ten years later that figure had surpassed 1.9 billion, representing twenty-eight per cent of the world’s population.²⁰ A new, often ignored, audience in some parts of the world, especially in Africa,²¹ had become “far more plugged in than most people realise.”²² In Africa and in the Middle East, Internet use now stands at approximately eleven per cent and thirty per cent respectively.²³ An increasing proportion of individuals now also rely upon social media networking sites for their news. The 2011 Arab Social Media Report, for example, identified that ninety-four per cent of Tunisians and eighty-eight per cent of Egyptians relied on social media websites rather than on state-sponsored networks for news and information.²⁴

Social Media and Participatory Democracy

Social media has supported the growth of a new form of participatory democracy whereby, through a public social online space,²⁵ “private citizens gather as a public body...in order to form public opinion.”²⁶ National borders are becoming irrelevant as individuals take advantage of the opportunity to exchange personal accounts of opposition and civil unrest or to record and post online film footage of humanitarian abuses, human suffering, and state suppression. Social media networks have therefore become tools through which individuals can help to influence foreign audiences and encourage international action. This effect was particularly visible during the Arab uprisings in Libya when competing groups conducted their own virtual campaigns to attract international public support and to demand the implementation of R2P. As such, social media networks are becoming educational tools through which the international community can be kept informed of R2P’s scope, meaning, and relevance.

As Diamond argues, social media allows ordinary citizens to “report news, expose wrongdoing, express opinions, mobilize protest, monitor elections, scrutinize government, deepen participation, and expand the horizons of freedom.”²⁷ Without the Internet and social media, these communications might otherwise have been censored or prohibited by state governments. For individuals who have spent years living under oppression and censorship, social media and the Internet have become an important tool through which their anonymity can be maintained, and their stories, articles, and images relayed to the world, thereby establishing an online “accessible archive of information.”²⁸ Like-minded groups and non-governmental organizations are, therefore, now able to converse and establish a more interconnected and uniform message.²⁹ As a result, the barricades of today’s protests are transforming, so that they bristle not “with bayonet and rifles, but with phones.”³⁰

This is not to say that traditional forms of media communications find themselves redundant. Al-Jazeera, for example, has opened up an alternative form for information distribution out of the Arab region. It has recognized the significance of this “new system of mass communication” of citizen journalism and has identified key bloggers to act as in-country citizen reporters able to verify information for the network. Private citizens can now, in real-time, act as “sources of unadulterated truth”³¹ who “contest the narrative crafting and information-controlling capabilities of authoritarian regimes.”³² As Allan and Thorsen acknowledge, news networks are becoming more proactive in soliciting this form of citizen journalism, recognising that it can enrich news reports by providing unique stories that would not otherwise be heard.³³ The difficulty lies in drawing a distinction between reality and cases in which individuals seek to “pose their [own] visions of the world” in order to raise awareness of a cause.³⁴

Government Suppression

Whilst the development of digital communications and rapid technological advancements has increased international awareness of R2P and international crises, some state leaders have reacted swiftly to these developments, by either banning Internet access to specific websites and/or monitoring its usage. Some have even elected to use the same technology themselves as a means through which they can identify dissenters and “harvest information”.³⁵ As Amnesty International warns, the use of social media can therefore leave groups who seek to expose cases of humanitarian abuses and human suffering exposed to infiltration by

the very powers that they seek to overthrow.³⁶ Just as “these platforms are used to organize dissent” they can be used by governments to locate protestors, and so social media can be “a double-edged sword.”³⁷

Social Media and the Arab Uprisings

Whilst some have identified the use of social media during the Arab uprisings as significant in creating a forum through which individuals can be recruited, make pleas for political change, motivate others to protest, and call for international intervention, others have been more cautious in their assessment. Gladwell, for example, argues that revolutions have taken place for centuries, long before the birth of Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, and as such the power of social media is exaggerated.³⁸ This echoes a sentiment voiced during the 2009 social unrest in Iran, during which it was argued that the influence of social media and the Internet had been grossly exaggerated³⁹ because there was little evidence to indicate either high Internet usage or a precise causal link between its usage and subsequent protests.⁴⁰

Some commentators such as Howard and Hussain have suggested that the protests in Tunisia and Egypt were a direct result of significant Internet discussion.⁴¹ Chebib and Sohail support this view, noting that during the first three months of 2011, there was “a substantial shift in the Arab world’s usage of social media towards online social and civil mobilization.”⁴² This high Internet usage, combined with pre-existing frustrations against the ruling powers, helped to provide a forum in which localized opposition could develop a “collective consciousness” and exchange ideas and “opportunities for action.”⁴³ Whilst the use of these social networks did not directly lead to the 2011 Arab uprisings, they nonetheless played a crucial role in “gathering real-time information” and forging ties across the region and with the international community.⁴⁴

Lynch offers a more cautious interpretation, arguing that although “protesters effectively used social media in their struggles”; it is difficult to demonstrate “that these new media directly caused any of the outcomes with which they have been associated.”⁴⁵ Instead, he places more emphasis upon the underlying historical influences and socio-economic factors that created an environment which fuelled the Arab uprisings.⁴⁶ One should also consider that the impact may vary between states. In Saudi Arabia, for example, Internet usage is comparatively high and yet there were no protests, while in other states such as Tunisia and Bahrain, where Internet usage is comparatively lower, a significant number of protests took place. As such, we need to err against over-simplified

assumptions about the use of social media and the Internet in bringing about change in the region. Furthermore, it is important to note on the one hand, social media's influence in raising awareness of humanitarian abuses and in encouraging interventions, but on the other, that R2P was only implemented in Libya. Consideration of its possible implementation in Syria was also vetoed by members of the UN Security Council.

(i) Tunisia and Egypt

In December 2010 when Mohammed Bouazizi stood before a Tunisian municipal building and set himself on fire in protest, few could have imagined the enormous impact his actions would have and the domino effect of civilian-led rebellions that would subsequently result in Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Syria, and Yemen.⁴⁷ Filmed on a small mobile phone, his protest was posted on a social networking site, and despite internal censorship, Tunisians living abroad were able to transfer the footage to the Internet. It was then picked up by the news network Al Jazeera and broadcast within Tunisia, circumventing Tunisia's strict Internet censorship.⁴⁸ The footage encouraged fellow dissidents to organize their own protests, spreading calls for democracy further afield.⁴⁹ Tunisians, therefore, with the help of Al-Jazeera, had shifted power away from the state and into the hands of a newly networked society.⁵⁰ The "new arsenal of social networking" had helped to "accelerate Tunisia's revolution driving out the country's ruler of twenty-three years, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, into ignominious exile and igniting a conflagration that has spread across the Arab world at breath-taking speed."⁵¹ Castells and Howard note the importance of these developments with the latter stating:

The power to control information no longer resides exclusively with the institutions of the state; it resides in media networks; and media networks are constituted by social relations and communication technologies. So Castells argues that in contemporary network society the power residing in media networks is stronger than that residing in states.⁵²

Similarly at the height of protests in Egypt, approximately forty-five tweets were sent every minute, drawing attention from a global audience who stood as constant witnesses to the unfolding story of human suffering and atrocities.⁵³ Through online media forums, they were able to keep up-to-date and engage in debate. This online eyewitness prevented politicians from pleading ignorance of such human suffering as they had during the Rwandan genocide, a fact acknowledged by the former United States President, Bill Clinton. When asked about the failings of the international community's response in Rwanda, Clinton noted that,

“all over the world there were people like me sitting in offices, day after day, who did not fully appreciate the depth and the speed with which [Rwanda was]...engulfed in this unimaginable terror.”⁵⁴ Social media and the Internet, therefore, offer a forum through which there are no “excuses anymore for not knowing about these things.”⁵⁵

(ii) Yemen and Bahrain

In February 2011, following longstanding conflict between the Shi'a majority and the Sunni rulers, protesters gathered in Bahrain's capital, Manama. Conflict ensued between the protesters, the police, and pro-government opposition groups. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was then invited into Bahrain as a 'State of National Security' was announced. During these protests, as with Tunisia and Egypt, social media had a role to play in bringing about government opposition. The initial protests began on Facebook, with individuals uploading Internet footage of demonstrations, speeches in the protest's epicentre in Manama's Pearl Square, and images of the numerous casualties as the protesters clashed with the GCC. Since some believed that the main television networks, Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya, had failed to give equal weight to the protests in Bahrain relative to protests elsewhere, social media websites became an important point from which information could be communicated to a wider audience.⁵⁶

Similar events had taken place in Yemen as civil society activists demanded government reform and the removal of President Ali Saleh. Through a “combination of repression, counter-mobilization, economic enticements, and promises of political compromise and reform,” it was thought that Ali Saleh might maintain control; however, after fleeing to Saudi Arabia following an injury sustained in an attack, he agreed to hand over power.⁵⁷ Unlike in Bahrain, it was difficult to assess the impact of social media in the revolution because only twelve per cent of Yemen's population had Internet access.⁵⁸ This highlights that any consideration of the role of social media in the Arab uprisings must take into account the variance in Internet access between states.

(iii) Libya

In Libya, protests against the forty-two-year rule of Colonel Gaddafi galvanised support on social media websites. Faced with a leader prepared for conflict against his own people, ordinary citizens began to film the fighting, uploading videos onto the Internet for the rest of the world to view. A generation more familiar with tweeting, Facebook postings,

and blogs than with traditional news outlets began to track minute-by-minute the scale of human suffering and unimaginable brutality within the region.

Social media communications also proved incredibly important to the world's journalists, several of whom were based in Tripoli's Rixos hotel, restricted in their movements and information access by armed guards loyal to Gaddafi. During this time, the Libyan state-owned television channel, "Al-Jamahiriya...was broadcasting nonstop patriotic songs, poetry recitations and rowdy rallies supporting the Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi."⁵⁹ Gaddafi's regime was simultaneously attacking any foreign news media broadcasts and rebel video footage as the work of "kids," "saboteurs," and "foreign-funded agents."⁶⁰

Only a handful of journalists were on the ground in the capital's Green Square speaking to the rebels.⁶¹ The difference in reporting between these journalists and those based in Tripoli's Rixos Hotel was stark. In contrast to the state fed information provided to journalists, Al-Jazeera broadcast images of angry Libyan demonstrators protesting against images of Gaddafi.⁶² Outside of Libya, a number of websites, including Almanara and Libya Alyoum, were also broadcasting "crudely filmed videos and images of civilian deaths and injuries" of the human suffering on the streets of Libya.⁶³ These amateur films, as compared to the "clean and professional pictures on Libyan television," highlighted the disparity between the sterilized images being portrayed, and the gritty reality of the situation.⁶⁴ Together, the images made a "global impression" through the "multiple amateur video Web posts...twitter posts and dozens of heartfelt interviews on Arab television stations telling stories of a ruthless repression unleashed by troops loyal to Colonel Gaddafi."⁶⁵ The contrast demonstrated how social media could offer a perspective which many state rulers were trying to block from the rest of the world.

Such disparities were evident when the state-controlled Libyan press reported that protestors were not rebelling against Gaddafi. At this point, thousands tweeted their disagreement, highlighting the reality of the situation. Similarly, when Gaddafi refused to step down and urged his supporters to attack the protesting "cockroaches," tweets and YouTube footage filmed by the protesters offered a window to the reality on the streets. Such stories were subsequently drawn upon by the international press⁶⁶ to provide a "more comprehensive image of the crisis."⁶⁷ The Libyan journalist Mahmud Shammam even used his own webpage to rally volunteers to establish a satellite channel. 'Libya TV', as it was called, aimed to overcome Gaddafi's state propaganda and to counter state-sponsored false reports about the protests by state controlled television networks.⁶⁸

Digital forms of communication are, however, accessible to all. Recognizing its potential for information distribution, Gaddafi sought to censor social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter, and to arrest activists on websites that encouraged dissent. He also sought to rally his own supporters to fight by ordering mobile service providers to send text messages. This practice was also used to “dupe protesters into arriving at particular locations, dispersing them and/or positioning them to be picked up by the security forces.”⁶⁹ Similarly, Libyan state controlled television networks appealed for amateur video footage showing support for Gaddafi’s leadership to be placed online alongside footage from the rebels: “for the dear brothers whose hobby is photography and videotaping, to please put up videos online that show the massive support for our beloved leader.”⁷⁰ Despite such efforts, communications with the rest of the world continued through social media websites and pan-Arab television channels such as Al-Jazeera, the BBC Arabic service, and Al Hurra. The website www.libyaFeb17.com also became an important outlet for opposition support with numerous twitter postings and discussion forums.⁷¹ As such, it is important to remember that modern day communications are accessible to all, and therefore can be used by repressive regimes as instruments of propaganda.

Whilst social media and the Internet have offered additional means of communication, they are not always entirely accurate, especially in highly contentious and politicized situations. In Libya, reports often focused upon the violence and abuse inflicted on the rebels and urged international intervention. Amnesty International later questioned the accuracy of some of the rebel’s allegations against the Gaddafi regime, suggesting that at times, there was a lack of credible supporting evidence. They questioned whether some rebels might have knowingly made false statements in order to encourage internal opposition to the Gaddafi regime and encourage international intervention.⁷²

Despite a wealth of information about the situation in Libya circulating on the Internet and in the global media, the international community was slow to intervene, as “governments procrastinated and debated the possibilities of military and humanitarian intervention.”⁷³ Eventually the UN Security Council passed resolutions 1970⁷⁴ and 1973⁷⁵ authorizing a no-fly zone and requiring member states to “take all necessary measures” to “protect civilians and civilian populated areas under attack.”⁷⁶ This represented the first time that the UN Security Council had explicitly authorized R2P and the use of force against the will of a functioning government in order to protect citizens from atrocities inflicted by their own state rulers. It was seen as an opportunity for the international community to “preserve the integrity” of R2P, and to draw international

consensus for R2P so as to prevent another Rwanda or Srebrenica.⁷⁷ Others, however, questioned whether R2P was simply a disguise for military intervention⁷⁸ and/or western imperialism.⁷⁹

(iv) Syria

When physical access to an area of unrest is restricted, it is often difficult for media networks to have a clear understanding of events. Through social media and the Internet, however, they now have an alternative source of information. When President al-Assad denied human rights groups and international journalists' access to Syria, it became increasingly difficult for the global community to understand the scale of the crisis. Assad also increased restrictions on social media networks and Internet access. The Syrian Electronic Army (SEA) later admitted to defacing several websites that it believed provided hostile reports on the Syrian regime. They even attacked foreign media websites⁸⁰ who broadcast stories condemning the Syrian leadership and sought to promote pro-Assad messages through Facebook, as a means of conjuring up support.⁸¹

Some individuals and organisations nevertheless managed to post blogs, stories, and film footage online that provided insight into the scale of human suffering taking place. The Syrian National Council, the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change, and the various Local Coordination Committees of Syria established websites from which they were able to broadcast information and galvanize public support. Similar activities were taking place further afield as organizations such as the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights in Britain also sought to raise awareness of the human rights abuses taking place.⁸²

Such organizations, together with social media websites, also kept a close eye upon the international community's response and its discussions of R2P. Online, a number of expert analysts used data provided by social media to raise awareness of the need for an international response and to try to influence the form of that response. Discussions started to take place comparing the application of R2P in Libya to its lack of application in Syria despite reports of large-scale violence and human suffering taking place in both states.⁸³ Online debate questioned foreign states' motivation and the influence of western imperialism and state self-interests on the intervention.⁸⁴ In particular, online debate contended that a UN Resolution in favour of R2P had only been possible for Libya because of Russian and Chinese abstaining in the UN Security Council vote. It suggested that the adoption of a similar resolution in Syria was impossible owing to "Russia['s] fears for its access to the Mediterranean" and "because any international measure against a single country strikes

at the heart of the theory of absolute national sovereignty especially dear to any authoritarian regime.”⁸⁵

Debate also criticised the Chinese and Russian use of the UN Security Council Permanent Member veto to prevent intervention in Syria, arguing that it was “a blow-back from the Libyan episode”⁸⁶ in which the two nations felt “the West [had] pushed them into a corner” and “feared that they [had] accepted a precedent for Western interventionism that they... [wanted] to erase.”⁸⁷ Accordingly, they suggested that Syria was simply a test case for ensuring that no such precedent was created.⁸⁸

As the “gruesome reality of the...massacre” has been “brought home to countless millions all over the world, including Russians and Chinese, thanks to social media,”⁸⁹ both nations have condemned the massacres in Syria. They are moving towards some acknowledgement of R2P and the national government’s failure to protect its citizens and to uphold state responsibilities.⁹⁰ Similarly, in concession to current debate and the inconsistent application of R2P, former UN Secretary General and Special Envoy to Syria, Kofi Annan, remarked that, “just because we cannot intervene everywhere, does not mean we should not intervene where we should, or can. We need to move forward and address this application gap to ensure that R2P remains legitimate.”⁹¹

The question, however, remains whether intervention would make any difference in Syria. Whereas initially the international community showed support for intervention, some now believe it would actually make things worse (particularly military intervention). This view is supported by Roméo Dallaire, the former Force Commander in the UN Mission in Rwanda, who argues that the most opportune moment for intervention would have been in the early part of the protests.⁹² Furthermore, as Annan has appreciated, Syria is not Libya.⁹³ The former is “located in one of the most volatile regions of the world” and, as Dallaire contends, represents a “patchwork of different ethnicities” so that the country is a “powder keg sitting within artificial borders.”⁹⁴ The enormity of the task ahead means that the international community must not raise “the hope of the people [of Syria] that the cavalry is on the horizon” since this will overly complicate an already complicated situation.⁹⁵

It is also expected that the rebels will eventually overthrow Assad’s regime, and there is a genuine risk that they will seek retribution. If the international community participates in assisting the rebels’ victory, it will “morally own part of the resultant butchery as well.”⁹⁶ R2P is premised on the principle that the international community should, through the UN, act to prevent genocide and other such crimes against humanity. This must, however, be considered alongside the principle of “first, do no harm,” since “a humanitarian intervention [in Syria] that may serve

to increase the total body count” would be considered “no humanitarian intervention at all.”⁹⁷

What is Next for Social Media and R2P?

Although social media and the Internet provided an alternative discussion forum in which the events of the Arab uprisings and awareness of R2P could be relayed to the world, there are suggestions that their roles have been dramatically overplayed. Analysts contend that long before the existence of Twitter feeds and YouTube footage, civilians united around a common cause and sought to voice their concerns. If, however, the influences of social media and the Internet were not significant or influential, then why did many states seek to restrict access to them? In particular, in response to the significant Twitter traffic taking place at key points in the Arab uprisings, some nations, both within and outside the Arab region, adopted a much firmer stance on the accessibility of social media websites. China at one stage feared a contagion effect on its own territory and reviewed its controls of social media usage.⁹⁸ Within the region, political leaders also limited access to the Internet and adopted much stronger surveillance measures.⁹⁹

In assessing the role of social media and the Internet in encouraging the implementation of R2P and the protection of human rights more generally, much will depend upon the outcome of events in Syria. Whilst social media communications have not been used to the same extent as in Libya, postings on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook, have, nevertheless, illuminated the scale of the crisis. This has not, however, established a consensus regarding what response, if any, the international community should provide, and whether indeed any response will help to change the current situation, its possible responses, or their effectiveness. Whilst the implementation of R2P in Syria has been vetoed by China and Russia, the continuous Internet postings have helped to maintain the international community's attention, providing fresh news for the international news networks, and encouraging civilians around the world to lobby their governments to respond.¹⁰⁰ Syrians, for example, have founded ‘The Syrian Revolution 2011 Facebook page’, which argues for UN support for R2P. It provides daily commentary about the protests and, like many other websites, has proven to be helpful in mobilizing public opinion and in disseminating information about R2P.¹⁰¹ This has provided Internet users with a constant reminder of events, ensuring that the world is not allowed to ignore such atrocities and humanitarian abuses. Even governments with state controlled broadcasting networks

and tight restrictions on Internet usage have found themselves unable to shield humanitarian abuses from the eyes of the international community. Consequently the ability to report on humanitarian conflicts rests not just with media corporations, but owing to an era of expanded global online communication, “societal responses are part of world politics at every stage,” which has placed Syria firmly on the international agenda.¹⁰²

Conclusion

At present, it is perhaps too early to make a conclusive assessment of the influence of the Internet and social media upon the Arab uprisings, and their role in raising awareness of humanitarian abuses and R2P. It is, however, plausible to speak of social media and the Internet as having the potential to transform localized debate and dissent into a structured and organised collective conscience, and to help to inform the global community of human suffering, international crises, and awareness of R2P. In the words of the United Arab Emirates journalist Sultan Al Qassemi:

Social media has...played a part in the Arab Spring Revolutions...Where social media had a major impact was conveying the news to the outside world, bloggers and Twitter users were able to transmit news bites that would otherwise never make it to mainstream news media. This has been instrumental in garnering the attention of the citizens of the world who expressed solidarity with those suppressed individuals and may even put pressure on their own governments to react.¹⁰³

This is not to say that other methods of communication have no relevance but rather, that social media and the Internet add another dimension through which the public can observe the “spectacle of suffering”, and encourage and evoke within the public a “sense of care and responsibility for the distant sufferer”.¹⁰⁴

Certainly it is difficult to assess with any precision social media and the Internet’s responsibility for changing international perceptions in Libya in 2011, in Syria in 2012, or in raising awareness of humanitarian abuses and R2P more generally. We can, however, compare such scenarios to the absolute indifference displayed by the international community in response to the human suffering in Rwanda and Darfur during the 1990s. If anything, these alternative means of communication encourage the world to develop “an international reflex response” and to promote global awareness. When such “catastrophic” events take place, these communication outlets help to generate a sense of urgency and desire

for the international community to “do something” and to try to cease human suffering.¹⁰⁵ Even if this is the sole consequence of the Internet and social media’s engagement with R2P, it is nonetheless an important and worthy achievement in its promotion and implementation, and one that should not be treated as insignificant. ■

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Social Media Networks and Tactical Globalization: An Exploratory Case Study of Contesting Political “Space” in Singapore

VICENTE CHUA REYES JR

ABSTRACT

This exploratory article attempts to interrogate the emerging responses of the traditionally powerful Singaporean city-state as it is confronted by the upsurge of social media networks. This inquiry is premised on the assertion that Singapore's city-state, historically dominated by the People's Action Party (PAP), acts as an overall enforcer by employing tactical globalization. In its drive towards development and nation-building, the city-state has identified protecting social cohesion among its diverse and multicultural population as one of its key vulnerabilities. Globalization, particularly heralded by the increasingly unpredictable electronic media, is anathema to the ethos of a city-state that leaves nothing to chance. The city-state pragmatically and selectively appropriates what it sees as benign aspects while at the same time discarding and de-legitimizing malignant features of the globalization phenomenon as it carries out its dominant role as creator and enforcer of policies. The information age characterized by the Internet provides an interesting case study of how tactical globalization is employed by the city-state. On the one hand, Singapore declares itself an open and wired nation with the goal of being an information hub. On the other hand, it controls social media through a repertoire of dominant party role-modeling, restrictive communications policies, and harsh legal regulations warning against “crusading journalism” that could lead to political instability and damage the nation-building project. Nonetheless, very recent high-profile and embarrassing events that have tarnished top members of the bureaucracy have been highlighted through social media networks. The Internet chatter caused by the slip-ups of elites associated with the ruling party seems to be a portent of the emergence of a “politics of scandal.” Levels of trust in government seem to have been dampened, evidenced by the most recent parliamentary elections that have witnessed an unprecedented defeat of a bailiwick of the ruling PAP. The unpredictability and intractability of social media networks poses a serious challenge to the Singaporean city-state that has built an ethos of control and shrewdly applied tactical globalization as it navigates the twenty-first century. This article explores the evolving responses of the city-state as it attempts to manage the potential power wielded by social media.

This exploratory case study tries to address the following question: Have incipient social media networks, represented in this inquiry as Internet activism, redefined political “space” in the city-state, which has historically been under the tight control of the Singaporean government? This question will be answered through five sections in this exploratory article. The first section begins by providing a brief description of the unique Singaporean context where rapid economic development blends almost seamlessly with stunted political activism. The second section describes tactical globalization, a theoretical approach that helps articulate the control that Singapore’s government plays in an increasingly globalized context. This section provides an example of how tactical globalization is used specifically through the government’s different ways of controlling social media. The fourth section zeroes in on the 2011 General Elections, as an example of how the politics of scandal coupled with increased social media activity—measured through Internet activism—have helped redefine political “space.” The fifth and final section provides a discussion of what lies ahead.

Singaporean Context: Rapid Economic Development Alongside Stunted Political Activisms

On August 9, 2012, the Republic of Singapore celebrated its forty-seventh anniversary as a nation. Quite distant from its unsettled beginnings characterized by impoverished slums divided along ethnic lines and sporadic racial riots, the nation today has undergone a dramatic transformation. Gone are the chronic overcrowding and unemployment; instead, the nation boasts high home ownership rates and low unemployment rates. More importantly, Singapore’s high quality physical infrastructure has been meticulously planned to pay particular attention to ensuring that its housing, transportation sector, and public services, complement growth. Most recently, a report from Knight Frank and Citi Private Wealth declared that Singapore has the “highest GDP per capita in the world now and [will until] 2050.”¹

Despite these impressive achievements, one of the pervasive challenges that the multiracial nation confronts is its contentious record of civic and political participation characterized “by the prevalence of elite dominance, bureaucratic omnipotence and political indifference in the society.”² Moreover, political activities and the consequent freedoms are

treated as “dysfunctional” and “unproductive,” and therefore do “not deserve to be encouraged.”³ Consequently, the state of civic and political participation in Singapore is a far cry from Putnam’s relations based on “mutual trust and not of control and subjection.”⁴ The Singaporean government, itself represented by the People’s Action Party (PAP)⁵ for most of the nation’s modern history, is unapologetic about its exclusive and “legitimate right to represent the whole nation,”⁶ its self-mandated role of maintaining the party’s interests and gaining “control,”⁷ and its purposeful characteristic of leaving “nothing to chance.”⁸

The history and vulnerabilities of Singapore are the main causes for its government’s overriding trait of being an “administrative state,”⁹ or what other commentators describe as a “developmental state.”¹⁰ Its genesis as a nation was turbulent as it experienced an abrupt separation from Malaysia. Early in its tempestuous past, the fledgling nation realized that social cohesion among its diverse races was critical in order to accomplish nation-building goals.¹¹ In its early years, the city-state deliberately adopted a developmental perspective with the understanding that the way forward was to pursue an ambitious opening up of its economy towards the goal of industrialization while paradoxically assuming all the features of the classic centrally-planned state. After effectively neutralizing the communist threat, minimizing the competitive influence of an opposing political party, and preventing mass media from adopting a Western-style liberal approach, the government successfully engendered a “controversial Singapore style of peaceful environment.”¹² Additionally, the fact that the PAP has formed the government since 1959 has led to a consistency in policy formulation and implementation that has few parallels elsewhere.

Singapore’s Selective and Tactical Globalization: Controlling Boundaries and Space

With the dawn of the twenty-first century, Singapore faces different sets of vulnerabilities brought about by globalization. Globalization as defined in this inquiry “represents a complex, overlapping set of forces, operating differently at different levels.”¹³ Furthermore, viewing globalization as much more than a process and instead as a “*tendency to which counter-tendencies may be mobilized*” provides an appropriate analytical starting point.¹⁴ Globalization, heralded by the increasingly unpredictable electronic media, is anathema to the ethos of a city-state that leaves nothing to chance. The city-state pragmatically and selectively appropriates what it sees as benign aspects while at the same time discarding and de-legiti-

mizing perceived malignant features of the globalization phenomenon as it carries out its dominant role as creator and enforcer of policies.

Singapore, consistently identified as one of the top ten global cities in the world,¹⁵ provides an insightful picture of how a city-state responds to the dynamics of globalization. Scholars have already attempted to map the response of the powerful PAP-led Singaporean government in relation to the forces of globalization. Chong argues that Singapore practices “selective globalization” in its quest to balance global connectedness and retain entrenched traditions as it treads the path towards “national survival.”¹⁶ Koh provides an insightful and complementary viewpoint by describing the Singaporean city-state as an agent actively engaging and anticipating threats and opportunities presented by globalization forces by responding to these with well-thought out and carefully calibrated experimentation. Koh refers to this as “tactical globalization,” highlighting “the mobilization of state power through the construction of knowledge(s) and discourse(s) that effect the formation of specific subjectivities as Singapore continues to work with and against globalization.”¹⁷ Chong points out that this response has left the PAP-led government “with little choice but to constantly shift gears between the national and the global when it comes to policymaking,” further solidifying the Singaporean city-state’s role as pragmatic enforcer.¹⁸

Evidence of the Singaporean city-state’s dominant role as pragmatic enforcer can be seen in the way that social media is regulated in Singapore. This inquiry posits that the Singaporean city-state astutely uses the tenets of globalization in controlling social media. This control is effectively done through tight regulation of the boundaries of social media and the “space” that is afforded to social media.

Boundaries of Social Media

The Singaporean city-state declares that the Societies Act (revised in 1985) is one of the safeguards established to protect social cohesion in Singapore. Scholars and practitioners have claimed that the Societies Act is one of the mediums of control employed by the city-state to regulate unbridled political activism. The Societies Act “blocks civil society by restricting political engagement to registered parties and associations and by severing the former from any social bases that could contribute to, or be mobilized around, reform programmes.”¹⁹ In effect the Societies Act defines the legally acceptable boundaries in which individuals and groups in Singapore may engage in social media. The Internal Security Act or ISA (revised in 1985), which has been described by the current Singaporean President as a “blunt instrument,” is the tool that enforces violations against the Socie-

ties Act. The ISA gives the government the right to arrest and preventively detain individuals that violate the act without trial for up to two years at a time. Aside from the Societies Act, the boundaries of social media are also regulated by the Media Development Authority (MDA). Consistent with the effort to control boundaries, the Films Act of 1988, under the purview of the MDA, was also enforced, effectively banning political parties from making and distributing films and videos.

Controlling the “Space” Afforded to Social Media

In 1985, the city-state established the Feedback Unit (FBU) that provided Singaporeans with a forum where they can engage in discussion, participate in national debates, and also come to understand policies. However, a major initial criticism against the FBU was that it served merely as a venue for policies to be explained and neither debated nor discussed, since, although authentic feedback from the masses was noted, it was never truly incorporated into final policy outcomes. In October 2006, the FBU was restructured into REACH (Reaching Everyone for Active Citizenry @ Home). REACH was designed to move beyond gathering public feedback to become the lead agency for engaging and connecting with citizens. Nonetheless, the stigma of the rubber-stamp fbū remained. Recognizing that the Internet is a powerful source of unregulated feedback, the Singaporean city-state enacted the Internet Code of Practice of 1997 to control material transmitted through the Internet. It also deems unlawful “objectionable material on the grounds of public interest, public morality, public order, public security, national harmony, or is otherwise prohibited by applicable Singapore laws.”²⁰ Scholars and practitioners have argued that the Singaporean city-state’s “particular brand of authoritarianism is characterized by legal limits to independent social and political activities on the one hand, and extensive mechanisms of political co-option to channel contention through state-controlled institutions on the other.”²¹ But controlling information through an intensely-regulated feedback mechanism and controlling the type of material transmitted through the Internet are not the only mechanisms to limit “space.” A careful scrutiny of the existing patterns by the city-state shows that “legal and administrative controls to restrict the space for independent civil society has been extended to cyberspace.”²² Moreover, these controls essentially restrict “political engagement and competition to within a narrow sphere of party politics and/or formally registered and tightly regulated political discussion groups”²³ ensuring that the control of political “space” by the dominant Singaporean city-state is complete.

The Age of the Internet and the Challenge to Singapore's Dominant Party

Globalization in an information age characterized by the Internet sets the stage for an interesting case study of how selective and tactical globalization, as employed by the city-state, addresses incipient contestations of political "space" through emerging social media networks. On the one hand, Singapore declares itself an open and wired nation aiming towards its goal of becoming an information hub. It strategically positions itself by leveraging its strengths to "capture global opportunities in the ICT space."²⁴ It also ambitiously aims to become a renaissance city with "an environment conducive to creative and knowledge-based industries and talent."²⁵ On the other hand, it controls social media through a repertoire of dominant party role-modeling, restrictive communications policies, and harsh legal regulations warning against crusading journalism²⁶ that could lead to political instability, potentially damaging the nation-building project.

May 7, 2011, which was General Election Day (GE 2011), proved to be a watershed in the incipient political history of Singapore: "Singapore's long-ruling People's Action Party (PAP) suffered its first-ever loss of a multi-member constituency, handing the opposition Workers' Party (WP) five of the eighty-seven elected seats in the city-state's parliament."²⁷ Several months later on August 27, PAP's candidate Mr. Tony Tan, who previously served as Deputy Prime Minister, was elected Singapore's President, capturing thirty-five per cent of the votes with a narrow margin of zero-point -three per cent over the next closest opponent, former Member of Parliament (MP) Tan Cheng Bock.²⁸ Crucial to consider were the days and weeks leading to GE 2011 and the August 2011 Presidential Elections, which saw a frenetic buzz in cyberspace, particularly among Internet forums and social media networks. Months and weeks heading into the elections saw a burgeoning increase of political activity: "Most murmurs of discontent can be found online: fears of reprisal are diminished for anonymous bloggers. On internet forums, blogs, Facebook and Twitter, grumblings about high housing prices, the widening gap between rich and poor, [and] immigration"²⁹ can be found. A month before the official nomination day for the elections (April 27), the volume of online activity (i.e. blog postings, Tweets, Facebook updates) increased by sixty-three per cent. The greater bulk of the online chatter centred on the PAP (sixty-six per cent). A further breakdown of the online activity directly related to the PAP reveals that "52.8 per cent were rated as positive or very positive, and 25.4 per cent rated either negative or very negative."³⁰ Mainstream

media that hosted online platforms also experienced unprecedented traffic: Mediacorp had “49 million page and video views over the 12-day period from Nomination Day (April 27) to Results Day (May 8).”³¹

Could one argue that the dramatic spike in Internet buzz around GE 2011 heralded a change in the political climate of Singapore, from control to greater openness? Was the watershed GE 2011, where the PAP ruling party suffered its first-ever loss, a clear sign of the powerful impact of social media networks in Singaporean politics? In order to fully address these questions, there is a need to re-visit the Singaporean context and specifically interrogate the strength (or even the existence) of a relationship between online and offline political activity. Without a doubt, the unprecedented Internet activity during GE 2011 and the August 2011 Singaporean Presidential elections showed the potential of cyberspace in allowing unnamed strangers to articulate their unfettered, radical, and unconventional political views to a huge and equally anonymous audience. Scholars have attempted to describe this proliferation of online political activity as a form of “liberation technology” that provides a safe venue, thereby enabling “citizens to report news, expose wrongdoing, express opinions, mobilize protest, monitor elections, scrutinize government, deepen participation, and expand the horizons of freedom.”³² However, making judgments on levels of political openness by merely enumerating the number of new and free venues where online reporting and propagandizing is made available or measuring the fluctuations in the volume of online political chatter is insufficient. Scholars have argued for clarity in the relationship between “online activism” and how it “facilitates offline liberation strategies.”³³ Thus, notwithstanding the emergence of new online portals and venues for political discussion and dramatic increases in online activism, the real test—particularly in the context of Singapore—would be to definitively answer whether these have contributed to a greater amount of political activity on the ground.

What complicates determining causal linkages between online and offline activism in Singapore is the role that the PAP-led Singaporean state performs in relation to regulating civic and political participation. The state apparatus is used unflinchingly in situations where national security is perceived to be compromised. To date, two local Singaporean films,³⁴ the first in 2007 and the second in 2012, were banned by the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) under the Films Act since both were declared to be against public interest. In 2006, three bloggers who posted allegedly offensive racial remarks “were charged under the Sedition Act.”³⁵ Police reports have also been lodged against individuals who have used online platforms that “threaten social harmony in Singapore.”³⁶ Scholars and observers

of media control and censorship, particularly those who study Singaporean cyberspace, have commented that what initially started in 1996 as a “light touch” approach³⁷ “backed by a set of strict offline laws as well as a skillfully crafted control system” may seem to augur a “shift to a hard-line stance.”³⁸

The Politics of Scandal

Unequivocal examples of this emergence of a “hard-line” position can be gleaned from official statements coming from the cabinet ministers of Singapore’s PAP-led government. This stance can be seen as an attempt to try to address online activities that seemingly threaten notions of an “inclusive, gracious society” or those that have precipitated an increasing amount of “vitriol towards foreigners” and a steady percolation of “xenophobic statements.”³⁹ The government determines that online discussions that become uncivil should not be tolerated, and therefore it must intervene to maintain order, and to ensure that the progress Singapore experiences is maintained if not improved. In the Singaporean context, the paternalistic rhetoric declaring that the nation’s welfare is protected and is in the good hands of incorruptible officials (who are also among the highest-paid in the world) has always been the cornerstone of the PAP. This has—to a large extent—contributed to the continual political successes of PAP during General Elections.

However, a “recent string of high-profile corruption scandals has highlighted Singaporean officials’ weaknesses to other forms of temptation as well,”⁴⁰ which has placed pressure on the aura of the PAP’s incorruptible government. The scandals began in earnest sometime in October 2010 when two senior officials of the Singapore Land Authority (SLA) were convicted of fraud amounting to over \$12 million and using the ill-gotten wealth for purchasing apartments and luxury sports cars.⁴¹ In January 2012, an official of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) was convicted of cheating the ministry of over \$600,000 for personal purchases of luxury items.⁴² These scandals reached their zenith in late January 2012 when lurid details of an illicit sex for contracts scheme broke out and “the head of the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), Peter Lim Sin Peng, and the director of the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), Ng Boon Gay, were dismissed for alleged corruption.”⁴³ The Internet chatter caused by the slip-ups of elites associated with the ruling party seems to be a portent of the emergence of the politics of scandal. Internet chatter⁴⁴ related to these scandals lit up Singaporean cyberspace. Figures 1 and 2 provide an illustration of the increase of

website hits corresponding to the disgraced ex-CNB head and ex-SCDF director respectively⁴⁵.

Figure 1: Web Hits on Google Search (Singapore) for “ex-CNB”

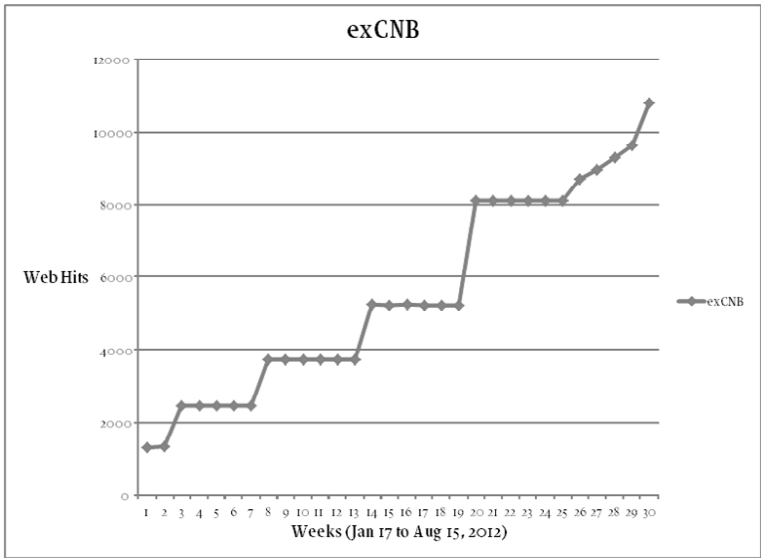
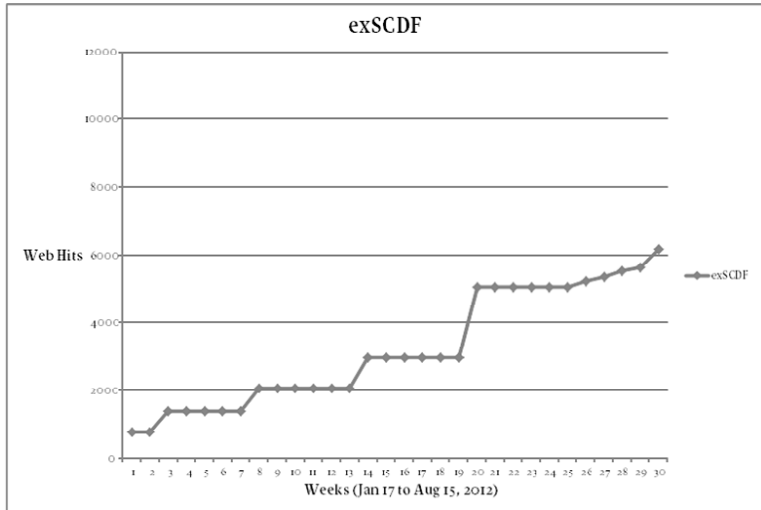


Figure 2: Web Hits on Google Search (Singapore) for “ex-SCDF”



The politics of scandal takes centre stage in political competition, in close interaction with the media system, and with the co-operation of judges and prosecutors, the new stars of our political soap operas. Politics becomes a horse race, and a tragicomedy motivated by greed, backstage manoeuvres, betrayals, and, often, sex and violence—a genre increasingly indistinguishable from TV scripts ⁴⁶

GE 2011, which saw the unprecedented loss of a PAP bailiwick to the opposition and the narrow victory of the PAP in installing the nation's second President, highlights the undeniable increase in political competition in the Republic. It may now seem evident that the days when the PAP dominated all forms of political contests will no longer be sustainable. In the context of the Singaporean government priding itself in being an efficient and incorruptible government, the increase of damaging political scandals weakens the PAP's competitive advantage against opposition parties. As Castells implies, political scandals "take centre stage in political competition," as such political contests become far removed from issues of policy and performance but instead degenerate into "tragicomedy." With the increasing number of PAP-associated scandals, the marginalized and fragmented opposition groups in Singapore do not need to exert efforts in trying to match the quality, caliber and resources of the PAP during electoral contests—they only need to wait for the next political scandal to erupt.

Selective and Tactical Globalization vis-a-vis Social Media Networks: Uncertain Future

Chong and Koh argue that as Singapore navigates the challenges of globalization, it practices tactics in which it selects features that allow the nation to be globally connected whilst clinging to deep-seated traditions.⁴⁷ Furthermore, this tactical maneuvering is implemented with the use of state power and resources to "construct knowledge and discourse."⁴⁸ Examples of these selective globalizing tactics in action were enumerated earlier: Singapore continually positions itself as a creative hub both for ICT and the arts (to be globally connected); yet it punishes those who use the Internet carelessly (enforcing entrenched traditions to protect national interests). The application of these selective practices of tactical globalization in managing social media networks worked well in Singapore particularly in a context where boundaries referred to in Singapore as (Out of Boundary) OB markers⁴⁹ were very clearly distinguishable. However, this article argues that with the explosion of venues made

available through cyberspace and social media networks, the “space” demarcated by Singapore’s OB markers needs to be problematized.

This exploratory inquiry proposes that social media networks in Singapore and the specific example of increased Internet activism in cyberspace triggered by political scandals provides a case study where “space”—traditionally controlled via tactical globalization by the PAP—is undergoing transformation. Cyberspace, defined as “discursive space produced by the creative work of people whose spatial locations are ambiguous and provisional,”⁵⁰ creates a context that could radically re-define how the dominant PAP regulates ordinary people engaging in political discussion. With cyberspace and the creation of virtual spaces for free and open discussion, “communal voices can now be uttered without pressures from real-life marginalizing forces”⁵¹—represented, for example, by a dominant PAP that selectively exercises tactical globalization.

One type of society and economy that could be dominant in a twenty-first century globalized setting is what is referred to as an Experimentally Oriented Economy (EOE). In EOE’s “full penetration of state space for optimal positioning by all agents is impossible at each point in time, and (because of learning) at each future point in time.” This presents a situation where uncertainty and complexity are features of tomorrow’s society.⁵² The unpredictability and intractability of social media networks poses a serious challenge to the Singaporean city-state, which, as it navigates the twenty-first century, will build an ethos of control and shrewdly applied selective and tactical globalization. This exploratory article argues that the Internet and the emergence of social media networks can be seen as a critical discursive space for the “mobilization of countertendencies” to the dominant “tendency” typical of the Singaporean city-state’s role of pragmatic enforcer. The contours of this critical discursive space will be shaped and contested on the one hand by a historically strong and practically immovable apparatus underpinning the city-state and on the other an unpredictable and almost irresistible force brought about by the ubiquitous wave of the Internet and the ever expanding social media networks that come in its wake. ■

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The author wishes to acknowledge the very helpful comments and suggestions from anonymous reviewers and from the editors of this issue.

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The Empowered Citizen? Online Political Discussion in the United States

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ABSTRACT

Across many sectors, the common wisdom is that online political forums create a more egalitarian space for the deliberation of citizens. Research, however, shows that in the United States, these spaces are often dominated by those who control many political spheres: white, educated males. While the internet has provided a means for citizens to express their opinions, it may ultimately be creating a dialogue which is actually more reflective of the values of dominant elites. At the same time, large media conglomerates and political institutions can utilize these political forums as a means to promote their own commitment to democratic processes, to demonstrate they are committed to “the average Joe!” It is vitally important then, to understand the process of political discussion on forums, the limited sphere of influence these forums maintain, and the internal processes on American political forums that continue, (deliberately or unintentionally) to promote the agenda and values of traditional power holders. Access to political forums is not prevented and is often promoted on a large-scale, but the factors that have led to a stratified social system and differing relationships to the democratic process translate into the structure of the Internet. Again, the mythos of the Internet and its participatory capacity can shade the true structure of those with influence. The technology requires training, knowledge, and the ability to actively engage with other internet users and those in power. This paper explores five American political discussion forums during August 2012—a key month in the United States presidential election. This exploration finds that discussion forums (even those promoting values of openness, equality, and freedom of expression) follow patterns mimicking the dominant hegemonic values prevalent in the United States—individualism, competition, consumerism, and reductionism.

Introduction

In the United States, the mass media (network news, local news, cable news, newspapers) provides primary means for the gathering of information; however, information is largely disseminated by hosts, report-

Cara Robinson, “The Empowered Citizen? Online Political Discussion in the United States,” *St Antony’s International Review* 8, no. 2 (2013): 47-69.

ers, and journalists, acting as information gatekeepers. As a result, individual citizens have little or no influence on the dominant informational and news-worthy discourse. The language used, topics discussed and viewpoints perpetuated by the mass media primarily reflect the hegemonic values of the dominant culture in American society individualism, competition, consumerism, and reductionism. Public policy issues, as discussed by the mass media are primarily framed through the lens of these hegemonic values. The limited possibilities that individuals have to create and distribute information through mass media channels severely restrict discourse outside of this dominant framework.

Over the past twenty years, hopes for the development of a more inclusive, accessible, and deliberative space for individual citizens to create dialogue outside of the dominant framework have been realized. The internet provides generally free access to virtual meeting places wherein discussions on a plethora of issues can take place through, (in theory), a more egalitarian, open method. One type of egalitarian virtual meeting place is the political discussion board. This paper explores five American political discussion boards that were active throughout August, 2012, with the intention of investigating the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic patterns of online political discussion in the United States. In so doing, it will question the ability of online discussion boards to facilitate an alternative space for deliberative discussion and/or dialogue during the 2012 United States Presidential Election.

Media and Democracy

In a democracy, the discussion of public issues is crucial to the functioning of the body politic. The exchange of information through discussion provides citizens with a means to explore ideas regarding their society, their governance, and their civic participation. Many believe this discussion should take place in an accessible, open, and public space. The conceptualization of this deliberative space is often referred to as the public sphere. The public sphere is “a discursive space in which individuals and groups congregate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment.”¹ In the democratic public sphere, “the possibility exists for public association and debate leading to the formation of public opinion and political movements and parties that can hold private interests accountable.”² The public sphere is thus a place to discuss and debate issues, as well as to reach conclusions regarding the next steps in the governance of society. The conceptualization of the democratic public sphere has grown to include everything from a physical meeting

space (i.e. town square) to a virtual meeting place (i.e. internet message board). The ideal public sphere would be characterised as a space to deliberatively discuss public issues through an informed citizenry, with the aim of promoting policy action in the democratic state.

The discussion of public issues is particularly crucial during the period of national elections. In a representative democracy, the election of public officials through direct voting serves as a means for the public to voice its stance on electoral issues. The irregularity of national elections in the United States and magnitude of their importance on policy development results in increased citizen participation in public dialogue during the months leading up to Election Day. Citizens seek information during elections from the mass media. Consequently, elections attract more people to the news and the public policy information it disseminates.³

In large, modern, representative democracies such as the United States, the mass media plays a vital role in the design, distribution, and dissemination of information. Consequently, at least in theory, the mass media also plays an integral role in the formation and maintenance of an informed citizenry. The news in the United States is largely dominated by mass media television and newspaper outlets (e.g. CNN, The New York Times, Fox News, etc.). Over the last century, the mass media in the United States has played an increasingly important role in facilitating discussion on public issues. Many concerns about the current structure, ownership, and content of American mass media have been raised.⁴ Increased corporate, consolidated ownership of television and newspaper organizations has, according to critics, resulted in a mass media run by and for elite members of the political and business community; thus, the presentation of information in the mass media primarily reflects elite values. In the traditional media, the user goes through several channels of information and influence in order to glean a story from the news. As a result, "the media may reinforce the power of vested interests and exacerbate social inequalities by excluding critical or marginalized voices."⁵ Lance Bennett states that in order for the media to meet the standards required to foster an informed citizenry for democracy, it must provide access to diverse voices reflecting different value systems.⁶

Concurrent with the increasing consolidation of mass media outlets, there has been a rise in diverse formats for the creation and distribution of news and information on the Internet (i.e. blogs, wikis, message boards, and independent news websites). Internet platforms have provided an information delivery structure which stands in stark contrast to the top-down, centrally controlled mass media organizations. The Internet provides an accessible, often free, space with the potential to cre-

ate and disseminate information on public issues outside the constraints of the dominant cultural values present and proliferated in American newsrooms. As such, individuals are increasingly turning to the internet's alternative information outlets. In a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center within the framework of the "Internet & American Life Project", sixty-one per cent of Americans indicated that they get at least some of their news online, compared to fifty-four per cent who said that they listen to a radio news program and fifty per cent who said that they read a national or local print newspaper.⁷ As a result, the internet provides the opportunity for deliberative engagement outside of the confines of dominant American values, and subsequently carries the potential to operationalize a different social structure. One specific online space with such potential is the blogosphere.

The Blogosphere

Blogs, or web logs, are "frequently modified webpages containing dated entries listed in reverse chronological order."⁸ They are online diaries, news centres and social networking venues. The blogosphere is "the universe of available blogs."⁹ According to *Blogpulse*, there were more than 150 million blogs available on the Internet as of December 2010, a sharp increase from the 32 million blogs in March 2005.¹⁰

Blogs began entering the public sphere in the late 1990s, but remained a relatively marginalized phenomenon until the events of September 11, 2001 and the Iraq War.¹¹ Accompanied by the expansion of internet usage¹² during the early part of the twenty-first century, these events created an atmosphere conducive to the growth of online networking. Supporters and opponents of the war, for example, discovered blogs as a new means of organizing, creating, and discussing narratives outside of those purveyed in the mass media.

Blogs are a diverse and growing medium of communication. Rutigliano identified three main types of blog formats: controlled, hybrid, and open.

- **Controlled:** one writer, centralized editorial control of the content in an effort to conform to traditional media goals of objectivity and writing structure. Twenty-five per cent of the posts are created by users, while seventy-five per cent are created by the staff of the blog.
- **Hybrid:** part-time centralized staff who generate content and moderate. Twenty-five per cent of the posts are created by the staff, while seventy-five per cent are created by the users.

- **Open:** administrator, but little direct intervention with users. Most are self-organized.¹³

Blogs are owned by a variety of sources, including private citizens, non-profit organizations, businesses, church groups, voluntary associations, political parties, journalists, etc. Seventy-two per cent of blogs are owned by individuals who are hobbyists. These hobbyists do not profit from their blogging, nor do they dedicate a large amount of time to maintaining their blogs.¹⁴ The lack of focus on profit-making is another way in which blogs differ from the American mass media. Within the blogosphere, there are many topic sectors; bloggers may write about the weather, gardening, or politics. For the purposes of this paper, I focus on the subsector of political blogging or the political blogosphere.

The Political Blogosphere

The political blogosphere is comprised of blogs providing commentary on public policy, campaigns/elections, politicians, and political issues in the widest sense. Political blogs are often touted as means through which to engage a larger portion of the public in politics and civic life. “[B]logs are thought to be providing new communication channels that can temper or reverse the crisis in political communication by challenging the indirectional flow of message traffic that has tended to characterize mass-mediated democracy.”¹⁵ The blogosphere provides information to the public outside of the traditional constraints of the mainstream media (i.e. corporate and political control, lack of citizen voice, and gatekeeping). It also can alter the top-down (mass media to public) information flow of news to a more collaborative structure wherein individuals or groups of citizens provide information directly to community leaders for expanded distribution. In addition, if a user wants to circumvent the mass media and discuss the corruption of their local police force, the blogosphere provides the means. All that is needed on the blogosphere is a computer, and an account through which to access the Internet. One does not need access to journalists, an elite social standing, and/or monetary power and influence. Hence, there have been several examples of American bloggers and discussion board users successfully circumventing the traditional methods of news creation.

One prominent example of the newfound power of blogs occurred during the 2004 US presidential campaign. In September 2004, the CBS show *60 Minutes* aired a story about documents which allegedly demonstrated “significant irregularities in President G. W. Bush’s Na-

tional Guard Service.”¹⁶ These documents created a firestorm within political circles, as they, during a national election, potentially undermined the President’s perceived credibility and dedication with respect to national security. After the story aired, conservative bloggers seized the documents and reviewed their authenticity. The conservative blogosphere concluded, and subsequently disseminated, information that revealed the documents to be false. CBS retracted the story, fired staff, and took a reputational hit in the national media discourse. Here, bloggers had researched the story, refocused it, pushed it to national attention, and called for action regarding its publication. There was a clear two-way information flow. The power of the blogosphere was evident.

However, many have challenged the view that the blogosphere serves as a counterpart to the powerful cultural constraints of the mainstream media and society in general. Using the 2004 George W. Bush case study, for example, the power of blogging was not used to challenge traditional power structures or dominant cultural values, but rather to support the most powerful person in the nation: the President. In other nations (e.g. Moldova, Egypt), blogging has contributed to significant changes in political power structures. However, in the United States, rather than contribute to instability, blogs may actually serve to reinforce overarching power structures and to entrench dominant values. This suggests that American society perhaps requires a different means through which to create political change, than many other states.

Political blogs are privately owned and the overwhelming majority face content-moderation. Moderation itself necessarily places restrictions on the flow and production of information. Moreover, most political blogs are ideologically and/or party-politically driven. Thus, opinions posted and debated on blogs generally fall within the confines of the views of the American two-party system, the same system which has led to America’s current social structure. Finally, blog participants are often asked or expected to conform to the ideology of the moderator, owner, or the majority of blog users. For example, during the Republican presidential primaries in the fall of 2007, Free Republic (a popular conservative blog) publically purged members who identified themselves as supporters of Rudy Giuliani. Giuliani’s perceived social liberalism was viewed as an affront to the conservative mission of the website owner and its moderators. As a result, Giuliani supporters were deleted and prevented from future participation.

Political blog users, (excluding blog moderators), also face the social pressures of viewpoint conformity. Supporters of Hillary Clinton in the 2008 Democratic primary reported feeling website abuse on a number of prominent liberal/progressive discussion boards during the

campaign. Abuse took the form of name-calling, “sinking” pro-Hillary posts/diaries, and mass use of the “ignore” user function, as a result of which pro-Hillary users were restricted from open participation in online political discussion. The battle between the Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton camps became fierce, and debate was often reduced to name-calling and cheap political shots, that is when Internet users of disparate political persuasions were not “blocked” and ignored outright. Hence, the Rudy Giuliani and Hillary Clinton examples demonstrate the power of political blogs to operate in a method far from the vision of the Habermasian notion of “public sphere” characterized by open, deliberative discussion. The examples also show that political blogs can often operate as segmented political communities, perpetuating ideological fervour within the confines of the American political system. It is indeed an indication or glimpse of trends manifested throughout the mass-media driven, dominant society.

Furthermore, the mass media is increasingly playing the dominant role in political blogging and discussion through their own blogs. CNN’s *Political Ticker*, New York Times’s *The Caucus*, and MSNBC’s *First Read* are all ranked in the top ten political blogs with authority.¹⁷

Powerful independent political bloggers also straddle the line between the mass media and political blogging. Indeed, many of these bloggers have either transitioned from or to the mainstream media. Markos Moulitsas Zuniga, founder of *Daily Kos*, a top ten liberal/progressive political blog, also contributes to *Newsweek*. Andrew Sullivan, founder of the *Daily Dish*, hosts his blog through the political magazine *The Daily Beast*, and Michelle Malkin, founder of *Hot Air*, which is a conservative political blog, was previously employed by the *Los Angeles Daily News* as well as the *Seattle Times*. Popular independent political blogs are also often purchased by mass media outlets. For example, *The Huffington Post* (the number one political blog online) was purchased by America Online (AOL) in 2011.

These trends imply that the lines between the media’s spheres of communication are blurred, and that the transition between them is fluid. Former journalists previously operating as “independent” bloggers are now mass media journalists. The personal blogger, with the power to use internet technologies to influence public discourse and challenge dominant cultural values, is the exception, not the norm. *Technorati*, a web-based blog tracker, found that fifty-seven per cent of all US bloggers in 2008 were male, seventy-five per cent were college graduates, and fifty per cent had incomes above \$75,000 a year.¹⁸ Thus, despite their intentions, the “creators” of information on political blogs are not truly representative of the diverse racial, ethnic, economic, and educational

cleavages present in American society. These bloggers do, however, represent those who have benefitted most from the current system, its structures, and its cultural values.

Political Discussion Boards

The most popular political blogs are those with a controlled, top-down format, owned and moderated by white, college-educated, upper middle class males. There are, however, millions of political blogs with hybrid and open structures. Many of these political blogs utilize a discussion board format. These discussion boards differ from traditional blogs in that users control much of the original content, while discussion is almost exclusively conducted amongst users themselves, not owners or administrators of the website. Jeremiah Owyang describes the difference between traditional political blogs and political discussion boards as follows:

Forums are like social mixers, where everyone is at equal level, milling about and discussing with others. These many to many communication tools allow anyone to start a topic and anyone to respond to one. Members are often at equal level, and content is usually segmented by topic (rather than by people). Blogs are like a keynote speech where the speaker (blogger) is in control of the discussion, but allows questions and comments from the audience.¹⁹

The structure of discussion boards provides additional, more accessible space for open discussion, deliberation, and information creation for a larger number of users than the mainstream media or traditional political blogs. Questions remain, however, as to the extent to which these boards offer a forum for deliberation, instead of simple discussion. Indeed, the breadth of online discussions can cover every topic imaginable (e.g. entertainment, sports, socializing, etc.). Authentic political deliberation, or intense, thought-provoking, long and careful discussion about political issues, is a different animal than gossip, sports, or tabloid news. Are online discussion boards encouraging and manifesting a space for the latter? If they are, is any political deliberation taking place? Political discussion boards do have the participatory capacity and potential to serve as communities focused upon empowering citizens, and challenging the dominant cultural hegemonic values of American society. The question, however, is whether, and how frequently, this authentic political deliberation occurs.

Much has been written on American hegemony and its role in the globalized world.

The present world order—characterized by an unprecedented number of democratic nations; a greater global prosperity, even with the current crisis, than the world has ever known; and a long peace among great powers—reflects American principles and preferences, and was built and preserved by American power in all its political, economic, and military dimensions.²⁰

'Hegemony' in this case means the success of the dominant classes in presenting their definition of reality, their view of the world, in such a way that it is accepted by other classes as 'common sense.' The general 'consensus' is that it is the only sensible way of seeing the world. Any groups who present an alternative view are therefore marginalized.²¹

The overarching concept that neoliberalism a system of reduced government intervention in business and the economy, based upon the belief in the superiority of privatization of enterprise and in the reduction of social benefits associated with a centralized welfare state leads to enhanced freedom and liberty from the constraints of government intervention, is the basis of American hegemony. To achieve this end, businesses themselves exert tremendous power on the American political system in order to shape public policy. "The hegemonic group [the dominant American socioeconomic class] acquires authority through the intellectual, moral, and cultural persuasion or consent of the governed population without applying violent, political or economic means of coercion."²² In the United States, the societal structure and cultural norms perpetuate the overarching idea that neoliberalism equals freedom. This hegemony has resulted in specific American values, such as individualism, competition, consumerism, and reductionism, contributing to the overarching hegemony touting the superiority of neoliberalism.

Observation of American hegemony on the Internet has also been analyzed. "Though the communication that takes place within its sphere is often publicly generated and largely 'free', one cannot escape the reality that corporate sponsorships and synergistic ownership [in the mass media] dominate the medium. This tension undercuts the idealistic notion that the internet serves as a radical threat to hegemonic forces."²³ Hegemonic forces have resulted in the current socioeconomic stratification of American society: a system of increasing income inequality, wealth concentration, and continued legacies of racial and ethnic segregation.

Antonio Gramsci, who developed the cultural theory of hegemony, “says particular attention should be given to ‘everyday’ routine structures and ‘common sense’ values in trying to locate mechanisms of domination.”²⁴ With the supposed co-option of the Internet by corporations, the continued perpetuation of hegemonic forces in the virtual sphere should result in the replication of hegemonic values and social structures online.

What role, then, do American hybrid and open political discussion boards play in creating an alternative, deliberative space? Or, do they instead simply replicate the hegemonic values of the larger society in the virtual sphere? Are these American neoliberal values simply (and subtly) reinforced and entrenched in the space previously envisioned for alternative deliberation and information creation?

Selection and Analysis

This paper explores the content and structure of five popular American political discussion boards during August 2012. These discussion boards exemplify the tension between the potential of the Internet to provide an alternative space for deliberative discussion and the overwhelming power of hegemony in the internal American context. To this end, five political discussion boards were explored utilizing the following metrics:

- **Topics:** the top user-created posts. The top three were determined by the number of comments in response to the original post.
- **Structure:** the patterns of participation by users were assessed within the discussion board structure.
- **Moderation:** the methods of moderation were explored.

These three areas of exploration provide information on the extent to which political discussion boards exhibit patterns of use and deliberation similar to the patterns found in dominant society. Each of the metrics listed above was analysed in respect to the hegemonic values listed in Table 1 (see below).

For each topic (which includes the post-title and introductory content), a content analysis was conducted. The specific topic was recorded (e.g. Mitt Romney’s taxes, selection of Paul Ryan as the Vice-Presidential candidate, etc.). The content analysis also looked at how topics were framed and the perspective through which the topic was presented. For example, if a post on gun control was presented as simply as “guns are bad”, then that was coded as an example of reductionism. If, however,

a post on gun control was presented using arguments based on external sources such as the Second Amendment and its historical foundations, it was coded as displaying values of individualism. In addition to the presented original topic, the posts were analysed for diversity of responders (number of unique responders/users), the level of debate (was there conformity with the original ideas presented and, how were alternative perspectives received by users?), and the content of the responses (did the responses focus on the topic or did they become personal? Did they retain a specific focus, or stray wildly off-topic?).

The structure of the posts and the discussion board itself was analysed on the basis of the ease of registration (did users have to wait for approval?), the visual and technological friendliness of posting for non-Internet savvy users, and the process of monetary payments or dues as a barrier to participation. The structure of the websites was also assessed against the definitions of the hegemonic values listed in Table 1. For example, did the website require dues for full participation, thus reflecting consumerism? Was the level of user-friendliness adequate to support full participation across a range of technological skillsets or did the website rely on individuals fending for themselves, reflecting competition?

Finally, the moderation techniques were analysed. The method of moderation (i.e. through one or a small group of website moderators, a jury of peers serving as moderators, or a random selection of peer moderations per post) was assessed, as well as the process for user appeals and communication with moderators (where appropriate). This analysis was conducted by reviewing website policies and observing the method of moderation established by the site's structure (did an open list of moderators exist and was there a location on the website to lodge appeals?). Moderation was also analysed against the hegemonic values outlined in Table 1. For example, to what extent did the moderation policies reflect an individual's right to expression versus the website's right to preserve the collective well-being? To what extent did the moderation promote a top-down, competition-based moderator selection process versus an egalitarian approach to participation?

Table 2 provides a basic overview of the five political discussion boards explored in this analysis. These five political discussion boards were selected due to their web power rankings, diverse ideological affiliations, and diverse structural formats. They provide a representative cross-section of American political ideologies, discussion formats, as well as a high enough web power ranking to garner high levels of traffic and page hits, but not enough to enter the "power elite" of American political discussion websites (e.g. *Huffington Post*).

Table 1: American Hegemonic Valuse

<i>Hegemonic Value</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Individualism	The action or principle of asserting one’s independence and individuality; egoism, a view that stresses the importance and worth of each person. In economics, it is the doctrine that individuals best serve the public interest by pursuing their own self-interest. ²⁵
Competition	The act of competing; rivalry for supremacy. Utilization of the same resources by organisms of the same or of different species living together in a community, when the resources are not sufficient to fill the needs of all the organisms. ²⁶
Consumerism	The concept that an ever-expanding consumption of goods is advantageous to the economy. The fact or practice of an increasing consumption of goods. ²⁷
Reductionism	The practice of simplifying a complex idea, issue, condition, or the like, especially to the point of minimizing, obscuring, or distorting it. ²⁸

Democratic Underground and *Daily Kos* are self-acclaimed liberal web-sites, whereas *Free Republic* and *Red State* are conservative. *US Message Board* does not proclaim an affiliation.²⁹ For the purposes of this study, political discussion boards using the bulletin board structure are those without a separate dedicated section for the staff of the website to create main posts. Those using the diary structure have a staff blog with a separate area for user-generated diaries and comments.

Table 3 gives the mission and purpose of the website, as the website presents itself, which provides users with an overview of the values of the

Table 2: Universe of Political Discussion Boards

<i>Discussion Board</i>	<i>Structure</i>	<i>Web Ranking (as of September 1, 2012)</i>
Democratic Underground	Open/Bulletin Board	1,327 (US Ranking) ³⁰
Free Republic	Open/Bulletin Board	1,194 (US Ranking) ³¹
Daily Kos	Hybrid/Diary	870 (US Ranking) ³²
Red State	Hybrid/Diary	3,311 (US Ranking) ³³
US Message Board	Open/Bulletin Board	32,196 (US Ranking) ³⁴

website. It is important to understand the mission and purpose in order to explore the extent to which the discussion board operates as stated.

Each of the discussion boards have mission/purpose statements emphasizing the power of community, grassroots organizing, providing a voice to the non-elite, and effecting change. Therefore, they reflect the potential for the Internet to offer alternative spaces that challenge hegemonic values through the creation of information.

Table 3: Political Discussion Board Stated Mission and/or Purpose

<i>Discussion Board</i>	<i>Mission/Purpose</i>
Democratic Underground	Democratic Underground is an online community where politically liberal people can do their part to effect political and social change by:, interacting with friendly, like-minded people; sharing news and information, free from the corporate media filter; participating in lively, thought-provoking discussions; helping elect more Democrats to political office at all levels of American government; and having fun! ³⁵
Free Republic	Free Republic is the premier online gathering place for independent, grass-roots conservatism on the web. We're working to roll back decades of governmental largesse, to root out political fraud and corruption, and to champion causes which further conservatism in America. And we always have fun doing it. Hoo-yah! ³⁶
Daily Kos	It is at once a news organization, community, and activist hub. Among luminaries posting diaries on the site are President Jimmy Carter, Senator Barack Obama, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, and dozens of other senators, congressmen, and governors. Even more exciting than that, however, are the hundreds of thousands of regular Americans that have used Daily Kos to shape a political world once the exclusive domain of the rich, connected, and powerful. ³⁷
Red State	Today, RedState is the most widely read right of center blog on Capitol Hill, is the most often cited right of center blog in the media, and is widely considered one of the most influential voices of the grassroots on the right. Across the country we find grassroots candidates and work hard to get them elected. At RedState, we are conservatives in primaries and Republican in general elections and we aim to win. ³⁸
US Message Board	Where your voices count ³⁹

Findings and Discussion

Throughout August 2012, 210 posts were analysed accordingly: the top three posts on each website's discussion board determined by the number of responses on each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday of the month. These posts (as of September 1, 2012) contained over 19,500 responses. The median length of discussion threads varied widely between websites. The median thread lengths for *Democratic Underground*, *Daily Kos*, and *Free Republic* were between 300–500 posts, between 150–200 posts for *US Message Board*, and only fifteen posts for *Red State*. The following topics were the primary topics discussed during the month of August 2012:

- General election threads discussing campaign strategy (top post on 5/5 sites).
- Paul Ryan as Mitt Romney's Vice-Presidential candidate selection (top post on 4/5 sites - not *US Message Board*).
- Debate over Mitt Romney's refusal to release additional years of tax return documentation (top post on 4/5 sites - not *Free Republic*).
- Missouri Senatorial candidate Todd Akin's comments regarding rape and abortion (top post on 5/5 sites).
- Rampage shootings and gun violence (e.g. Sikh Temple, Wall Street, Chicago violence, Family Research Council) and the debate over gun rights (top post on 5/5 sites).

It is important to note that, although the selection of Paul Ryan as the VP candidate and the debate over the release of Mitt Romney's tax returns did not appear as a top posts on *US Message Board* and *Free Republic*, respectively, the topics were discussed during August 2012 on those sites.

While the sample of discussion boards and posts is limited, the specific findings outlined below provide a snapshot of the ever-changing, amorphous world of online dialogue. The exploration of these five political discussion boards offers important insights into the online American political community, as a forum for deliberative democracy and for the dispersion of American cultural hegemony.⁴⁰ The emancipatory capacity of online discussion boards to provide spaces free from societal constraints and economic factors which influence the operation of the mass media is evident. Simultaneously, this exploration demonstrates that these discussion forums do little to facilitate dialogue outside of pre-imposed, yet hidden, discursive constraints. Whilst all the discussion boards examined are free of charge and claim to maintain open debate regarding topics re-

lating to current events, the analysis of their structure and content reveal otherwise: persistent themes are present which point to these discussion boards as offering a space for a dialogue reflective of the dominant American culture, thereby implicitly reinforcing the social structure of the overarching American society. These themes will now be explored.

Theme #1: Deliberation on issues focuses largely on those previously reported by the mainstream mass media.

The vision of the blogosphere, particularly those blogs with open access and discussion, is to provide a space for the alternative creation of information and deliberation on events and society in general. During August 2012, the topics most frequently discussed on the discussion boards in this study were the same as those discussed most frequently in the mass media. Moreover, the posts created to discuss these issues often cited the mainstream media as sources to initiate discussion. Topics such as Chick-Fil-A's stance on marriage equality, Senatorial candidate Todd Akin's statements on rape, the pressure on Presidential candidate Mitt Romney to release his tax returns, and the selection of Congressman Paul Ryan as Mitt Romney's running mate were popular topics in the mass media and on the discussion boards.⁴¹ This provides evidence that the mainstream media is still setting the agenda for what constitutes public discourse, as evinced through the content of "free" political discussion boards. In sum, the topics of discussion are limited to those perpetuated by the current American value system.

Theme #2: Despite missions dedicated to grassroots social change, the majority of political discussion focuses on "winning" in the current American system.

The American political system provides a narrow, two-party choice. Compared to other nations, the ideological spectrum within which debate in the American political system occurs is limited. The political blogosphere would seem, then, to provide a forum through which a broadening of discourse could occur. Most discussion throughout August 2012, however, was focused primarily on winning the upcoming US elections. User attempts to broaden the discourse were often attacked by others as "trolling" (i.e. posting comments perceived as biased or superfluous to the conversation at hand) or undermining the candidate. For example, on the conservative boards, posts labelling Mitt Romney as a "Republican in Name Only" were castigated as unproductive, supportive of President Obama's re-election campaign, and anti-American.

There was also frequent discussion on campaign strategy, not actual policy issues. The discussion surrounding Paul Ryan's selection as the Republican Vice-Presidential candidate was often assessed on the basis of his physical appearance, and his state of origin (Wisconsin), not of his political or policy positions. The focus was, simply, winning the US election, even though posters on each of the boards agreed that the American political system was too narrow, broken, and in need of reform. Discussants appeared unaware that they were propagating the same system of values they were castigating.

Theme #3: Complex issues were often whittled down to sound bites.

American healthcare policy, the presence of racism in society, and the violence associated with gun ownership are all complex, multi-faceted public issues requiring deep deliberation, assessment, and planning. During August 2012, political discussion board users focused on political sound bites, or even quotes from Facebook, to debate these complex issues. Topics necessitating thorough research became distilled and reduced to cries of bankrupting Medicare, Obama's birth certificate and "people kill people, not guns". When these issues were debated, users who attempted to add external research or data to the discussion in order to ground it in empirics were told, "No, it really is that simple [Medicare needs drastic cuts, Romney supporters are racist, gun rights are sacred]."

Theme #4: A few users dominate.

Open access is a key Internet value; however, even within small discussion board communities, a few users dominate discussion, hold powerful social positions, and even have fan/supporter "followers". Competition amongst powerful users is created when two or more of the leaders have a public conflict.

On each of the discussion boards, moderators play a powerful role in determining appropriate content. A system of anonymous reporting exists on each of the message boards wherein other users can report posts for abuse, being against board rules, or for a myriad of other perceived problems. There are often complaints of favouritism lodged against moderators and owners.

Theme #5: Education and class play a strong role.

During August 2012, debates on these message boards included those on "dumb, young people", "proper grammar", and "playing the race card."

Each of these debates was rated in the daily top three in terms of user comments. The majority of the comments were those that reinforced the social status of the larger American society. For example, on the thread discussing proper grammar, many bemoaned language most commonly used by the less-educated and minority groups ranging from African-Americans to residents of Appalachia.

In addition to deliberation focused on reinforcing social structures through language debates, some bloggers are scared to make comments because other participants have a tendency to blast a comment based on grammatical and/or spelling errors, rather than content. This necessarily affects members of disadvantaged groups from participating at higher rates than others, as proper use of grammar is determined by external factors, such as levels of education or employment.

Finally, fundraising is a key component of maintaining these large sites. On *Free Republic*, the most popular posts on half of the days studied were those dedicated to fundraising. The owner needed money to keep operations going. During a national election, fundraising became the primary point of deliberation. On *Democratic Underground*, one cannot even access portions of the discussion board without being a member donor. These trends point to the dominance of consumerism, even on alternative spaces.

Theme #6: Accessibility is limited.

Navigation on each of the political discussion boards is difficult. To register is often a complicated process of selecting a user name, password, and replying to an e-mail. To many this is a simple, common procedure when online; however, to create spaces for egalitarian discussion, access should be universal. In addition to the registration process, there are social constraints affecting participation. On *Democratic Underground*, for example, participants can see a user's post count. When a new person posts, they may be flagged as a troll or disruptor based solely on post count. As expected, there were also attacks on each of the boards when a controversial opinion was posted. Calling for a political third-party was cause for account deletion on *Democratic Underground* and *Free Republic*.

Political discussion boards often target members of a particular political party (e.g. Democrats, Republicans, Greens) or political ideology (e.g. liberals, conservatives, socialists). Moreover, the structure of political discussion boards often segregates users further by creating separate spaces within the larger board for deliberation on specific areas of policy/political interests (e.g. gun rights, religious freedom, marriage equality) and/or group identities (e.g. women, GLBT, Hispanics). It is impor-

tant to remember that one of the key notions of the traditional view of deliberative democracy in the public sphere is the sharing of ideas and, through that sharing, the creation of diverse information sources. Given the structure of the discussion boards and the self-segregation of users into deliberative identity groups, do political discussion boards serve as communities to discuss and debate or to reinforce larger cultural values? Given the predisposition to segregate and the structural format which emphasizes it, one can argue that they simply replicate the communities of the “real world” in a virtual place.

Findings of Hegemony

Throughout the posts on the discussion boards, examples of individualism, competition, consumerism and reductionism were found. Individualism was found in the numerous debates around Mitt Romney’s tax returns, as many users asserted that calling for the release of his tax returns was simply the act of people jealous of his wealth and prosperity. This assertion also held that Romney had earned his money through his individual drive and initiative afforded to him by the free market economy. The focus on fundraising on all of the boards places great emphasis on an individual’s access to disposable income. This also reflects individualism as well as competition (survival of the fittest) because access to disposable income is, in the minds of some, the reflection of one’s ability to work hard, earn money, and spend it as one sees fit. Discussion boards focusing on egalitarian values would, ideally, not give special privileges to users who have more money. This is especially true for access to moderation powers through financial giving. Moderation powers give a user the ability to delete posts, ban users, and determine appropriate content.

Consumerism was present throughout the debates surrounding the boycott and support of Chick Fil-A, whose owner made disparaging comments regarding marriage equality. Marriage equality supporters organized a boycott of Chick Fil-A restaurants. Marriage equality opponents made the extra effort to spend money at the restaurants and organized a special day to support Chick Fil-A. Political protest was being played out at a fast food restaurant, whilst being organized online. Discussion of the issue was heavy on the forums, garnering as many as ten original topics a day on *Free Republic*.

Reductionism was present throughout many of the discussion topics. Some topics simply stated that President Obama was a Marxist, without any definition of Marxism or any evidence that President Obama fits these criteria. Discussion surrounding guns on one discussion board

degenerated to equating the need for assault weapons with the size of a man's sexual organ. One top post claimed that it was impossible for a conservative to be funny. A common complaint amongst users on each of these boards, regardless of political ideology, was referring to the horrible state of the mainstream cable news media. These users complained that cable news focused too much on election campaign strategy, and did not delve into key issues undergirding candidate platforms. It is interesting to note that many of the discussion board topics mimicked the level of discussion on these cable news shows—a series of short statements aimed at winning an argument, not deliberating on an issue below superficial levels.

Despite the powerful examples of political discussion boards reinforcing American cultural hegemonic values, there remains the vision of the political blogosphere serving as a public space for information alternatives. However, examples of counter-hegemony that this study has uncovered contests this vision.

Some of the examples of counter-hegemony include discussions of issues not highly covered in the mainstream media or calls for political/civic organizing. The Occupy Wall Street and Tea Party movements were discussed on each of the boards. At times, there were also in-depth policy debates on universal healthcare, reducing the carbon footprint, and the role of churches in providing social services. Each thread contained dialogue explicitly running against the hegemonic values of individualism (communities function better with universal healthcare); competition; consumerism (the materialistic nature of Americans must be shed to reduce carbon emissions); and reductionism (in depth debates about the role of churches and the government in ensuring economic equality). The aforementioned discussions show the capacity of individual citizens to advance political dialogue through deliberation. The question is how to create an atmosphere which is able to adequately maintain a space for dialogue and deliberation, while offering open access. Perhaps traditional political blogs (with one author or a small group of authors) provides a better context to promote deliberation, and not simply a superficial debate.

While discussion forums provide open access and a voice to more individuals than traditional blogs, these traditional political blogs (e.g. *The Daily Dish*, *Talking Points Memo*, *Firedoglake*) often create topics that run counter to mainstream dialogue and challenge what is proffered as common wisdom in these mediums. Moreover, these bloggers, due to their name recognition, are occasionally offered the opportunity on mainstream media outlets, to voice their concerns. The real questions, however, may have less to do with what kind of online technology is most

conducive to offering a place for deliberation among American citizens, and the extent to which American citizens *seek* to engage in sustained and insightful deliberation. In a society based on individualism, competition, consumerism, and reductionism, deliberation, regardless of location, seems to run counter to the hegemonic values of neoliberalism.

Conclusion

The exploration of these political discussion boards has implications for the debate surrounding the Internet as a tool of online citizen empowerment. Currently, in the United States, it can be said that there is limited citizen empowerment with respect to creating alternative means for participation in the creation of information, developing alternative values counter to the cultural hegemony, and thus actively engaging in an egalitarian public sphere. The promise of political discussion boards, and the Internet in general, is and has been the potential to make change in those three areas. As we have seen in our exploration, however, the day-to-day reality of political discussion boards lends itself more towards reinforcing the current American hegemony without creating sufficient space for alternative information streams, or an egalitarian public sphere.

Arnstein's ladder of civic participation posits that there are forms of engagement that can provide citizens with greater access to and equality within the public sphere. Establishing governing processes—including the partnership, delegated power, and citizen control models proposed by Arnstein—spreads power, decision-making, and information across groups of citizens; whereas in modern society the public sphere concentrates power, decision-making, and information dissemination in the hands of a few.⁴² Today, civic participation is often non-existent, or only occurs through token processes such as public hearings and community surveys, methods which do not grant greater access to power.⁴³ Citizen empowerment requires access to not only the tools of participation, but also to an egalitarian space which affords individuals the opportunity to make decisions outside of traditional hegemonic norms. What we see instead, through the use of political discussion boards, is a technological cultural determinism. These tools are not empowering, but instead, function to solidify, or shore up, the values of those who benefit from the current neoliberal configuration of American values. ■

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Notes

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⁴⁰ Overall, all but one of these boards (Red State) is extremely active. The other four boards average over 3,000 user comments per day.

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Social Media under Duress: State Responses to Political Expression and Social Mobilization in Repressive Regimes

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ABSTRACT

Social media, in a number of diverse forms, figures prominently in both routine and crisis situations to initiate and amplify political action. Events beginning with the Green Revolution in Iran (2009), anti-government protests in North Africa (2011), and violent protests in Syria (2012) have employed varying methods of social media mobilization. Political mass movements are relying on social media networks for late-breaking events, civil disobedience, network activism, and a host of similar functions. These technological potentialities are proving to be effective methods for keeping protest movements active, recruiting both leaders and followers, and in countering state-controlled media. Governments have been slow to recognize the power of social media to organise and direct opposition and protest movements. Yet the experiences of 2011, especially during the Arab Spring uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, have raised the profile of social media in the purview of state and society alike. Governments unsympathetic to organised, unmanaged political opposition are planning and implementing specific technical and political and other measures to control the access and use of social media networks for political action. This paper will utilize a model that takes these experiences and events as inputs through which to profile the interactions between political opposition and civil society groups, and steps taken by governments to inhibit or suppress social media-based mobilization. The model generates four dimensions of social media use: (1) Access; (2) Anonymity; (3) Awareness; and (4) Advocacy. Each dimension represents a scale of conditions that enables and enhances the power of social media in the context of political protest or, conversely, inhibits the utility of social media to place demands on government. I will examine three cases (Iran, 2009, Tunisia, 2010-2011, and Egypt 2011) to: (1) illuminate the initial conditions in each country for the employment of social media as a catalyst for political opposition and protest; (2) chart the course of various social media techniques and parallel human organization during active periods of public protest; (3) identify initial attempts by governments to control or inhibit the use of these social media and their underlying communications infrastructure; and (4) reveal subsequent plans and actions by successor governments to encourage, discourage, block, or otherwise control, future use of these technologies.

Electronic social media have received increasing attention from students of political change because of their supposedly critical role in the social mobilization of groups opposing governments in power. Beginning with the Green Revolution in Iran in 2009, through the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011, mass political factions have sought to force incumbent regimes from power by garnering support through social media technologies. To mobilise large groups of people in opposition to an entrenched regime requires effective and dispersed modes of communication, and, as this paper will illustrate, electronic social media are key factors in such social mobilization.¹

A growing infusion of information and communication technologies in developing societies has had significant and demonstrable economic effects, including: the reduction of transaction costs, optimization of pricing, and, in general, the growth of trade and commerce.² Beginning in 2009, the application of such social technologies in forms of protest and political opposition gained attention as a significant phenomenon. These technologies, in the form of electronic social media networks, were typically delivered through two basic platforms for communication amongst large numbers of individuals: the Internet (Worldwide Web) and mobile telecommunication. The Internet allows for the development of applications that connect people, or advertise groups and issues, by making it convenient to create spaces where individuals can locate each other, establish networks of like-minded individuals, and then create linkages amongst organizations, issues, and the community. These social networking sites, of which Facebook is typically cited as the most pervasive,³ simplify the creation of individual and communal spaces. Their discourse can occur in multiple languages, that detail specific issues or connect networks of individuals and groups to the same particular issue. These sites can also be rapidly and easily updated by any user, and are embedded in general web traffic accessible through any device using the Internet Protocol (TCP/IP).

The technological development that has dramatically extended the reach of social media is their linkage with mobile networks and devices. No longer tethered to personal computers attached to local wireless networks or hardwired web access, mobile networks increasingly allow seamless access to social networking sites, as well as a variety of text messaging services, such as SMS and web-based Twitter. These networks can also be accessed via the web, and used to exchange text messages, photos, videos, or assorted containers of data and information, from virtually any

destination.⁴ They are easily maintained and supported from either inside, or outside, of the country to which the social media network may pertain; thus, they serve as vehicles to import and export information, and to circulate it within the country, without concern for borders and boundaries. These are the features which give social media their increased potential for organizing large groups of people in times of political turmoil.

Extending the reach of social media platforms to a much wider community through the ubiquity of mobile networks also extends their value in mobilizing greater numbers of people than could be done through the Internet. They offer the potential to demonstrate and articulate the mounting evidence of continued pressures on political regimes, the symbolic support for protests, and the allowance of reporting of late-breaking events that may not be captured by the mass media.⁵

Authoritarian regimes that have repressed information, civil society, and various forms of opposition and dissent, have relied upon “traditional” means (such as violence and press censorship) for controlling their populations. Political opposition and dissent are viewed by the regime’s leadership largely in terms of threats or challenges to state power and authority, not in terms of open political competition.⁶ Although repression can stimulate dissent, dissent almost always provokes repression.⁷ It seems that most authoritarian regimes, especially those presiding in the Middle East, were slow to understand the potential of social networking to amplify latent grievances previously hidden in the sentiment of their populace and demonstrate safety in large numbers as popular opposition expressed itself in mass rallies and demonstrations over sustained periods of time.⁸ It may also be the case that the events of 2009-2011 have raised the profile of social media tools to the extent that authoritarian regimes will be much more pre-emptive to block social networking sites or restrict communications at least temporarily to discourage nascent opposition movements.

Whether such social networks can be effective as tools for social mobilization in repressive environments depends upon a number of factors which can be characterized in two dimensions: the qualities of media freedom present, and the incentives for individuals and groups to use electronic social media for political action.⁹ A basic model of four “media freedom qualities” can be understood to shape this environment: network access, anonymity, awareness of issues, and advocacy. Firstly, network access defines the penetration of social media technologies, in particular mobile services and devices, in the hands of the general population. Where internet access and mobile telephone penetration¹⁰ is low, opportunities for using social media to disseminate news and tactical information may be limited to urbanized leaders and elites. Where there

is widespread web access and high penetration of mobile telephones and devices, messages will reach a greater number of people directly and rapidly, amplifying potential tactical effects on the situation.

A second critical factor in social media freedom is anonymity or non-attribution. This factor usually refers to the ability of individual users to conceal their identity, and it is closely related to the notion of attribution. Network operators and government security services have capabilities to identify a user that is connected to the web or to a mobile service. This attribution can be established through the device being used, the account being used, the location of the user, and by implication, the identity of the individual using the service. Technologies used on the internet are available to mask individual identity, conceal the content of messages, and to access blocked content. In circumstances where it is difficult to maintain such secrecy, individual users can be compromised more easily by having their communications intercepted and analysed by state authorities. Likewise, where users are more confident about using anonymity and circumvention tools successfully, social media may have increased appeal. There are also instances where the lack of anonymity can be offset by high participation rates in social networking, email, and other electronic messaging, making it a more difficult task for authorities to sift through millions of messages sent and received by millions of people.¹¹

To apply social media to political mobilization also requires a level of awareness of its potential utility in communities of interest.¹² For example, the leaders of political opposition groups must be aware that their activities can be monitored, and thus, must accept that risk in communicating with their followers by electronic means. Awareness is also increased when political opposition groups seek external support for their movement and monitor external reactions to events. In this dimension, social media also plays a potential role in documenting events through the use of digital recordings of street demonstrations by protestors, or repressive acts against them by the state. The efficacy of social media is then demonstrated when a recording depicts a particularly dramatic event that is widely distributed across the world without censoring constraints. Larger numbers of people will then rely on the same channels for information and advice as a political crisis advances.

Organization and advocacy are also necessary conditions for social media to become accepted as a means of communication in political conflict. Without the human element that produces a steady flow of news and events, social media will not become habitual, and will not be relied upon as representing and documenting current events. There may also be opportunities for new leaders to be recruited by advocacy groups when their communications reach a significant number of potential followers.

Along the dimension of incentives, four elements can also be identified to chart the course of social media in a political contest. In repressive environments, these elements have special significance for the degree of personal investment in the regime or in its opposition. Media that touch issues appealing to large numbers of a population are able to galvanize, unify, and direct opposition far more quickly and effectively if the grievances are widespread. As there is significant self-censorship in repressive environments, such latent hostility may find expression when people realise that many others have similar thoughts and there appears to be relative safety in numbers and a reduced perception of individuals being isolated from one another.

The demand for uncensored, unfiltered information needs also to be high to attract social media as a means of learning what is happening in the country and in the outside world. Notifications through electronic messaging of movements of government forces, locations of street demonstrations, arrests, and similar events may be the only means of obtaining such information when traditional media are controlled by the regime. If a political opposition movement is searching for legitimacy from the international community or for support from specific countries, then feedback on events from external sources is crucial. If communication links are severed with the outside world, it becomes more difficult for political opposition groups to press on with sustained defiance to a regime, because they are not aware of support from outside groups and countries. Governments that seek to repress such movements are also in a position to monitor outside support and are incentivized to press their attack if they believe the international community is indifferent to the situation.

Individuals will also assess their own appetite for risk-taking behaviour in political conflict situations. Surely, there appears to be safety in numbers when it comes to mass demonstrations and street protests, but online behaviour, especially under conditions of low confidence in anonymity, may have a very different risk profile. The acceptance of personal risk to either receive or impart forbidden messages can affect one's desire to use social media to oppose a regime, or to refrain from taking actions to expose dissent. If individuals believe they will ultimately be successful, or that they have already been exposed, then they may be more willing to engage in social networking that advances their cause.

Finally, the efficacy of the regime's repressive measures against online activity should be considered as affecting the use of social media in conflict situations. This element is not the same as individual risk-taking, as some individuals may engage in extremely high-risk activities knowing that a regime has a demonstrated reputation for decisive countermeasures. Actions taken by governments run a wide range of types

of attacks on social media networks, from monitoring to denial. Some regimes may temporarily ease restrictions on social media so that better intelligence can be gathered on the patterns and content of these communications. At other times, a regime may block web access to particular domains, such as popular social networking sites, when these tools are being used by opposition groups to post information and mobilise their followers. In certain cases, where social media facilitate widespread dissent and opposition, a regime may take down all communication services temporarily in an attempt to restore order.

The three cases considered for this model begin with the Iranian Green Revolution in 2009. Following a contentious outcome of presidential elections in June 2009, public protests began to grow, eventually becoming much larger than the student protests of 1999. The defeated opposition candidate claimed the election was fraudulent and later claimed victory over incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. In addition to blogging, with support from diaspora groups outside Iran, Iranians posted information on the protests to Facebook and organised comments about the election on Twitter using the hashtag #IranElection. These latter messages increased to about thirty new messages per minute.¹³

In 2009, Iran's communications infrastructure was well-developed in comparison with other countries in the region, with Internet penetration rates at thirty-six per cent of the population or higher, and mobile penetration rates reaching eighty per cent. By 2012, mobile penetration rates had reached more than one hundred per cent in Iran.¹⁴ Detailed study of the role of social media indicate a shifting variety of themes¹⁵ during the events that indicate social media made the public expression of dissent and opposition against the regime larger and longer in duration. There is also some evidence that the high global visibility of the use of social media to amplify these protests was an increase in world oil prices.¹⁶ Such a price increase augmented Iran's revenues, strengthened the regime, but, simultaneously, the protests displayed an organised expression of dissatisfaction with a flawed electoral process. Social media was seen as a relatively safe means of communication, because the Iranian government had not yet begun to employ the targeted blocking of websites, and had no apparent means to stop mobile messaging, except by closing down all similar digital and electronic messaging services.¹⁷ At the time, consumer, business, and governmental services, all used the same internet network infrastructure; so, ironically, the Iranian government was caught in a situation in which it would have had to shut down its own services, in order to deny open social networking to protesters. The regime also did not have the surveillance and monitoring capabilities in sufficient quantity or technical quality to identify or

track large numbers of messages, devices, and people. The regime did seem to be successful in attacking bloggers and others who used web services to support the protests.¹⁸

The rapid infusion of messaging through social media, especially Twitter, indicated widespread regime dissatisfaction that could be expressed through public protests. Younger Iranians, familiar with social networking services and keen to challenge the election results that they perceived were stolen from them, communicated a common dissent that gathered increasing momentum. While attempting to gain some international support, the communications were directed primarily at maintaining a level of internal discontent and about getting the story of the election's aftermath out to the larger global community. Iranian protesters did not use social media to either query or seek international legitimacy for their actions. Yet given the widespread disorders of 2009, the regime subsequently took renewed measures to censor, filter, and monitor electronic communications in the country.¹⁹

The events in Tunisia beginning in December of 2010 were unlike the Iranian case in many aspects, particularly in that Tunisia had no disputed election to touch off protests that were intensely and almost exclusively political. In Tunisia, deep dissatisfaction with the regime manifested primarily due to deteriorating economic conditions aggravated by institutional corruption. President Ben Ali became the focus of this displeasure after alternative media—not state-controlled—carried the stories of Mohamed Bouazizi and others who killed themselves in protest of their dire conditions. Widespread protests, in open defiance of security forces, soon forced Ben Ali from office. As protests continued under interim political arrangements, a number of prominent bloggers were arrested. These arrests appear to be high-profile acts in which the identities of the bloggers were already well-known to authorities and they did not take extraordinary measures to conceal their identities.²⁰

Internet services were significantly controlled in Tunisia under the Ben Ali government, and Tunisia ranked below Iran in both web and mobile services penetration. This fact did not dissuade a number of blogging sites to spread news of the growing dissatisfaction with the Ben Ali regime and begin to enlist the support of elites outside the ruling families allied with Ben Ali.²¹ While social media contributed to the size and strength of public protests, as in Iran, web services and social network messaging attracted many new supporters since the state-controlled media refused coverage of the events and many people, aware of the precarious position of the government, had an appetite for news about what was happening in their own country. Some efforts by the government were belatedly made to block social networking sites and

messaging services, but these seemed to be ineffectual as policies and control shifted in the aftermath of Ben Ali's departure from Tunisia. Governments across the Maghreb realised that digital messaging was playing a significant role in toppling the Tunisian government, informing the citizenry despite media censorship, and making the political drama visible to a global audience. Protests were focused directly at a small ruling elite in the belief that once removed, economic and social conditions would improve for the majority of Tunisians.

In Egypt in 2011, the Mubarak government was well aware of the power of alternative media but did little to prepare for its own social disorders that eventually forced the regime from power.²² Egypt's internet penetration was relatively low in 2011, below twenty per cent of the population, and mobile penetration at about thirty-seven per cent. Egypt, similar to Iran and Tunisia, also had, and maintains as of this writing, a concentrated set of international access points to the Internet.²³ Internet traffic was subject to certain monitoring, especially email traffic and international links.

Presidential elections were scheduled for 2011 amid widespread dissent over the openness and integrity of the electoral process, especially since the President's son was believed to have been groomed to ultimately take over the office from his father. Encouraged by Ben Ali's ousting in Tunisia, the latent dissatisfaction with the Mubarak government rose to crisis proportions; protestors held sustained demonstrations in Cairo for eighteen days until Mubarak resigned. Social media played a crucial role and in a number of ways was significantly different from the Tunisian and Iranian cases. First, the Egyptian opposition was very interested in the international reaction to their demands, a feature that was much less prominent in the cases of Tunisia and Iran. The support of the United States was a decisive element in establishing the opposition's legitimacy, no doubt because the Mubarak government was a long-time ally of the United States and was dependent on substantial military and economic assistance. Alternative media were a primary source through which international news could be monitored, even with intermittent internet blockages. Opposition bloggers also led the way toward building mass protests, which were not triggered by any specific event per se, but were catalyzed online, in order to stimulate and solidify a political impetus for large numbers of people to turn out onto the streets to protest. Several of these bloggers eventually became the de facto leaders of the opposition movements. Spurred by these movements, other well-known Egyptian elites, even those not associated with the Mubarak government, eventually joined into this mix of opinions, strategies, and aspirations, expressed during these critical days.²⁴

The Egyptian opposition seemingly did not need social media for tactical level warnings about regime reactions to public protest activities, for example, to avoid certain gathering points where security forces were concentrating to counter protests. Most of the attention focused on Tahrir Square in Cairo, and efforts were made to publicize and sustain the energy of the opposition over a longer period of time. It must be noted, therefore, that further research is required to determine whether organized protests in other urban centers, such as Alexandria, were linked to social media warnings and tactics.²⁵

In Iran, where the 2009 post-election protests were organised through social media in a number of cities, tactical use of messaging to avoid confrontation, arrest, and so forth, was much more useful for the Green movement. Without a single leader to organise and speak for the opposition in Egypt, a few articulate bloggers and other similar leaders emerged from the media chatter and gained a significant following. Social media became a method for recruiting leaders as well as a way for an opposition to sense that it was united in the absence of an identifiable single leader.

Since many of the demonstrations were concentrated in Tahrir Square, social media helped to spread information about developments there to the rest of the country, and more importantly, to the outside world. Protestors did not need to use their messaging to inform one another so much about events within visual range. When the government removed Egypt from normal internet service for a five-day period during the crisis, some international linkages were not shut down at the same time, leaving at least one wireless network close to Tahrir Square operational, allowing news to travel in and out of the country.²⁶

The blunt instrument of closing down internet services in Egypt had serious domestic and international consequences for the Mubarak government. Domestically, it allowed mobile services not connected to the Internet to take a more prominent place in maintaining the flow of information. It was still possible to send messages and other files through mobile telephone networks and the need to maintain anonymity (much more difficult in a mobile system than on the internet) did not seem to be an overriding concern to Egyptians. The lack of internet services, especially electronic commerce, banking, tourist bookings, etc., cost the economy considerable losses, and put increasing stress on the regime. At the same time, the international reaction to turning off communications was condemned by the US and the EU, further attenuating the regime's legitimacy in the face of growing opposition.

The variety of initial conditions and social experiences in Iran, Tunisia, and Egypt makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the role

and influence of social media in each instance. Taking the observations about each situation as it is known today (further research may provide additional valuable evidence) and organizing them into the media freedom and incentives model may reveal common patterns and may focus further research on factors directly related to the use of social media.

Table 1 categorises the three cases of social media in the three repressive environments to discern relationships among the factors considered. Since this is a first attempt at finding common patterns, an ordinal scale of low, moderate, and high are used to attach rough measures to each element. If an element is marked low, it means that this quality or incentive was less important to the users of social networking during the period of political conflict. A score of moderate means there is evidence that this factor had some influence on the process of social media messaging. A high score indicates that the element appears to have played a decisive role among opposition groups and individuals employing social media messaging.

Table 1: Social Media Factors Compared

<i>Media Freedom Qualities :</i>	<i>Network Access</i>	<i>Anonymity; Non-Attribution</i>	<i>Awareness of Issues and Situation</i>	<i>Organization and Advocacy</i>
Iran	Moderate to High	Low	High	Low to Moderate
Tunisia	Moderate to High	Moderate to High	Low	Moderate
Egypt	Low to Moderate	Moderate to High	Moderate	Moderate to High
<i>Incentives :</i>	<i>Latent Dissatisfaction Regime</i>	<i>Demand for Uncensored Information</i>	<i>Acceptance of Personal Risk</i>	<i>Efficacy of Regime Countermeasures</i>
Iran	Moderate	Low	Low	High
Tunisia	High	High	High	Low
Egypt	High	High	High	Moderate

In this table the four media freedom qualities and the four political mobilization incentives are compared in a qualitative appraisal of the three cases considered: Iran, Tunisia and Egypt. These comparisons expose

both similarities and substantial variations among the social media dynamics in each country during their times of political turbulence.

Network access as an indicator played an important role in fostering nation-wide opposition in Iran and in Tunisia. It seems to have been less important in the Egyptian case, due to the fact that much of the protest against the regime was concentrated in one physical location (Tahrir Square), and in the maintaining of just a few international links that were sufficient enough to move information in and out of the country adequately. Anonymity had a moderate to high tolerance in both Egypt and Tunisia where, despite exemplar arrests of prominent bloggers, large numbers of people gradually gained confidence in using social media without facing immediate retribution. This was not so in Iran where instances of both publicly advertised arrests and aggressive surveillance by security authorities (whose actions never lessened during the period) made the tolerance of exposing individual identity much lower. Issue awareness and advocacy varied among the three cases, leading to a tentative conclusion that initial conditions for grievances (political versus economic, for example) shape a particular crisis for a more extended period, even when regime change (Tunisia, Egypt) becomes the primary focus of political dissent.

The actual organization of advocacy deserves some additional scrutiny as preexisting affinities are certain to play a role amongst elites who go over to the opposition, especially the extent to which elite organizations received prior regime support.²⁷ A stronger independent civil society would logically lead to the notion that opposition might crystallize more quickly if major elite groups, such as the legal or medical professions, had high social status and some recognizable autonomy from the regime in power. In Egypt, civil society groups, especially those with foreign support, were openly assaulted by the interim military government a year after the social turmoil of early 2011.²⁸ Groups that have relative autonomy or whose members were nominally playing the regime's game, may be in a much better position to migrate to the opposition and provide leadership and resources. In Tunisia, evidence is not apparent as yet that a strong civil society movement outside the university communities was able to assert itself and make the case through public protest, declarations, or social media platforms. Conversely, the successor institutions in Tunisia took a clearly defined path against a new, religiously-based constitution, even though political institutions and the legal framework in both countries have been dominated by a secular regime. The area of group organization, especially among elites, deserves much more investigation than this article permits and may shed some additional light on an important dimension of group dynamics in political transitions.

Individual incentive structures are also varied except perhaps for the latent dissatisfaction with the regime in power. In Iran, while discontent was and remains widespread, the conditions in the country required a specific political event—the 2009 elections—to trigger a challenge to the legitimacy of the electoral process and hence of the regime itself. The country divided rather quickly into government—anti-government factions and the anti-government opposition was not sufficient to force fundamental changes to the political system. In Tunisia and Egypt, the factors of latent discontent—economic malaise, institutionalized corruption, clientelism—tapped a deeper reserve of anger that lay within their citizens, and this in turn motivated larger numbers of people to take personal risks through public protest and action than what was witnessed in Iran.

The Arab experiences in this regard may also explain that the desire for unfiltered information about the progression of the protests was not as high in Iran as in the other two cases. Here the Arab cases differ as well, since social media played a huge role in obtaining current changes in the reactions to the crisis by the international community. As the Mubarak regime began to slide in legitimacy, control, and resolve, the increasing support of the opposition external to Egypt emboldened the opposition even more to hold out until Mubarak was removed from power. In Tunisia, the need for international legitimacy was far lower, even though social media channels were still used extensively to mobilise domestic opposition and to publicise by independent sources evidence of the corruption of the Ben Ali government.

A final open element is the efficacy of regime countermeasures against the use of social media in a political crisis. This element has important consequences for the future use of social media in challenges to an authoritarian regime because governments will learn to anticipate an opposition's desire to spread information and advocacy and take preemptive measures against it. The experience of Iran in 2009 did not trigger intensive efforts on the part of Arab governments to increase preventive controls on social media in any consistent way. Perhaps because the Green Movement did not garner strong international support and the public protests began to wane rapidly, other governments perceived that any threat posed by electronic advocacy and mobilization could be offset by traditional methods of crowd control, arrests of leaders, and demonstrations of force.

Iran has since begun to tighten controls over all media, especially digital content accessed through the Internet. Websites are routinely blocked and web browsing is subject to increasing surveillance and monitoring to minimize, if not eliminate, anonymity. While both governmental and

private users employ social media (these are not completely blocked) the Iranian government appears to be moving towards a Chinese model, in which positive measures of control supplement the negative, punitive aspects of censorship. The approach is not only to deny the population information, news, entertainment, and conversation with the outside world, but to offer domestic substitutes for global social media and networking sites. These are crafted to appeal to themes localized to culture, religion, and language. The strategy not only aspires to migrate users away from global social media to a more managed, monitored environment, although that is a key benefit; it also attempts to inject into the social networking environment the regimes' own themes, adjusting them to build support, legitimacy, and to justify the conditions in the country. This strategy is known as networked authoritarianism.²⁹

The Tunisian case also caught security authorities off guard when opposition demonstrations spread through electronic messaging, allowing distant villages and cities to show common cause at common times. Despite efforts by Tunisian security forces to trace the source of communications, and monitor and block certain web sites, because the emphasis among the Tunisian opposition was primarily internal, the resources devoted to blocking undesirable web content were of lesser importance; it was the domestic political infrastructure, and not foreign influence, that was acknowledged to matter. Since the establishment of new government in Tunisia, efforts have been underway to regulate surveillance and to ease Internet filtering and censorship.³⁰ A government that now takes individual information and communication rights seriously provides evidence that maintain open flows of information is critical to maintaining democratic governance. It remains to be seen whether Tunisia will be able to maintain these policies if political and economic conditions provoke active dissent in the population.

In Egypt, authorities attempted to block Internet services entirely for a short period of time and to inject messaging supporting the regime into social media during the days before President Mubarak's resignation. Prominent bloggers and opposition organizers who were intimidated or arrested during this period were likely to have been identified beforehand, either because they used their actual names on their messaging or because they were known to authorities as unsympathetic to the regime.

Under the new government, as of this writing the degree to which media and communications will be controlled in Egypt is not yet clear.³¹ The episodes of outright blockage were brief, and the history of electronic surveillance to suppress opposition did not dominate traditional authoritarian methods of intimidation. The power of social media, demonstrated through

its mobilization of the population to outlast a dictatorship, will hopefully be institutionalised with legal protections protect free expression.

These three cases also demonstrate that when political opportunities first arise, at least in the change of government in Tunisia and Egypt, that there is a parallel opportunity to establish the open use of social media and other communication technologies that can be leveraged to the advantage of civil society and political organisation. The situation can provide opportunities for the larger social networking global community and the process of internet governance to draw these new governments into a more inclusive and permissive regime tolerant of these powerful and beneficial technologies.

The Iranian case can be viewed as an outlier, as the earliest of the three cases and one in which social media were used but not leveraged as dramatically as in Tunisia and Egypt.³² There may also have been much deeper reservoirs of discontent among wide and diverse segments of the populations in Tunisia and Egypt. The political and economic disenfranchisement of large numbers of people found new evidence of like-minded support in social media. Safety in growing numbers made the personal costs of opposition decrease as events unfolded and provided an increasingly trustworthy medium for expressing grievances and applying pressure to the regime.³³ Despite the limitations of these networks and the *a priori* human conditions that require success, the role of social media should not be underestimated. Regimes hostile to dissent and organized opposition may have learned that social media are indeed powerful augmentations to traditional forms of protest. In the future when regimes take actions to block or shut down social media sites during political crises, a critical means of organized protest will indeed be blunted.³⁴ How opposition groups and the international community respond will also affect how social media are employed to effect political change. ■

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¹ The connection between social mobilization and political action was first made by Karl W. Deutsch in which he observed that "...social mobilization is something that happens to large numbers of people...where advanced, non-traditional practices in culture, technology and economic life are introduced and accepted on a considerable scale." See Karl W. Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development," *American Political Science Review* 55 (September 1961): 493-514.

² See for example, International Telecommunication Union, *The World Telecommunication ICT Development Report*, 9th Edition, Geneva, ITU, 2010.

³ Al-Arabiya, "Arab Users of Social Networking Sites Surge in 2012," May 8, 2012. Retrieved from: <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/05/08/212904.html>.

⁴ Access must also take into account usage. In some countries, there is reasonable access as measured by teledensity figures, but the correlation with actual usage is not always strong. This may be in part a function of language, cost, age, and general IT literacy. On this point see Richard Rogers, et al. "National Web Studies: Mapping Iran Online." Digital Methods Initiative, University of Amsterdam, January 2012; and Dubai School of Government, "The Role of Social Media in Arab Women's Empowerment." *Arab Social Media Report* vol. 1 no. 3, November 2011.

⁵ This symbolic value of social media is central to the arguments about its amplification in Arab societies made by Philip N. Howard in *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Information Technology and Political Islam* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 41. Howard convincingly demonstrates that wider access to these technological platforms has produced a multiplier effect to leverage their political application (p. 42ff).

⁶ Christian Davenport, "Multi-Dimensional Threat Perception and State Repression: An Inquiry Into Why State Apply Negative Sanctions," *American Journal of Political Science* 39 (August 1995): 683-713.

⁷ Christian Davenport, "State Repression and the Tyrannical Peace," *Journal of Peace Research* 44 (July 2007): 485-504 for a test of this hypothesis and Mark Irving Lichbach, "Deterrence or Escalation? The Puzzle of Aggregate Studies of Repression and Dissent," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 31 (1987): 266-297 for a review of prior studies of regime threat and response.

⁸ An exception might be China, where ruling elites clearly learned a lesson from the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, and have taken successive actions to control traditional media, retard the development of independent civil society, and shape new digital media in ways that enforce a progressively thorough censorship and surveillance system. See J. Zittrain and B. Edelman, "Empirical Analysis of Internet Filtering," *IEEE Computing*, 7 no. 2, March 2003. Retrieved from <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/filtering/china/>; G. Chen and J. Zhu, "Behind the 'Green's Dam': Internet Censorship in China," Singapore: East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, September 2, 2009; and James A. Lewis, "The Architecture of Control: Internet Surveillance in China," Washington, DC: Center for Security and International Studies, July 15, 2006. Retrieved from <http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/0706-cn-surveillance-and-information-technology.pdf>. At the same

time, there is evidence that the Chinese have also had to balance other economic interests that depend on international communications with domestic controls. For a discussion of these conflicting goals see C. Liu, "Internet Censorship as a Trade Barrier: A look at the WTO Consistency of the Great Firewall in the Wake of the China-Google Dispute," *Georgetown Journal of International Law*, 42 (2011): 1199-1240.

⁹ The author is indebted to Ryan Henry and Martin Libicki at The RAND Corporation for their initial efforts to demonstrate the application of these two sets of factors to the problem of online communication in hostile environments.

¹⁰ Penetration is typically defined by the term teledensity, which divides the number of connections, devices, or lines by the population multiplied by 100. Thus a teledensity value of 50 indicates that half of the population has access to a specified network service or appliance.

¹¹ See for example the assessments in Tobit Emmens and Amy Phippen, "Evaluating Online Safety Programs," The Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Harvard University, 2010. Retrieved from <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/node/6216>

¹² For an excellent background discussion on this dimension see William Youmans and Jillian York, "Social Media and the Activist Toolkit: User Agreements, Corporate Interests, and the Information Infrastructure of Modern Social Movements," *Journal of Communication* 62 (2012): 315-329.

¹³ A comprehensive content analysis and timeline of these events can be found in Sara Beth Elson et al. "Using Social Media to Gauge Iranian Public Opinion and Mood after the 2009 Election," Technical Report, National Security Research Division, The RAND Corporation, 2012. Exile of high profile individuals no longer affords a regime a method of curtailing communication inside the country, as a high profile activist or blogger that becomes part of a Diaspora amounts to obtaining another IP address and continuing communication in the same fashion. Blocking and censorship technologies are not overwhelmingly effective in this situation. The timeline of events during the Green Revolution is most comprehensively documented in the Open Anthropology Project, *Twitter and the Iranian Election Protests: An Annotated Bibliography*. Compiled by Maximilian C. Forte (Montreal, Canada, July 24, 2009)

¹⁴ Teledensity rates for all countries in this article are obtained from the International Telecommunication Union, World Communication and ICT Indicators Database, 2006-2012, Geneva, ITU, 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/>

¹⁵ Elson, et al., *ibid*.

¹⁶ Kevin Cross. "Why Iran's Green Movement Faltered: The Limits of Technology in a Rentier State." *SAIS Review* 30 (Summer-Fall 2010): 169-187.

¹⁷ Babak Rahimi. "The Agonistic Social Media: Cyberspace in the Formation of Dissent and Consolidation of State Power in Postelection Iran." *The Communication Review* 14(3) (2011): 158-178.

¹⁸ Reza Marashi. 2011, April 30. The Islamic Republic's Emerging Cyber War. National Iranian American Council, 3. Retrieved from <http://www.niacouncil.org/site/DocServer/The—Islamic—Republic—s—Emerging—Cyber—War—APR—2011—.pdf?docID=821> ; also C. Muzaffar, "Iran: the Price of Resistance."

JUST Commentary, 12 (January 27, 2012):1-5. The attraction of electronic media has not waned in Iran, although a majority of individuals receive their primary news and information through traditional media channels. For a detailed analysis of these trends see M. Wojcieszak, Briar Smith, and Mahmood Enayat, "Finding a Way—How Iranians Reach for News and Information." Philadelphia, PA: Iran Media Program, Annenberg School of Communication, University of Pennsylvania, 2012; Open Source Center. "Iran – Social Media Environment Guide." Washington, DC April 25, 2012. Retrieved from <https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS—0—0—200—0—0—43/content/Display/IAF20120425364001?returnFrame=true> ; and Broadcasting Board of Governors and the Gallup Organization. "Analytical Report for Iran Media Use Survey." BBG Research Series, March 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.bbg.gov/wp-content/media/2012/06/BBG-Iran-ppt.pdf>

¹⁹ Philip N. Howard, Sheetal D. Agarwal, and Muzammil M. Hussain, "When Do States Disconnect Their Digital Networks? Regime Responses to the Political Uses of Social Media," *The Communication Review* 14 (2011): 216-232; see also, Associated Press, "Iran's Leader sets up Internet Control Group," *Al Arabiya News*, March 7, 2012. Retrieved from <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/03/07/199182.html>.

²⁰ See Jeffrey Ghannam, "Social Media in the Arab World: Leading up to the Uprisings of 2011," A Report to the Center for International Media Assistance, February 2011, for details

²¹ See Fatima El-Issawai, "Tunisian Media in Transition." *The Carnegie Papers*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC, July 2012.

²² See Chad Spindel, "The People want to Topple the Regime: Exploring the Arab Spring in Egypt, Syria, and Jordan." *SAGE Open*, November 11, 2011. Retrieved from: <http://sgo.sagepub.com/content/early/2011/11/10/2158244011428648> . Also, there is a very good collection of original information on Egypt in Nadia Idle, and Alex Nunns, *Tweets from Tahrir: Egypt's Revolution as it Unfolded, in the Words of the People who Made It* (New York: OR Books, 2011).

²³ For these measures, see Hal Roberts, D. Larochelle, Robert Faris, and J. Palfrey, "Mapping Local Internet Control. Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University, May 13, 2011. Retrieved from <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/netmaps/mlc—20110513.pdf>

²⁴ Sahar Khamis and Katherine Vaughn, "Cyberactivism in the Egyptian Revolution: How Civic Engagement and Citizen Journalism Tilted the Balance," *Arab Media and Society*, Issue 13, Summer 2011.

²⁵ For evidence that social media have played this tactical role see Alex Comninos, "Twitter Revolutions and Cyber Crackdowns," Association for Progressive Communications, June 2011; and Christian Christensen, "Twitter Revolutions? Addressing Social Media and Dissent." *The Communication Review* 14, no. 3 (2011): 155-157. After the Alexandria murder of Khaled Saeed, Google marketing executive Wael Ghonim in Dubai created the famous Facebook memorial page for Saeed, *We are all Khaled Saeed*. The page quickly became Egypt's biggest opposition Facebook page, attracting hundreds of thousands of supporters (See Jennifer Preston, "Movement Began With Outrage and a Facebook Page That Gave It an Outlet," *New York Times Online*

5 February 2011: Retrieved from: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/06/world/middleeast/06face.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 Using the Saeed murder as a rallying point, opposition rapidly spread even to the point of many Egyptian Facebook pages using Saeed's photograph in their own profile. While this is not operational use of social media to direct or steer street protests, it does indicate its power to mobilise support. On 25 June 2010, opposition figure Mohamed ElBaradei led a protest in Alexandria against the police and publicly visited Saeed's family.

²⁶ Comninos, Ibid. There also were examples of using mobile devices to organize logistics to keep the Tahrir Square demonstrations going, such as rotating family members, bringing supplies, etc. See also Constance Duncombe's analysis in "The Twitter Revolution? Social Media, Representation and Crisis in Iran and Libya," Paper Presented to the Australian Political Science Association Conference, 2011. There is also some additional evidence for these applications in other protest activities outside the Middle East in Alexandra Segerberg, Alexandra and W. Lance Bennett, "Social Media and the Organization of Collective Action: Using Twitter to Explore the Ecologies of Two Climate Change Protests." *The Communication Review* 14, no. 3 (2011): 197-215.

²⁷ On this and related questions of state support and intervention, see Christian Christensen, "Discourses of Technology and Liberation: State Aid to Net Activists in an Era of "Twitter Revolutions." *The Communication Review* 14, no. 3 (2011): 233-253.

²⁸ See Thomas L. Friedman, "Egypt's Step Backward," *New York Times*, 21 February 2012. Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/22/opinion/friedman-fayzas-last-dance.html>

²⁹ This term was first used by Rebecca MacKinnon in *Consent of the Networked: The Worldwide Struggle for Internet Freedom* (New York: Basic Books, 2012).

³⁰ For evidence of the increasing acceptance and tolerance of social media, see Dubai School of Government, "Facebook Usage: Factors and Analysis," *Arab Social Media Report* 1 no. 1, January 2011; and their "Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter." *Arab Social Media Report* 1 no. 2, May 2011.

³¹ The new Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt entered into force on 26 December 2012. Article 45 claims to afford its citizens freedom of expression without stating what lawful constraints are permissible. Whatever freedoms of speech and expression are inferred from Article 45, Article 31 states that, "The individual person may not be insulted," and Article 44 prohibits "the insulting of prophets." For details see *Human Rights Watch Report*, 30 November 2012. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/11/29/egypt-new-constitution-mixed-support-rights>

³² For details on the changes in communication patterns within Iran since 2009, see The Foreign Policy Centre. *Iran Human Rights Review: Access to Information*. Edited by Tahrih Danesh and Nazenin Ansari, Preface by Dame Ann Leslie. London, May 2011. It is quite possible that the substantial growth in Smartphones (in 2012 approaching 7 million or more: interview by the author with Mehdi Sharifzadeh, San Francisco, California, 14 September 2012) since 2009 may provide a critical mass not achieved during the Green Revolution.

³³ See the research into social media adoption performed by the Dubai Press Club in

Arab Media Outlook 2010-2013: Inspiring Local Content, Dubai, 2010. This research indicates that social media in the Gulf and Maghreb are coalescing into three key segments of social media: (1) Globally-based sites such as Facebook that have gained the most popularity due to strong branding and early market entry; (2) Localized versions of Twitter and FML (FMyLife) that have Arabic language features; and (3) Indigenous social media sites such as *Maktoob*, *Jeeran* and the Emirates Women's Network which offer additional services and have the potential to grow significantly with organizational support and advertising.

³⁴ For a theoretical dynamic of the use of social media in political protest movements, see Natalie Fenton and Veronic Barassi, "Alternative Media and Social Networking Sites: The Politics of Individuation and Political Participation." *The Communication Review* 14 no. 3 (2011): 179-196.

Social Media and Cyber Utopianism: Civil Society versus the Russian State during the “White Revolution,” 2011-2012

KRISTEN MEREDITH

ABSTRACT

In December 2011, a young Russian blogger and activist named Ilya Klishin used Facebook to organize an anti-electoral fraud, anti-Putin mass protest in Moscow. The protests quickly spread to cities across Russia. Academics, Russia-watchers, and the international and domestic media alike drew comparisons to contemporaneous pro-democracy protests around the world, such as the Arab Spring, in which social media played a central role. Russian activists pointed to social media as the single most important factor in the advent of their movement. The perception that social media in Russia is primarily pro-civil society, however, is misleading. In this paper I examine the “cyber utopianist” (to use Evgeny Morozov’s term) celebration of social media as “free and pro-democracy,” in relation to the recent Russian protest movement, as well as the state’s increasing presence on, and use of, social media. I argue that the cyber utopianist view is flawed. I further argue that the state, as it increasingly perceives the banning of certain websites as counterproductive, has negotiated new strategies for engaging with the social media sphere, which closely reflects the “civil society sphere.” Most importantly, the emergence of cyber utopianism in Russia has implications not only for the role of social media in Russian politics but for the future and viability of civil society, and for the outlook for stronger democracy in Russia overall.

Introduction

In an early 2012 interview with *Time* magazine, high-profile anti-corruption blogger Aleksei Naval’nyi stated that “it wasn’t that we [civil society activists] were so tricky that we came up with the Internet. It’s that the Internet is all we have.”¹ Naval’nyi, who has emerged as the face and a de facto leader of the ongoing movement in opposition to President Vladimir Putin’s policies, has reason to put his faith in the Internet: he has turned his online social media presence into real-life political

Kristen Meredith “Social Media and Cyber Utopianism: Civil Society versus the Russian State during the ‘White Revolution,’ 2011-2012” *St Antony’s International Review* 8, no. 2 (2013): 89-105.

influence, and his movement gained traction partly due to its use of the social media network Facebook to organize and coordinate adherents. His comments, however, reflect the increasingly popular view among Russian activists that the future of Russian civil society is online—on RuNet (a term which refers to all Russian-language websites and all sites hosted on Russian servers)²—and, moreover, that the Russian Internet is the territory of the people, not the Russian state. In Vladimir Putin's Russia, where mainstream media outlets self-censor and where civil society remains weak, RuNet's potential to undermine the political status quo increases in importance. After all, in Naval'nyi's own words, "the split between the virtual and real world is no longer relevant."³

The view that the Internet is a tool for civil society and democracy, however, is at best incomplete. On March 15, 2011, I was present at a talk given by Wikileaks website founder Julian Assange at the Cambridge Union Society of the University of Cambridge. Assange's whistleblowing website has published highly controversial, often classified political-military material, causing governments embarrassment and angering people around the world. Yet, during his speech Assange flatly stated that despite the actions and stated intent of Wikileaks, the Internet was first and foremost a tool by which governments around the world stalked and controlled their citizens, and that it was far from the democratizing mechanism many consider it to be.⁴ That is, the Internet is potentially (if not overwhelmingly) a tool of the oppressor (an Orwellian Big Brother-type government) rather than the oppressed, and consequently, that "cyber utopianism"—or "digital utopianism"—is potentially dangerous.

In this paper, I examine the celebration of social media in relation to Naval'nyi's protest movement, as well as the state's increasing presence on Russian social media. Firstly, I define cyber utopianism and social media and identify the use of social media as a fast-growing and highly significant trend in Russian society. Second, I highlight how the use of social media in the protest movement, also known as the 'White Revolution,' was praised and celebrated both by Russian activists and external analysts, and argue that this discourse was permeated by elements of cyber utopianism. Third, I present a broad picture of the role and activity of the Russian state on RuNet, and its changing strategies therein, particularly in regard to social media. Finally, I provide concrete examples of the use of social media by pro-Kremlin forces during the White Revolution, which I argue demonstrate a clear response to the social media use of Russian civic activists. Overall, the argument presented is that in the Russian context, the cyber-utopianist view that social media is inherently free and pro-democracy becomes increasingly problematic as the Russian state's presence on social media becomes more firmly established.

The focus of this study is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it highlights the need for greater research into social media in Russia. Russian social media has been the focus only of very recent, and still limited, academic analysis. Beyond a few key studies (for example in the pioneering online journal *Digital Icons* and a Harvard study by Bruce Etling et al. in 2010 on the Russian blogosphere⁵) there is little in the way of substantial research, and at the time of writing no book-length English-language texts on the subject exist. Secondly this study provides a necessary counterpoint to the flood of analyses of the White Revolution, which describe civil society's use of social media whilst (perhaps not willfully) failing to address the use of social media by pro-Putin forces in response.⁶ Most importantly, however, this study sheds light on the need to remain cautious in further assessments of the prospects of RuNet civil society based on its use of social media, and offers a perspective on the implications of continued cyber utopianism in Russia.

Cyber Utopianism

There is significant literature on cyber utopianism, ranging from Fred Turner's *From Counter-Culture to Cyber-Culture* (2006) to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Commonwealth* (2009). But to establish a working definition, I will use Evgeny Morozov's (2011) general theoretical framework. Firstly, it is important to note that Morozov directly links cyber utopianism to the euphoric optimism of early Internet researchers, and particularly to writers in the 1990s. These researchers propagated the view that a 'technological revolution' was underway, one that could and would both dismantle oppressive governments, and end economic inequality and instability.

Morozov argues that these notions of technological romanticism are now outdated and paints a stark picture of the dangers of seeing the Internet as an inherently liberating phenomenon.⁷ He defines cyber utopianism - which he argues has strongly influenced Western media and political discourse - as a "flawed set of assumptions" about the relationship between the Internet and democracy, in conjunction with a "naïve belief in the emancipatory nature of online communication"—one marked by an ignorance of, or the refusal to acknowledge, the varied and conflicted landscape of the web.⁸

Furthermore, "cyber utopianism" is partly the byproduct of a wider 'Web 2.0 movement.' Coined in 1999, Web 2.0 refers to the 'second generation' of Internet sites in which users participate, interact, collaborate and generate content (such as social media), rather than being

passive consumers of said content. Andrew Keen writes that the Web 2.0 movement “fuses ‘60s radicalism with the utopian eschatology of digital technology,”⁹ and that

Buzzwords from the old dot.com era...have been replaced in Web 2.0 by language which is...militant and absurd: Empowering citizen media, radically democratize, smash elitism, content redistribution, authentic community...Web 2.0 ‘empowers’ our creativity, it “democratizes” media, it “levels the playing field” between experts and amateurs.¹⁰

It is the Web 2.0 movement, therefore, that has paved the way for the increasingly widespread belief that a strong relationship exists between the Internet—specifically social media—and civil society. Indeed many analysts have found that the Internet promotes political participation.¹¹ Annabel Quan-Haase and Barry Wellman, among others, have conducted studies to show that the Internet increases an individual’s access to social capital.¹² Sarah Oates and Rachel K. Gibson argue that “the Internet can contribute to civil society in new and useful ways.”¹³ The prominent (and arguably cyber-utopianist) academic-writer Clay Shirky, who famously claimed that “the Internet runs on love” has written books praising the pro-democracy nature of crowdsourcing and other social media.¹⁴ These intellectual strands, in combination with social media networks and their popularity amongst the citizens of states, have now given rise to an entire school of thought regarding the role of social media in the *perceived* redistribution of power. Social media, in short, now affects everyone from the traditional ‘elite’ to the everyday citizen.

Social Media in Russia

There is a consensus that the growth of Internet access in Russia has led to the proliferation of what Elena Vartanova of Moscow State University calls “alternative news agendas.”¹⁵ The Internet thus provides a (relative-ly) new and (apparently) uncensored platform for the transmission of content in Russia and consequently Russians are taking advantage of the opportunity to broadcast news, disseminate information, and portray their own versions of how events transpire. Most major political opposition movements, such as Solidarity and Strategy-31, run their own web-sites. Independent media, such as the independent radio channel Ekho Moskvyy and (perhaps most famously) the news journal *Novaya Gazeta*, also operate online. Journalists, pundits, and other members of the intelligentsia also have their own sites or blogs, many of which are stridently

critical of the Putin regime. Russian civil society, therefore, now has an impressive online presence.

In Russia, social media use is flourishing. At the end of 2011, News Media Trend Watch reported that throughout that year Russians used and accessed social networking sites more frequently, and for longer, than citizens of any other country in the world.¹⁶ The All-Public Russian Opinion Centre (VTSIOM) reports that eighty-two per cent of its survey respondents now use social media, an increase of thirty per cent since 2010.¹⁷

Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein define social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.”¹⁸ Ray Poynter notes that the rise of social media indicates “the way that the Internet and other new technologies are being used to move away from media that was essentially a one-to-many model, for example broadcast, towards a many-to-many model, such as Facebook.”¹⁹ Types of social media include web-blogs and micro-blogs, most famously Twitter, whose users post updates of 140 characters or less that are stored chronologically, just like a blog. Other forms of social media include crowdsourcing platforms, wikis, virtual worlds, multiplayer games, and other forms of content sharing (such as YouTube for uploading user videos, or Flickr for uploading user photos).

Russian civil society has thus taken advantage of the convenience and logistical benefits of social media to coordinate and to organize. Numerous online civic initiatives have been launched, for example the Blue Buckets movement, which formed in 2009 to tackle the illegitimate use of blue flashing lights (flashers) by non-emergency vehicles and particularly vehicles owned by VIPs.²⁰ Perhaps the most important use of social media by civil society activists was during the series of political protests in December 2011 and the subsequent anti-Putin political movement, a phenomenon that (as we will explore below) became partly entrenched in the discourse of cyber utopianism.

A ‘Facebook’ Revolution?

The series of December protests was initially prompted by the victory of Vladimir Putin’s United Russia party in the State Duma elections on December 4, 2011, an election result that was immediately marred with allegations of electoral fraud. In many instances, videos, which appeared to capture tampering with ballot boxes, were uploaded onto the Internet.²¹ The ‘victory’ provoked what is considered to be one of the largest waves of political oppositional protest in the two-decade-plus history of post-Soviet Russia.²² The protests occurred against the backdrop of Pu-

tin's long and tremendously high popularity,²³ making the movement overall a significant and remarkable development in the larger picture of Russian politics and society.

Following protests in Moscow on December 5 and 6 in 2011, blogger/opposition activist Ilya Klishin created his first Facebook protest page with the aim of rallying support for a December 10 protest. A page for a protest on December 24 followed, and became part of a larger series of events and linked Facebook pages, collectively entitled *Rally for Honest Elections*²⁴ with tens of thousands describing themselves as 'attending.' It is perhaps unsurprising that from the outset the "White Revolution" was couched in cyber-utopianist terms in external, particularly Western, analyses. Morozov uses the example of events in Iran in mid-2009 to highlight this phenomenon.²⁵ Outside analysts from the *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times*, among many, attributed the "revolution" directly to Twitter and to "protestors firing tweets." Yet a study by *Al-Jazeera* later found that only sixty Twitter accounts were in active operation in Tehran in June 2009, as Iranians, mostly youth, took to the streets to protest against electoral fraud.

Outside analysts reacted similarly to the events in Russia, with Alexander Kolyandr of the *Wall Street Journal* declaring in an article in January 2012 that "the recent opposition rallies in Moscow...grew suddenly and unexpectedly from chatter over social networks." There were early and frequent allusions to Ukraine's "Orange Revolution" (2004-2005), thus prompting the nickname "White Revolution," and to the other "Colour Revolutions" that have taken place in ex-Soviet states.²⁶ Several media outlets gave the movement the labels "Facebook rallies" or "social media revolutions."²⁷ These drew comparisons to the 'Arab Spring' of early 2011, in which regimes were seemingly toppled in part because their citizens organized using various forms of social media.²⁸ In early December 2011, US Senator John McCain 'tweeted': "Dear Vlad, the Arab Spring is coming to a neighborhood near you" following the outbreak of protests in Moscow.²⁹

The use of social media, therefore, served to legitimize the burgeoning protest movement: it placed the Russian opposition within an emerging tradition of seemingly Internet-enabled emancipation-oriented movements that have enjoyed varying degrees of success. As Morozov has identified, cyber utopianism has permeated Western discourse, and social media have developed a potent symbolic value in twenty-first century pro-democracy protests. The successful utilization of social media now implies the subversion of mainstream or potentially biased media, and thereby the circumvention of authoritarian governments. The protestors themselves were accorded more attention and attribution by analysts with-

in Russia; Alexander Lebedev, editor-in-chief of the newspaper *People's Initiative*, argued that after the Arab Spring and the 'Occupy Wall Street' movement, "the whole world saw that social media sites...can accomplish what years cannot: the making of professional revolutionaries."³⁰

Russian activists also celebrated the use of social media; viewing it as the catalyst of the entire movement. Sergei Parkhomenko, a journalist, told the independent online television channel Dozhd "nothing like this has ever happened before...this all started with a few posts on Facebook and (blogging platform) LiveJournal."³¹ Independent political analyst Dmitrii Oreshkin further added that "the Internet played a very important and possibly decisive role in changing peoples' attitudes towards elections."³² Aleksandr Morozov, a political blogger, has pointed out that "social networks played an enormous role in demonstrating just how the elections took place. If we didn't have social networks, we wouldn't have heard about the sheer quantity of violations."³³ Konstantin von Eggert, for Kommersant FM Radio, told Reuters that "for the first time really, the online presence has transformed offline politics...this is definitely the start of something that will stay in Russian political life."³⁴ Perhaps the most prominent figure to exhibit elements of cyber utopianist discourse was Aleksei Naval'nyi,³⁵ who has stated that "they can call us microbloggers and little social-network hamsters...I am a little social networking hamster! And I'll gnaw through the throats of these little cats! And we'll do this together...because we exist."³⁶

Naval'nyi believes that social media is the optimal pro-democracy tool. In December 2011, the Initiative Group for the Protest (an offshoot of the protest movement's Organizing Committee), of which Naval'nyi was a member, held an online vote to decide who would speak at the protests.³⁷ The initial results were highly problematic. In second-place a convicted conman was selected, and in third-place, a neo-Nazi, Maxim Martsinkevich. Naval'nyi was the eventual winner.³⁸ Nonetheless, Naval'nyi has restated his desire to see all elections, including the presidential election, move onto the Internet: a form of electronic democracy termed 'Democracy 2.0.'³⁹ Critics and policy makers have raised concerns about fraud, but Naval'nyi has dismissed these criticisms, responding that "if you're afraid of a vote, sit at home."⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Naval'nyi manages multiple online crowdsourcing projects of his own, including RosPil.info (a whistle-blowing anti-corruption website) and RosYama.ru (helping citizens report the location of potholes and other road quality violations to local authorities).⁴¹ Lastly, Naval'nyi communicates to his audience largely via LiveJournal and Twitter,⁴² despite several of his online accounts including his email and his Twitter page having been hacked.⁴³ Yet, none of these

setbacks has deterred Naval'nyi from claiming social media as the path to the ultimate displacement of the current regime.

There is little doubt that social media was logistically useful for organizing and coordinating protest events in Russia from late 2011 onwards, as it had been for earlier civic initiatives. However, the celebration of the use of social media among Russian activists—the idea that democracy in Russia has been ‘transformed’ by the use of social media by its citizens, or that social media is the territory of Russian civil society —has begun alarmingly to ring of cyber utopianism. There is increasing evidence that social media in Russia is being increasingly penetrated by the Russian state and pro-state forces, and that these forces are adapting their strategies to exploit the social media fetishism of Russian civil society activists.

The State and RuNet

Originally, the Kremlin maintained a largely hands-off approach towards the Internet. It seemed unlikely, in light of the freedoms associated with RuNet and its sheer size, that the Russian state would ever be able to monitor all the activities of all users online. Furthermore, it is difficult to justify direct intervention in an area that has been perceived as ‘free’ from state intervention from its outset. However, although the government has in many ways been tentative and ineffective in policing RuNet, as Vlad Strukov argued in 2009,⁴⁴ it is clear that the state has been trying to do so nonetheless.

At the most basic level, Jeffrey Carr notes that the federal security service (the FSB) is already privy to all “Internet activity originating in Russia because all outbound traffic passes through gateways controlled by government entities.”⁴⁵ Furthermore, Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, Russian security services analysts and co-founders of the website *argentura.ru*, report that advances in technology have made new forms of monitoring and control both more covert and more effective. They state that the FSB and the Ministry of the Interior (MVD) began buying new technological systems in the mid-2000s which they now use “to monitor open sources (i.e. the media) and the Internet, including the blogosphere and social networks.”⁴⁶ However, the government does not only monitor; it also intervenes and interferes. The FSB consistently investigates various RuNet phenomena and has shut down several groups and websites, most prevalently in the areas of crime⁴⁷ and extremist content⁴⁸ (as is common in many countries and would be expected) but also those relating to politics/civil society. Various groups on VKontakte/VK have been targeted in particular, not only in regard to the recent political protests but also due to past civic activity. For example, the FSB shut

down groups dedicated to supporting miners and their families against riot police after the Rospadskaya mine explosion in May 2010.⁴⁹

The significance of these instances is often obscured by the fact that the government does not overtly censor Internet access or block large parts of RuNet. As the Open Net Initiative reports, in an extensive survey of Russian cyberspace published in December 2010: “the absence of overt state-mandated Internet filtering in Russia has led some observers to conclude that the Russian Internet represents an open and uncontested space. In fact, the opposite is true.”⁵⁰

Former President Dmitri Medvedev stated (in a speech in April 2012) that online censorship was “impossible” and “senseless” and that the government had no plans to censor RuNet.⁵¹ Any comments made by Medvedev must be considered in the light of his persistent attempts to appear Internet-savvy (creating for instance a Twitter account, a LiveJournal account and a video blog). Indeed, a 2011 report on the Status of RuNet Freedom by *Freedom House* lists Russia as “partly free” but states plainly that there is no substantial political censorship.⁵² However, as mentioned above, in its attempts to control RuNet, blatant censorship has never been the primary strategy of the government (or specifically the FSB). Therefore the threat to RuNet freedom has not really come from mechanisms of censorship, largely rendering Medvedev’s reassurances meaningless.

As Rafal Rohozinski and Robert Deibert state in their book chapter “Control and Subversion in Russian Cyberspace” (2010), “in RuNet, control strategies are more subtle and sophisticated and designed to shape and affect how information is received by users, rather than denying access outright.”⁵³ They argue that the Russian government employs “third generation” strategies, rather than “first generation”. “First generation” strategies are simple and often abrupt, for instance blocking a specific website or specific content and other forms of direct censorship. On the other hand, ‘third generation’ strategies are complex:

[a] sophisticated, multidimensional approach to enhancing state control over national cyberspace and building capabilities for competing in informational space with potential adversaries and competitors...the focus is less on denying access than successfully competing with potential threats through effective counter-information campaigns that overwhelm, discredit, or demoralize opponents.⁵⁴

Moreover, Gregory Asmolov argues that, increasingly:

a model of “sovereign Internet”...is currently developing in Russia. Its goal is much more far-reaching than controlling the flow of information. Actually, the model recognizes the lack of ability to manage this type of control. Instead... this model aims at recreating the state through cyberspace and encouraging citizens to stay within this framework.⁵⁵

Yet the prevailing view among Russian activists remains that the threat posed by the Russian state online is not a significant one and that the machinations of authorities on the Internet are ineffectual. Marina Litvinovitch, a prominent blogger/activist who once worked for the Kremlin, insists that the attempts of the authorities to go online are “very straightforward” and their reports “dull and uninteresting” due to the state security organs lacking “any brain.”⁵⁶ Such a view is borderline cyber-utopianist, especially in light of the fact that the state increasingly looks to civil society for motivation to increase its online presence.

Pro-Kremlin Forces on Social Media

In early 2012, a body of emails from the pro-Kremlin youth group Nashi! was hacked and released to the public by the hacking group Anonymous.⁵⁷ Consisting mostly of the correspondence of former Nashi! spokeswoman/press secretary Kristina Potupchik, the emails revealed that Nashi! had made use of tactics previously used by the state and by other pro-Kremlin groups to influence social media, including attempting to bribe bloggers and set up fake social media accounts. Such tactics, when exposed, are typically met with scorn by the general Russian public. They reflect that the social media sphere has become a battleground between civil society and the state.

The latter has now begun to adopt new methods and directions of penetrating the social media sphere that closely reflect the methods of engagement used by civil society. At the most basic level, pro-Kremlin forces developed an awareness that galvanizing online support can spill over into the “real world.” Like the Facebook protest page organizers, event pages were created on the social network vk in support of ‘Anti-Orange’ rallies.⁵⁸ These rallies were in reference to the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine, and to Putin’s suggestion that, as in Ukraine, foreign sources were behind the outbreak of political opposition. The vk Anti-Orange page looks and functions much like its Facebook anti-Putin equivalent; in this way pro-Putin supporters were able to take advantage of the organizational and logistical benefits that social media offers.

Meanwhile, a casting website, called massovki.ru, was used to offer payment for participation in pro-Putin rallies. A section of the website even offers the role of locating political crowds, in order to receive financial compensation.⁵⁹ For example, pro-Putin rallies that took place during the White Revolution in early 2012 to counter the Facebook protests, as well as a rally on February 23, 2012,⁶⁰ are all listed in this section along with a specific sum of money offered and contact information. It is notable that there are advertisements for other political parties (not only

United Russia), including threads seeking participants for a gathering of the Liberal Democrats, a far-right xenophobic nationalist party.

Secondly, the state has shown increased interest in developing its own crowd-sourcing projects. Naval'nyi partly achieved his semi-celebrity activist status through the development of the RosPil.info project, as mentioned previously, dubbed a mini-Wikileaks. Given the degree to which corruption is believed to be widespread in Russia, such a project is of great significance. However, the Russian state is in part co-opting it. RosPil now has a potentially serious competitor in the form of Secure Homeland, a crowdsourcing platform that also seeks to identify, highlight, and condemn instances of corruption. The difference is that Secure Homeland is backed by the Kremlin and by Putin,⁶¹ which grants tremendous advantages in terms of access, among others, which RosPil lacks.

There is growing interest in RuNet on the part of the regime itself. In his February 2012 essays published in *Kommersant*, Putin, famous for 'ignoring' the Internet, endorsed the idea of 'electronic democracy.'⁶² The government has developed its own pro-democracy website, E-Parliament, a crowdsourcing platform which in theory allows Russian citizens the opportunity to communicate directly with members of Parliament.⁶³ This E-Parliament project is of particular interest, because it superficially appears to be pro-democracy and pro-transparency by opening the lines of communication between the citizenry and the power elite. However, it also shows the desire of the government to integrate online civil society into a preconceived, state-run, structural framework (other initiatives seem likely to follow). Thus, while seemingly contributing to online civil society, the state is attempting to absorb it.

Thirdly, increasingly the use of social media provides a potential window into every thought and movement of political opposition in Russia, and gives the state the opportunity to pre-empt the opposition. The very 'openness' and 'accessibility' of social media may ultimately be what inhibits its usefulness as a tool for Russian civil society, particularly if the government or the FSB specifically are able to obtain broader bodies of data that currently only belong to major foreign search engines such as Google (the Kremlin has toyed with the idea of developing its own search engine). Morozov notes that

The advent of social media has made most Internet users increasingly comfortable with the idea of sharing their thoughts and deeds with the world... trolling through all those blog posts, Twitter updates, photos, and videos posted to Facebook and YouTube could yield quite a lot of useful information for intelligence services—and not just about individual habits...but also about broad social trends and the public mood as a whole.⁶⁴

The Russian media environment is unfriendly to political opponents of Putin, and the state has long possessed a stranglehold on broadcast media. It is not surprising that, in these hostile conditions, Russian activists would consider the Internet, and particularly social media, to be the last refuge for the development of any kind of civil society or viable political opposition, and that they would be extremely eager to defend it.

The comments made by Russian activists, and indeed by observers worldwide, reflect a cyber utopianist perspective of the December 2011 protest movement through the use of social media as a pro-democracy tool. Yet in the same ways that social media enabled the opposition to organize and ‘reach’ the people, it increasingly enables the Russian state to monitor and police the public. The state continues to use various indirect policing strategies — including paid-off bloggers, fake social media communities, distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks on opposition webpages, the enforcement of ‘extremist’ laws, and so forth — whilst at the same time using social media platforms to rally and organize support, to facilitate online governance, to compete with civil society projects, and to respond to opposition, all of which represent new strategies of engagement.

As of early 2013, despite intermittent protest activity and controversy surrounding the anti-Putin rock music group Pussy Riot, the future of the protest movement on the whole remains open-ended. But one thing is clear: the cyber utopianism that emerged alongside the “White Revolution” is problematic. Most damagingly, the cyber utopianist belief in the democratizing power of social media has fuelled the idea that political change in Russia inherently depends on people using the Internet, the last ‘free’ space in society. This is in spite of the fact that the most momentous political shifts in recent Russian history took place without social media or the Internet. In this way, cyber utopianism is hindering the progress of genuine political change: it has created the perception of barriers where barriers do not exist, while simultaneously preventing Russian activists from seeing the barriers that *do* exist (for example, the scope of the government’s activity online).

Instead, it would be useful for Russian activists to alter their perception of social media: to see it not as a solution to a stagnant civil society or political repression, but rather as a simple tool for increased organization, interaction, and collaboration between citizens. In this way, social media remains extremely helpful for the continued development of offline civil society, rather than becoming a semi-proxy civil

society which can be easily monitored and manipulated by the government. On the whole in Russia, social media is no longer (if it ever was) the exclusive territory of pro-democratic or pro-civil society forces; it is now a battleground between civil society and the state. The sooner Russian activists are willing to acknowledge and engage in this 'battle,' and to abandon the cyber utopianist perspective, the more ground they may ultimately gain therein. ■

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Notes

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⁶ See for example Markku Lonkila, "Russian Protest On and Off-Line: The Role of Social Media in the Moscow Opposition Demonstrations in December 2011," *Fila Briefing Paper* 98 (February 2012).

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Why Should Girls Go to School?: Qualitative Aspects of “Demand” for Girls’ Schooling in Rural Pakistan

WILLY OPPENHEIM

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the concept of “demand” for girls’ schooling, though referenced frequently in the literature surrounding the Millennium Development Goals and “Education for All”, tends to be oversimplified and risks glossing over important variation in the ways parents understand the value of sending their daughters to school. The paper calls for closer attention to the qualitative aspects of demand for girls’ schooling, and uses data from the author’s doctoral research in rural Pakistan to demonstrate how such an approach can enrich existing research about the household-level perspectives associated with girls’ enrolment in school. Findings underscore the extent to which parents diverge in their evaluations of the non-economic outcomes of girls’ schooling, raising important questions about the processes through which individual and collective perceptions of the benefits of schooling emerge and transform.

Introduction

Recent decades of international efforts towards “Education for All” have brought to many villages in rural Pakistan a gradual reduction of historically persistent gender gaps in school enrolment.¹ However, the neat upward trends depicted by most enrolment statistics belie the extent to which the actual value of girls’ schooling remains contested and

Willy Oppenheim, “Why Should Girls go to School? Qualitative Aspects of ‘Demand’ for Girls’ Schooling in Rural Pakistan,” *St Antony’s International Review* 8, no. 2 (2013): 106-126.

uncertain for many parents. Consider the following excerpts from the author's 2011 and 2012 interviews with residents of an agrarian village in the Punjab:

There is stress from others that there is no use for that [girls'] education if they cannot get a proper job. In this area, parents (especially fathers) say there is no use to send girls to school after matriculation [year ten], because there is the problem of getting a job, and if they cannot get a job, it is useless.

-Mother of Zahida²

There were some relatives who fought with me. One person said you should send your daughter up to class five only. But I continued to educate her, and now when she passed class five, they are saying 'Oh, you did very well.' They were saying in the past you should not educate your daughter, but they changed. [...] There was no awareness of education. They have just seen the change in this decade, especially for girls. They've become more aware.

-Father of Sidra³

After education if she gets a job, definitely it is very good—but if she doesn't, [it is] no matter, because she can still make a house very well. We are not so greedy for a job, but education is everything for us, for our children.

-Mother of Haluma⁴

Yes, of course there is a use of her education [even] if she cannot get a proper job, because she is responsible for many generations if she is educated.

-Father of Sameena⁵

In a typical survey of "demand" for girls' schooling,⁶ these four parents might appear indistinguishable; all would report a general sense that girls and boys should both go to school, and all would report the current enrolment of at least one daughter in the local girls' school. Further analysis and longitudinal tracking might reveal that some background characteristics were more closely correlated than others with outcomes such as dropout rates and academic achievement. Such insights might provide a good basis for policy interventions aiming to alter these outcomes. What would be missing, however, would be any indication of the nuanced evaluations characterizing the "demand" that these parents articulate, and the complex processes of negotiation and resistance through which such evaluations have emerged. The quotations above only begin to hint at the divergent perspectives that provide the context for what might otherwise appear to be a straightforward growth in enrolment. As such, this paper argues for the importance of exploring the ways that such perspectives change and interact.

Investigating these *qualitative* aspects of “demand” can help educational sociologists and policymakers concerned with the uptake of girls’ schooling to better understand the dimensions of social change and reproduction that are obscured when demand is assumed to be a monolithic binary variable. Many studies have explored whether certain conditions or interventions seem to generate “more” or “less” demand, but few if any explore the possibility of *qualitative* shifts in demand—that is, qualitative changes in the ways members of a given community think about the reasons that girls should or should not go to school. This paper departs from this trend, and seeks to demonstrate how demand for schooling might be approached as a multifaceted variable that can shape, reflect, and predict broader changes in the diverse contexts within which it emerges.

The paper begins by locating common conceptualizations of demand within the broader literature on barriers and outcomes associated with girls’ schooling, calling for a reconsideration of this concept. Next, the paper presents empirical data illustrating the attitudes, aspirations, and intentions that constitute demand for girls’ schooling in a single rural village in the southern Punjab. This section advances several related arguments regarding the ways that parents and daughters understand the value of girls’ schooling: that the relationship between demand and expected future employment is complex and often indirect; that the broad ideal of “being educated” often seems to be the most powerful driver of demand; that this ideal is relatively new and contested; and that the core rationale for sending girls to school often reflects the continuation of patriarchal norms about the proper role of women in the household and the family. The paper concludes with a discussion of policy implications and areas for further research.

Girls’ Schooling: Barriers and Expected Outcomes

Recent decades of educational research have yielded abundant literature celebrating the positive outcomes of girls’ schooling in the development context. In addition to defending education as a basic human right, such texts emphasize the positive correlation between girls’ enrolment rates and social outcomes ranging from quantifiable reductions in fertility rates and improvements in health and per capita income to more abstract gains in domains such as “autonomy,” “equality,” “agency,” and “empowerment.”⁷ Indeed, the assumption that some form of empowerment is an inevitable outcome of sending girls to school has become so commonplace that eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education is the of-

ficial primary target associated with the broad Millennium Development Goal to “promote gender equality and empower women.”⁸

The insinuation that boosting girls’ enrolments in school will necessarily achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment has come under harsh criticism from a wide range of scholars, but these critics maintain the same emphasis on the barriers and outcomes associated with changing enrolment rates rather than the household-level intentions and evaluations that underlie these processes. Feminist scholars, such as Nelly Stromquist, have warned that apparent gains in women’s education are “more symbolic than real” and many have followed Stromquist’s call for additional research into the role of education in the “reproduction of conventional gender identities.”⁹ Many small-scale qualitative studies¹⁰ work to probe what Ramya Subrahmanian identifies as the “assumption that education translates into enhanced autonomy for women,”¹¹ while other scholars have made similar attempts to unsettle such assumptions by operationalizing concepts like “autonomy” and “empowerment” and quantifying their relationship to schooling.¹² Meanwhile, other scholars have raised serious doubts about this trend of attempting to measure or define such concepts, arguing instead that the forms of “empowerment” that might emerge from girls’ schooling will always be rooted in local meanings and understandings that resist aggregated measurement.¹³ These diverse threads of research have led to no consensus about whether or not schooling leads to “empowerment,” but share a common focus on the *outcomes* of increasing girls’ enrolments, rather than on the *intentions* and *perspectives* bound up in this trend.

In tandem with this spirited debate over what outcomes girls’ schooling can and cannot achieve, abundant research has highlighted the “barriers” responsible for persistent gender disparities in enrolment and the background variables most commonly associated with the girls who do enroll and continue in school. Research of this kind tends to be in the form of large-scale cross-sectional quantitative studies that focus almost exclusively the factors most strongly correlated with girls’ (non)enrolment.¹⁴ Such studies have established important findings regarding the significance of measurable factors such as family income, sibling number and order, employment opportunities, availability of female teachers and “safe” school spaces, the distance of school from home, and the level of mothers’ education.¹⁵ Other studies use qualitative approaches to explore the impact of social and cultural norms such as expected marriage age, inheritance practices, and female mobility outside of the household.¹⁶ However, these studies still tend to focus on *if* such norms allow girls to access schooling, rather than *how* they might

shape perceptions about the value of schooling. Accordingly, such studies' treatments of "demand" remain simplistic.

In sum, researchers have made great strides in identifying some of the common outcomes and barriers associated with girls' schooling, but remain conflicted or uncertain about others—particularly those having to do with changes or continuations in gendered social norms that operate within the household. This paper's argument for a more nuanced consideration of "demand" aims to shed light upon the substance of such norms and the extent to which they illuminate broader dimensions of social and educational change not captured by common considerations of schooling outcomes and barriers.

What is "Demand", and Why Study It?

Scholars have routinely conceptualized school enrolment as a function of the interaction between "supply-side" components of educational infrastructure and "demand-side" factors that shape the ways that people understand it.¹⁷ While acknowledging that this distinction is not clear-cut, and that supply and demand overlap and interact,¹⁸ this paper mobilizes "demand" as a conceptual lens for examining the range of aspirations, attitudes, and intentions with which different parents and students might evaluate their investments (or non-investments) in the available schooling options. In this framework, demand becomes interesting not because it is assumed to be an independent, causal variable, but precisely because of the ways in which it is dynamically interwoven with supply. By exploring this dynamic interaction, while still maintaining some sense of distinction between its different components, this framework sheds light on how the norms and ideas that constitute demand can change in relation to different instances of supply and the contexts in which they occur.

Unfortunately, recent studies of gender and education in the development context have tended to overlook these qualitative aspects of demand in favour of using large datasets to test the influence of different household characteristics—poverty, for example—upon the existence or non-existence of "demand." By reducing demand for girls' schooling to a simple categorical variable, this approach risks conflating demand with enrolment, and limits discussions of *changing* demand to quantitative terms. Popular and academic voices alike have assumed that more girls in school indicates *more* demand—hardly considering the possibility that changing enrolments might only reflect the changing supply of school infrastructure, nor that measuring changes in the *quantity* of families that want to send girls to school actually explains nothing about whether, and

to what extent, these changes are linked to broader qualitative changes in attitudes or perspectives about the value of girls' schooling. Consequently, "demand" tends to appear stripped from the particular contexts in which schooling decisions are made, and the details and mechanisms of context-specific changes in demand remain obscured.

Researchers acknowledge that local evaluations of schooling are not made in purely monetary terms,¹⁹ but few go on to explore the ways that the perceived social value of schooling can shift and diverge within a given community. Aslam, for example, identifies asymmetries between Pakistani parents' persistent underinvestment in their daughters' schooling and the labour market returns expected per year of girls' schooling, concluding that this "puzzle" is probably due to "powerful social and cultural (demand side) factors"—but does not explore the substance of these factors or their possible determinants.²⁰ Likewise, Schultz notes that the "inelasticity of demand for schooling still poses a puzzle"²¹ in the sense that decreasing the economic cost of schooling does not induce a proportionate rise in enrolment.

A deeper understanding of qualitative aspects of demand might help resolve these puzzles, and by doing so might also shed light on points of intervention that work not only to boost girls' enrolments in school, but also to encourage broader shifts in the extent to which girls' schooling is appreciated and supported in a given community. This distinction is subtle but significant, and warrants two brief illustrative examples.

The first comes from within the growing body of literature assessing the impact of stipend programmes upon girls' school enrolments and outcomes. Programme evaluations from Mexico, Brazil, Pakistan, and beyond have shown that these "conditional cash transfers" tend not only to boost girls' school enrolment and achievement, but also their long-term improvement along a range of other indices of health and social welfare.²² However, a recent evaluation from Pakistan includes the revealing detail that parents who receive stipends continue to invest more money in the education of their sons than that of their daughters.²³ This finding suggests limitations in the extent to which stipend programmes can actually alter pre-existing gender biases in how parents value their children's schooling. The second example comes from the findings of the author's fieldwork in Pakistan; many parents expressed a clear desire to send their daughters to school for a few years, but no intention of enabling them to delay marriage in pursuit of further schooling.²⁴

In both of these examples, a greater understanding of the processes that led parents towards these perspectives would enable future interventions to take on a more holistic approach in addressing the matrix of concerns within which schooling decisions are made. A critical ele-

ment of the rationale for such an approach can be summed up in the maxim that “there is no such thing as a free lunch,” for it seems equally true that there is no such thing as “free” schooling. Supply-side initiatives that reduce the social and economic costs of schooling may indeed be justified, and demonstrably effective in raising girls’ enrolments and generating a range of positive outcomes, but there can be no doubt that enrolment, persistence, and achievement in school—particularly beyond the primary and secondary levels—inevitably require families and individuals to assume certain social risks and make significant investments of time, energy, and financial resources. Stimulating such investments would seem to depend upon not just reducing short-term costs, but also increasing the real or perceived benefits of sending girls to school. Research and policy initiatives directed towards trends in girls’ schooling have been largely agnostic as to how benefits are perceived and the ways in which these perceptions change. Correspondingly, the author’s exploration of these questions in rural Pakistan aims not only to generate insights specific to that context, but also to model a form of inquiry that could be replicated elsewhere.

Approaching Demand in Rural Pakistan: Background and Research Design

Pakistan received the world’s third-largest share of foreign aid in the latter half of the twentieth century—no less than US\$58 billion—but remains among the worst in the world on a number of human development indices, particularly with regard to the health, education, and general welfare of women.²⁵ Girls in Pakistan lag behind boys at all levels of educational enrolment, and these disparities are exacerbated by poverty and rurality.²⁶ Recent data suggest that the primary and secondary net enrolment rates for girls in rural Pakistan are roughly fifty-six per cent and twelve per cent, respectively.²⁷ Although significantly lower than the corresponding rates of seventy-four per cent and twenty-one per cent for rural males, these statistics actually indicate a tremendous increase since 1985, when the primary and secondary net enrollment rates for Pakistan’s rural girls were only twenty-one per cent and two-point-five per cent.²⁸ UNESCO reports that Pakistan’s Gender Parity Index (GPI) for secondary education jumped by more than twenty percentage points in the 1990s alone,²⁹ and the World Bank reports that primary net enrolment rates for poor rural girls grew by nearly 200 per cent during this period.³⁰ The speed and scale of this transformation in the rate at which rural girls attend

school makes Pakistan an ideal place to explore larger questions about the household-level evaluations that accompany such change.

The remainder of this paper presents selected findings from a village in the “Saraiki belt” of the southern Punjab region where the author spent six weeks conducting interviews, administering basic questionnaires, and making observations over the course of two visits in 2011 and 2012.³¹ Located roughly seven kilometers from the Indus River, the predominantly agrarian village consists of a few dusty streets surrounded by fields of wheat and cotton, and is home to several thousand residents living mostly in clay homes without electricity. The centre of the village consists of a few shops selling tea, vegetables, and dry goods; other products must be purchased from a larger town located roughly ten kilometers away. No definitive healthcare is available in the village, and no schooling is available beyond the level of “matriculation” (year ten).

The village was purposively selected with an interest in exploring distinct examples of the larger trend discussed above; the site is home to a gender-targeted schooling intervention that began in 2005 and has continued until the time of writing. Girls’ school enrolments in the village have increased dramatically over this time period. The intervention associated with this sudden uptake of schooling was led by an NGO founded and directed by a local woman who is widely renowned for her women’s advocacy work. The intervention entailed construction of a girls’ school, hiring teachers, the provision of free transportation to and from school, and periodic outreach events during which teachers and administrators encourage parents to send their daughters to school. Between 2005 and 2011, the number of girls enrolled in the school grew from 150 to 617. The majority of these girls were on the edge of historic inter-generational change; among the mothers of the thirty-seven female students enrolled in years six through nine at the NGO school, twenty-eight had never been to school, and an additional six had never completed year five. In other words, thirty-four of the thirty-seven girls enrolled in middle school in the village had already surpassed their mothers’ level of schooling. The author was unable to track overall changes in enrolment since the establishment of the NGO, but abundant anecdotal evidence suggests that the NGO intervention sparked a significant jump in the number and proportion of girls in the village that attend school.

To explore the aspirations, intentions, and evaluations that informed enrolment decisions for families in this village, the author lived in the village as a guest of the NGO, and conducted basic questionnaires, daily informal observations, and thirty-eight recorded interviews—seven with students, five with teachers, and twenty-six with parents in the community. Interviews with parents took place in households and, on

one occasion, in a public tea stall. Of the twenty-six interviews with parents, five included just one father, eight included just one mother, and thirteen included either multiple mothers, multiple fathers, or a father and mother together. A total of seventeen fathers and twenty-seven mothers were interviewed.

Interview respondents were selected purposively with the intent of maximizing variation in family backgrounds, but practical constraints limited the selection of families to those already sending at least one daughter to school. Interviews were conducted in Urdu or Saraiki with the assistance of one male and one female interpreter, and transcribed by the author with periodic assistance from interpreters. To supplement interview transcripts, the author generated daily field notes from observations of classes and everyday life at the NGO school, as well as informal observations of everyday life within the NGO office and frequent informal conversations with NGO administrators and other community members. Qualitative data analysis began with the establishment of a coding protocol based upon emergent themes and proceeded as an exploration of commonalities and contrasts between different respondents' perspectives on the value of girls' schooling. For purposes of concision, this paper focuses mostly on the author's interviews with parents, and does not delve into findings gleaned from interviews and questionnaires with students and teachers.

The potential limitations of this research design are considerable. The author is a white non-Muslim American male whose Urdu is conversational but not fluent and whose questions about gender relations in a rural Pakistani village—especially as the guest of an influential local NGO—may have induced some respondents to be overly strategic during interviews, whether in an attempt to impress the author, to mislead the author, or both. The author's sampling procedure was dependent upon the assistance of the host NGO and the consent of interview participants, and thus inevitably involved selection bias in favour of those who were more receptive to the NGO, the foreign author, and the general notion of sending girls to school. Nonetheless, this *de facto* exclusion of most parents who choose not to send their daughters to school does not invalidate the perspectives of those who do.

“Education is Good for All”: Negotiating a Social Norm

This section highlights the checkered ways in which parents in the sample assessed the potential value of their daughters' schooling in rela-

tion to different social and economic pressures and possibilities. While some parents voiced an appreciation of “being educated” as a social asset worth pursuing, regardless of its potential for direct monetary returns, others reported a lack of interest in sending their daughters to school unless employment was a guaranteed outcome. Still others worried that sending their daughters to school was in fact a social *liability* not worth undertaking, especially in the absence of immediate economic benefits. This divergence of perspectives about the non-economic benefits of girls’ schooling illuminates the dynamic web of contested social norms that constitute “demand,” and invites further exploration of how these norms emerge and transform.

The point here is not to argue that employment aspirations played an insignificant role in parents’ enrolment decisions. Indeed, many parents contrasted the relatively high cost of schooling³² and loss of household labour with the low likelihood that school would generate economic benefits for their daughters. This sort of analysis often became the rationale for non-enrolment. Consider, for example, this statement from a mother whose daughter had recently stopped attending school after completing class six:

According to my mind primary education is enough for her, because this is basic education, and she doesn’t need any job, and she has to work in the fields.

-Mother of Razia³³

This mother’s economic rationale is clear, and conventional frameworks for approaching “demand” might ask how to either decrease the economic costs or increase the economic benefits that appear to have shaped her decision. However, the emphasis of this paper is that these economic decisions do not occur in a vacuum; they are circumscribed by a broader social context in which girls’ schooling is assigned some degree of normative value. Put differently, what is perhaps most interesting about this mother’s statement is not that she decided that basic education was “enough,” but rather that she decided it was desirable in the first place, even with no apparent expectation that it would lead to future employment.

Many other parents in the sample voiced a similar affirmation of the non-economic value of girls’ schooling. When asked about the most valuable benefits (Urdu: *feda*) that girls could gain from attending school, it was not uncommon for parents to articulate an aspiration for future employment and income-generation, but such outcomes were seldom expected and were generally considered to depend upon “fate” or “God’s will.” On the other hand, parents consistently and confidently emphasized that their school-going daughters would benefit from learn-

ing about Islam, manners, and “household things” (*ghar ki chees*) that would help them become better wives and mothers. Consider the following bits of dialogue from interviews with three different mothers:

Our children have gotten obedience [from school], and when we compare our children with other children in our village they are much better.

-Mother of Hatima³⁴

First of all, after getting home she completes her homework, then takes care and helps with me with my household work, and is quite unlike other girls [who] just come out of their home and start playing with others. She's very obedient. And these things definitely she has learned from school.

-Mother of Mehavesh³⁵

WO:³⁶ So, what do you think is the most valuable thing that Sameena has gained from going to school?

M: Reading prayers [parhna namaz].

WO: Okay, and what else?

M: Cooking food and learning about knitting... [Interruption: neighbor's daughter enters room and greets research team; laughter ensues.] See, that girl, because she is not educated, she doesn't know when you shake hands you use your right hand, so she just used her left hand.

-Mother of Sameena³⁷

For each of these mothers, “being educated” seems to carry a certain social value that extends even beyond the immediate benefits of vocational household skills or religious knowledge. The references to “obedience” and comparisons to “other girls” reflect broader notions of propriety that reflect and reinforce an emergent social affirmation of the “educated girl” as a desired ideal.

In some cases, the persuasive force of this ideal seemed enough to supplant the need for economic incentives altogether. The following excerpt is from an interview with a male farmer who had not sent his older children to school, but recently began sending his younger daughter and son.

WO: If somehow, if it were possible, would you give permission for your daughter to have a job?

F: I will not give permission.

WO: Are you interested to say more about that?

F: Because of the concept of the village—people consider it bad, the going out

of the girls.

WO: So, do you think most people in the village have started sending their daughters to school?

F: Yes, most are going to school. But because people with master's degrees are unemployed here, because they cannot pay...a bribe, so they cannot get a proper job—so that's why [some parents] are not sending them to school.

WO: So in your mind, if school does not help someone get a job, does it have any value?

F: Yes, if a child is going to school and cannot get a proper job in future, definitely education will help—he or she can get proper etiquettes and manners.

-Father of Pati³⁸

From this father's point of view, future employment for his daughter is not only unlikely due to corruption and stagnation in the labour market, it is also undesirable due to social norms constraining female mobility beyond the household.³⁹ Yet even so, this father sees value in the "etiquettes and manners" that his children can gain through schooling, and apparently this is enough to justify his choice to enroll them.

It is important to note that the social value assigned to girls' schooling in this context does not neatly overlay the ideals of gender equality and female "empowerment" that have become commonplace in popular discourses about girls' schooling. Although many respondents insisted that girls and boys should receive the same education and opportunities, many others—including most of the female teaching staff at the school—asserted that school should prepare girls for domestic life, and should prepare boys for future employment and mobility.

[Boys and girls] should get different things from school. Because a girl should learn such things from school that she can run a house in a very good way, and boys should get different education, because they are responsible to earn money for the house.

-Father of Huma⁴⁰

Because man is the owner of house, he has to run a family, so he should have a different type of education. And maybe a girl is educated, but she is not going to go for a job anyway so at least she should get that level of education so she can run a house in a good way.

-Female teacher⁴¹

[Education] is good for both [boys and girls]—they can get awareness, respect of the elders, etiquettes, and manners. [But] boys should get more education because if a boy is highly educated he can go to another country or some other place to earn money, but a girl is restricted to the four walls of the house.

Because if she is married, maybe her husband will not permit her to move anywhere, so she will have to move according to the will of the husband.

-Father of Haluma⁴²

What is striking about these views is not just that they illustrate and perhaps perpetuate the continuation of patriarchal gender norms in the household and family, but also that they do so while simultaneously affirming the value of girls' schooling as a source of basic dignity within these contexts. The quotations above reflect an underlying sense that girls' schooling carries with it an intrinsic social value independent of its instrumental capacity to deliver skills or boost incomes. This notion might be unremarkable in a setting where girls' schooling has been the norm for generations, but in a village in contemporary Pakistan it warrants further exploration. The excerpts below provide further examples of the extent to which some parents seemed to understand "being educated" as intrinsically valuable.

We know that education is good, but because we are uneducated, we don't know what thing is good and what thing is bad. But we know education is good.

-Mother of Shazia⁴³

WO: What do you think is the most valuable thing that these children are gaining from going to school?

M: Education. And awareness [shaoor].

WO: And what is the most valuable part of that education? Why do you think that education is a good thing to have?

M: Definitely education is good because a girl or boy just gets awareness in this way. The purpose is to respect the elders.

-Mother of Laureeb⁴⁴

WO: And—why do you think people want to send their children to school?

F: Education is good for all, and in this way they can get awareness.

WO: And what do you think she is getting from school that is most valuable?

M: Education.

-Father of Fatima⁴⁵

WO: So why did you decide to send them to school—how did you think schooling would help them?

F: Just to get education, even if they do not have any job—just to have awareness.

-Father of Khadija⁴⁶

It would be easy to skim over the recurring statements that “education” (*talim*) is the most valuable benefit that girls can gain from school, for at first glance it almost seems to be a truism. Indeed, for these parents—and presumably for most readers—the value of “education” and “awareness” for their daughters seems to be self-evident. Yet in this particular context, such a notion is anything but an established norm supported by historical precedent and unanimous consent. Rather, as demonstrated by the first two quotations in this paper’s introduction, this notion is frequently challenged and re-negotiated in interactions between and within families. In such contestations, the perceived benefits of girls’ schooling are weighed against concerns that schooling—or at least “too much” of it—will tarnish girls’ reputations and complicate critical social relationships. The following excerpts from conversations about schooling and marriage begin to hint at some of these concerns:

M: Because I have only one daughter, it is my desire to send her to school. If she will get a proper job and get education, it will be good.

WO: [...] Do you think that your husbands have different ideas about education than you do?

M: Until primary or middle level they think education is good, but after that it means they are able to get married, so they do not permit daughters to go to school.

-Mother of Zahida (speaking for herself and her female neighbour)⁴⁷

M: My eldest daughter is committed to someone, and the other family is insisting to get her married [and terminate her schooling] very soon, but my husband has just refused them so that after her matriculation he will decide if she gets married or if she will study further.

-Mother of Mehavesh⁴⁸

In addition to highlighting the primary authority of patriarchal figures in decisions about girls’ enrolment and marriage, these quotations reveal critical disparities in parents’ evaluations of how much schooling is necessary and appropriate for girls to obtain before marriage. Whether these tensions exist between a husband and wife or between two fathers working to arrange the marriage of their children is less significant than the fact that they exist at all. They thus illuminate limitations in the extent to which the desirability of “being educated” is sufficient to displace other features of the social landscape within which this ideal has emerged.

In some cases, the ideal seems not to have emerged at all. Consider this excerpt from a conversation with a father who had forced his daughter to stop attending school after year eight:

F: All the time when she went to school, we paid her expenses, but now we cannot afford expenses. Even at that time we were not in a position to do that, but we paid her expenses.

WO: And why did you choose to do that? Did you think school was good for her?

F: At that time we thought our girl will get educated. But the men of this neighbourhood [basti] who got educated and learned, they are still jobless.

WO: So I'd like to know more—in the beginning, when she first went to school—can you say more about that?

F: You just listen to me. When girls get educated, we've seen on TV, they show everything, and we cannot bear that.

WO: But—at first you thought it was good? Why did you think it was good at first?

F: In the beginning, we thought that education was good, but when we heard such things, then our heart could not bear that.

-Father of Shabana⁴⁹

There should be no doubt that economic constraints played a role in this father's decision-making process, but it would be dangerously simplistic to conclude that a simple reduction in the cost of schooling, or an increase in the perceived likelihood of future employment, would have kept his daughter in school. The other constraint—and the one most interesting when contrasted with the views of many other parents quoted above—is the perception that educated girls “show everything”; that is, they become promiscuous, rude, and dishonourable.

Likewise, consider this mother's explanation for why she terminated her daughter's schooling after year six:

M: She has got manners [from schooling], but because we don't have such manners, we don't have education, so we have to stop her education.

WO: Hm. So—the manners that she got, you thought were not useful? Or tell me more about that.

M: Yes, we considered so. (laughing)

-Mother of Razia⁵⁰

Unlike most of the parents quoted above, but similar to the father quoted previously, this mother was not at all persuaded that the non-economic benefits of her daughter's schooling would justify its costs. It is possible that the incentives of a stipend programme or new job opportunities could persuade this mother or the previously-quoted father to allow their

daughters to stay in school, but to consider this a “change in demand” would miss the point. These parents’ evaluations of girls’ schooling diverge dramatically from those of their neighbours, and the root of such divergence is not easily explained by a simple analysis of costs and benefits. Rather, the findings presented above highlight the extent to which the emergence and transformation of “demand” for girls’ schooling corresponds not only to perceptions about what is economically profitable, but also to shifting individual and collective perceptions of what is socially acceptable and desirable. It follows, then, that policymakers seeking to understand and perhaps change “demand” for girls’ schooling must investigate not simply what background factors determine whether or not a girl will show up at school, but also what household and community-level processes shape the extent to which that student’s schooling will be endorsed, supported, and even admired.

Concluding Remarks

The tensions and fissures that this paper has sought to highlight are significant not only because they destabilize monolithic conceptions of “Pakistani culture” and “Islam,” but also because they raise questions about how and why different individuals adopt, negotiate, or contest the notion that “education is good for all.” A better understanding of these processes could provide valuable insights to policymakers seeking not just to boost girls’ enrolments, but to do so in a way that earns the respect and affirmation of families and communities for whom the absolute value of girls’ schooling is anything but self-evident. Further research investigating the *qualitative* aspects of “demand” could seek to better explain the pathways through which these norms emerge and transform, and to suggest possible points of intervention within these processes.

If nothing else, the findings presented above serve to demonstrate that efforts to strengthen “demand” for schooling must entail something more than simply lowering its cost, and must aim for an end other than simply boosting enrolments. A final example illustrates this point. When one of the mothers quoted above cited school-related expenses as a reason for the non-enrolment of her older daughters, the author asked if she would have sent her daughters to school if all expenses were waived. The mother’s answer was unequivocal: “Of course we would send them to school if there are no expenses!”⁵¹

Typical assessments of “demand” would likely conclude that indeed, this mother exhibits a clear “demand” for girls’ schooling—and thus would argue for policy responses that would aim to either lower

the costs of schooling or offset them with a stipend programme or something similar. Yet without disputing the potential effectiveness of such interventions, it is important to acknowledge that there are many behaviours that individuals will adopt in the hypothetical land of “zero-cost.” The fact of the matter is that nothing comes for free, and that our understanding of decision-making processes is impoverished if our focus on lowering expenses supplants our interest in exploring what might motivate particular individuals to accept the opportunity in question as worthy of its associated costs.

The point is not to suggest that this mother could have easily afforded the expenses associated with her daughters’ schooling, nor to deny that an expense-reducing intervention might have been entirely appropriate. The paper suggests instead that the mother’s statement should invite not just an attempt to lower the cost of girls’ schooling, but also further exploration of how and to what extent she understands and aspires towards its potential benefits. A more comprehensive grasp of these *qualitative* aspects of “demand” could inform future interventions, going beyond the knee-jerk lowering of costs and working more holistically towards expanding the real and perceived benefits that will hopefully offset the eventual costs that all parents will inevitably need to confront. ■

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Notes

¹ Government of Pakistan, *Education for All: Mid Decade Assessment* (Islamabad: Ministry of Education, 2008); World Bank, *Pakistan Country Gender Assessment* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2005).

² Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzaffargarh, Punjab, Pakistan. Note that all names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

³ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzaffargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁴ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzaffargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁵ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzaffargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁶ In this paper, I use the terms “schooling” and “education” interchangeably. There is no reason to assume that what goes on in schools necessarily manifests the larger ideals of “education,” nor that formal schools are the only venue in which education occurs, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to meaningfully maintain these distinctions.

⁷ UNESCO, *Gender and Education for All: The Leap to Equality* (Paris: UNESCO, 2003); Barbara Herz and Gene Sperling, *What Works in Girls' Education: Evidence and Policies from the Developing World* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2004).

⁸ United Nations Development Group, *Thematic Paper on MDG3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women* (New York: United Nations, 2005), 4.

⁹ Nelly Stromquist, “Romancing the State: Gender and Power in Education,” *Comparative Education Review* 39, no. 4 (1995): 445, 454.

¹⁰ See, for example, Christine Heward and Sheila Bunwaree eds., *Gender, Education, and Development: Beyond Access to Empowerment* (London: Zed Books, 1999); Roger Jeffery and Alaka Basu, eds., *Girls' Schooling, Women's Autonomy and Fertility Change in South Asia* (New Delhi and Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1996); Sheila Aikman and Elaine Unterhalter, eds., *Beyond Access: Transforming Policy and Practice for Gender Equality in Education* (Oxford: Oxfam GB, 2005).

¹¹ Ramya Subrahmanian, “Promoting Gender Equality,” *Targeting Development: Critical Perspectives on the Millenium Development Goals*, eds., Richard Black and Howard White (New York: Routledge, 2004): 195.

¹² E.g., Rina Agarwala and Scott Lynch, “Refining the Measurement of Women's Autonomy: An International Application of a Multi-Dimensional Construct,” *Social Forces* 84, no. 4 (2006): 2077-2098.

¹³ E.g., Masooda Bano, “Empowering Women: More than one Way?” *Hagar Special Issue on Critical Perspectives on Gender and Development* 9, no. 1 (2009): 5-23.

¹⁴ E.g., Colin Brock and Nadine Cammish, *Factors Affecting Female Participation in Education in Seven Developing Countries* (London: Department for International Development, 1997).

¹⁵ E.g., Monazza Aslam, “Education Gender Gaps in Pakistan: Is the Labour Market to Blame?” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 57, no. 4 (1999): 747-784.

¹⁶ E.g., Aikman and Unterhalter, *Beyond Access*.

¹⁷ E.g. Sudhanshu Handa, “Raising Primary School Enrolment in Developing Countries: The Relative Importance of Supply and Demand,” *Journal of Development Economics* 69 (2002): 103-128; World Bank, *Pakistan Country Gender Assessment*, 40.

¹⁸ David Johnson, "Education and Equity: Strategies for Increasing Access, Persistence, and Achievement for Girls," *Bristol Papers in Education: Comparative and International Studies* 7 (1999): 57-77.

¹⁹ E.g. Brock and Cammish, *Factors*.

²⁰ Aslam, "Education Gender Gaps."

²¹ T. Paul Schultz, "School Subsidies for the Poor: Evaluating the Mexican Progresa Poverty Program," *Journal of Development Economics*, 74 (2004): 199-250.

²² Nazmul Chaudhury and Dilip Parajuli, *Conditional Cash Transfers and Female Schooling: The Impact of the Female School Stipend Program on Public School Enrollments in Punjab, Pakistan* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2006); Amer Hasan, "Gender-targeted Conditional Cash Transfers: Enrollment, Spillover Effects and Instructional Quality," *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* 5257 (2010).

²³ Andaleeb Alam, Javier Baez, and Ximena Del Carpio, "Does Cash for School Influence Young Women's Behavior in the Longer Term? Evidence from Pakistan," *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* 5669 (2011).

²⁴ Interviews with parents, April 2011 and February-March 2012, in Districts Muzafargarh and Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab, Pakistan.

²⁵ William Easterly, "The Political Economy of Growth Without Development: A Case Study of Pakistan," In *Search of Prosperity: Analytic Narratives of Economic Growth*, ed., D. Rodrik (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); UNESCO, *Gender and Education for All*; United Nations, United Nations Gender Equality Initiative at 10: A Journey to Gender Equality in Education (New York: United Nations, 2010).

²⁶ Cynthia Lloyd et al., "Rural girls in Pakistan: Constraints of policy and culture," *Exclusion, Gender, and Education: Case studies from the developing world*, eds, Maureen Lewis and Marlaine Lockheed (Washington, DC: Centre for Global Development, 2007), 105; UNESCO, *Gender and Education for All*, 68.

²⁷ Government of Pakistan, *Education for All*; see also UNESCO, *Education for All Global Monitoring Report: Reaching the Marginalized* (Paris: UNESCO, 2010).

²⁸ Government of Pakistan, *Education for All*; N. Mahmood, "Measuring the Education Gap in Primary and Secondary Schooling in Pakistan," *Pakistan Development Review* 31, 4 (1992): 729-40.

²⁹ UNESCO, *Gender and Education for All*, 7.

³⁰ World Bank, *Improving Gender Outcomes: The Promise for Pakistan* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2005), 46.

³¹ This was part of a larger research project that explored three sites for a total of seventeen weeks.

³² There are no tuition fees at the NGO school, but parents are expected to cover incidental fees for stationery and daily snacks—estimated at roughly 150 rupees (less than \$2) per month.

³³ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzzafargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

³⁴ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzzafargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

³⁵ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzzafargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

³⁶ In interview excerpts throughout this essay, the abbreviation ‘WO’ indicates the voice of the author. ‘M’ indicates the voice of a mother being interviewed, and ‘F’ indicates the voice of a father being interviewed.

³⁷ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzzafargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

³⁸ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzzafargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

³⁹ For more on *purdah* and restrictions upon women’s mobility in South Asia, see, for example, Anita Weiss, “Population Growth, Urbanization, and Female Literacy,” *The Future of Pakistan*, ed., Stephen Cohen (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2011).

⁴⁰ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzzafargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁴¹ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzzafargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁴² Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzzafargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁴³ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzzafargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁴⁴ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzzafargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁴⁵ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzzafargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁴⁶ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzzafargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁴⁷ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzzafargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁴⁸ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzzafargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁴⁹ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzzafargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁵⁰ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzzafargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁵¹ Interview with parent, April 2011, District Muzzafargarh, Punjab, Pakistan.

Putin's Choice: The Russian President and the Reset

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KARI ROBERTS

ABSTRACT

There has been much speculation as to the extent of the reset of Russia-US relations, and whether it can withstand Vladimir Putin's return to the Russian presidency. This paper considers the motivations for the reset, some critical challenges to it, and ultimately confirms concerns that Putin's return could negatively influence the reset's chances for lasting success. In doing so, the paper examines the importance of both agency and structure as influences on Russian foreign policy making; a strong Russian president can personally influence foreign policy in ways his American counterpart does not similarly enjoy. Russia's strong executive enables Putin to have a personal impact upon foreign policy generally, and on Russia-US relations specifically, thereby rendering any assessment of the reset's staying power heavily dependent upon the commitment of the Russian president himself. Previously, Putin has influenced—and set back—relations with the US, and the question now is whether this is likely to happen again. If the reset is to succeed, it will ultimately be Putin's choice.

Introduction

The reset of Russia-US relations that began in 2009 between former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and American President Barack Obama was allegedly Obama's idea. Its success, however, depends more upon the Russian president than it does on Obama. While he was president, Medvedev's relatively greater influence upon the reset can be explained by the power differential between the two presidents; the Russian president is simply more powerful than the American president in matters of foreign policy.

Recently, the success of the reset has been questioned in light of Vladimir Putin's re-election to a third presidential term in March 2012. The tone of his remarks since announcing his presidential intentions, in conjunction with tit-for-tat diplomatic squabbling, American disquiet over improprieties in the 2011 Russian parliamentary elections and the 2012 presidential election, and Russia's opposition to the United States' positions on the key issues of Iran and Syria, have led some to suggest that the reset itself needs a reset.¹

Both Medvedev and Obama seemed committed to the spirit of the reset, which began simply as a desire to warm relations after they sunk to a post-Cold War low under Presidents Putin and Bush in 2006-2008. Both Medvedev and Obama saw that their nations could gain from a reset and have seen some success as a result. However, given his track record of assertive pragmatism toward the US, many have questioned the reset's longevity following Putin's formal return to the presidency. Full details of the power arrangement between Putin and Medvedev are not clear, and analysts rightly questioned Medvedev's freedom to independently negotiate Russia-US relations. Even if he did occupy what some have called a "virtual presidency," acting as little more than a front man for foreign policy, he was still able to negotiate a better relationship with Obama when some Russian elites did not agree with the approach. It is thus worth asking whether or not this relationship will continue as Medvedev steps aside.

Given that Russia's political institutions endow the president with a strong role in foreign policy making, this paper argues that the longevity of the Russia-US reset depends less upon the American president and more heavily upon the Russian president's commitment. The paper proceeds by first outlining the rationale for the reset and what both leaders hoped to accomplish with it. It then briefly considers Obama's commitment to the reset, as well as some important limitations he faces that diminish his influence over the ultimate success of the reset. The third task of the paper is to elaborate the importance of both structure and agency—the significance of both institutions and individuals—in Russian foreign policy making. Constitutionally, the president enjoys the authority to influence the Russia-US relationship (and, indeed, all foreign policy) personally, and therefore the reset's success depends more upon him. Given Putin's thinly-veiled hostility toward the United States in the past, and the power he enjoys as the Russian president, the reset thus faces critical challenges, more so than it ever faced during the Medvedev years.

Vice-President Joseph Biden first announced the need for a US-Russia reset in Munich in 2009. The time had come, Biden said, to “revisit the many areas where we can and should be working together with Russia.”² Biden and Obama have often stressed that cooperation between Russia and the US was needed with respect to Afghanistan, securing loose nuclear weapons, and renewing verification under the START regime. Although it was not expected that the US and Russia would agree on everything, there were many common interests that could be addressed together – more than could be achieved separately. Just one year later, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton symbolically bestowed the gift of a reset button upon her Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov.

For their part, Russian officials received American overtures warmly, and Medvedev announced a new, pro-Western orientation as part of his campaign to use foreign policy to support the “long term development of Russia,” as better relations with the West could “attract greater international investment.”³ He linked the reset to opportunities to attract foreign investors to Russia’s energy sector, which remains in desperate need of modernization,⁴ seeking to expose Russian officials and businessmen to the technological innovation needed in the Russian economy. Medvedev himself made a trip to California in 2010 to consult with leading Silicon Valley CEOs (such as then-Apple CEO Steve Jobs and officials at Google and Twitter) and government leaders (such as then-Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger) about building a Russian tech hub just outside of Moscow.⁵ His jovial photo op with Schwarzenegger symbolised the warming relations between the two countries, and portrayed Medvedev as a serious and reliable partner to Western audiences.

These efforts met with some success. Both Presidents enjoyed some gains and the tone of relations was more constructive. The true depth of the reset, however, was, and remains, debated. Though it was rooted in necessity, it is fair to credit the two men with mindsets conducive to positive, constructive engagement, especially compared to their predecessors. Neither Obama nor Medvedev appeared to be weighed down by Cold War-style rhetoric. Medvedev’s approach toward the West was a considerable departure from Putin’s and was thus warmly received by Washington. As a result, one wonders what the long-term impact will be of Putin’s return, given his unapologetic language and blunt assertions of Russia’s national interests. Of course, Putin did not always take on a hostile tone toward Washington. He and President Bush reportedly had a good relationship in the early days, symbolized by Putin’s phone call

to Bush following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Putin expressed his support for the United States in the wake of the attacks, and, upon first meeting, Bush asserted that he was able to “get a sense of Putin’s soul.”⁶ However, although the relationship had a positive start, it did not last. Similarly, for all of their efforts, the more relaxed tone of reassurance cultivated by Obama and Medvedev may also be short lived. Putin’s return may have serious implications for the reset.

When the reset was first introduced, there was speculation as to how it should be conceptualized. What should be made of the term itself? Was it best likened to resetting a stopped clock, or resetting a fractured bone? One implies a quick fix to a fairly common problem; the other, major surgery. Perhaps the reset has an even more modern application in the sense that it refers to the simple striking of a reset button to return a sub-optimally performing computer to full capacity.⁷ Each of these interpretations conveys a different evaluation of the severity of the problem needing to be fixed. Moreover, this reset must be considered within the context of the “new Cold War” rhetoric employed by some analysts to characterize Russia-US relations in the Putin era. If the reset has returned relations to their previous condition, what precisely was that state of affairs? I have speculated previously as to whether or not the warming of relations under Medvedev and Obama was a form of *détente* following the deterioration of relations under Putin and Bush.⁸ Ultimately, this is not a useful characterization, as it implies the current tensions resemble those of the Cold War, which, I have argued elsewhere, is a misrepresentation of Russia-US relations in the Putin era.⁹ Relying upon outdated Cold War interpretations of tensions between Moscow and Washington does a disservice to the differences between the two countries and prevents an objective analysis of how best to manage them. Ultimately, it appears as though the architects of the reset saw an opportunity for a fresh approach to embracing the areas of agreement and navigating those of disagreement more productively.

By many accounts, the reset bore fruit for both Presidents. Obama seemed to appreciate that addressing grave threats to American national security required some engagement with Russia. Russian cooperation in the stabilization of Afghanistan has taken the form of logistical support to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Similarly, Russia allowed a supply line from Riga, Latvia, through Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and on to Afghanistan as an alternate supply route to Pakistan.¹⁰ Moscow also lent its support to a (failed) US proposal to ship Iranian uranium to Russia for enrichment, agreed to tougher sanctions on North Korea, and sup-

ported a new protocol requiring the disposal of enough weapons grade plutonium to arm 17,000 nuclear weapons.¹¹

In return, the friendlier climate was ripe for Medvedev's 2010 declaration that Russia was open for business; he announced that Russia was undertaking a serious review of its business practices and conducting necessary economic reform. To draw foreign interest, he declared, "the abolition of capital gains tax for long term investment, a more relaxed visa process for foreign business people working in Russia, and a promise to strengthen the rule of law in the country, presumably to make it a safer place to do business."¹² Medvedev also hosted a delegation of American venture capitalists as a means of dampening concerns about the Russian investment climate. He prioritised the diversification of the Russian economy and moved to develop a Russian Silicon Valley, of sorts, in Skolkovo.¹³ Progress has been made on this front; IBM and MIT have looked into building research institutes in Skolkovo, and in November 2011 Microsoft announced its intention to provide seed financing for Russian high tech start-ups, as well as the provision of Microsoft products and technical support.¹⁴ Medvedev's strategy of boosting investor confidence in Russia also led to Pepsi-Co's decision to invest \$1 billion in Russia, and the Russian purchase of sixty-five Boeing planes.¹⁵ Finally, and perhaps most importantly for Medvedev, he was able to secure American support for Russia's bid to join the World Trade Organization (WTO). US lawmakers announced in November 2011 that the final impediment blocking their support for Russia's entry—Georgia's withholding of approval¹⁶—was resolved, and that the US could support Russia's bid.¹⁷ Though Putin was sceptical about WTO membership, Medvedev saw that it was essential to the Russian economy, and may well be among the greatest foreign/trade policy accomplishments of his presidency.¹⁸

Seizing the reset's momentum, Obama and Medvedev negotiated and ratified the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START)¹⁹ and improved NATO-Russia relations, as exemplified by Medvedev's presence at the 2010 NATO Summit meeting in Lisbon. This participation marked the highest-level talks between NATO and Russian leaders since Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia, which set relations back considerably after then-President Bush called for the suspension of the NATO-Russia Council. Russia had also been concerned about NATO's Action Plan for Georgia and Ukraine, which would consider the two nations, well within Russia's self-identified sphere of interest, for membership in an alliance originally designed to oppose the Soviet Union, and in which Russia has never been welcome (nor expressed formal interest in joining). NATO-Russia relations sunk to their lowest point in 2008–09, meaning that Russia's presence at the 2010 NATO Summit, and the rein-

vigoration of the NATO-Russia Council, was, in Medvedev's own words, "historic in terms of [their] spirit and atmosphere."²⁰ Russia's willingness to participate was arguably symbolic of the reset's success. Further mending of the relationship occurred in Obama's successful promise to have the agreement on peaceful nuclear energy cooperation ratified by the US Senate in 2010 (it had been previously withdrawn by President Bush after the 2008 War in Georgia).

Finally, the two Presidents created the United States and Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission, "dedicated to identifying areas of cooperation and pursuing joint projects and actions that strengthen strategic stability, international security, economic well-being, and the development of ties between Russian and American people."²¹ The Commission would coordinate bilateral relationships across a number of levels, including the two presidents as Co-Chairs of the Commission, with working level ties between Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov, as well as lower-level working groups in fifteen key policy areas, including nuclear security, arms control, energy, and economic relations.²²

Despite these gains, the depth of the reset has rightly been questioned. Has the reset *meaningfully* revolutionized the relationship to enable the two countries to resolve points of actual disagreement? Or are the fruits of the reset simply reflective of the combination of the states' pre-existing interests? Ultimately, the reset reflects each nation's desire to address core military or economic goals that are best addressed through cooperation. In other words, the reset is more a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. There is no evidence to suggest that this reset will see the relationship through difficult times. Recent diplomatic disagreements, notably regarding how to respond to the present Iranian nuclear threat, missile defence, and the on-going conflict in Syria, demonstrate the relative ease with which both nations tend to revert to self-interest and antagonistic rhetoric. The formal return of Putin, known for his provocative statements about Russia's interests, tinged with Cold War-style rhetoric, has undoubtedly tested the reset, a situation likely to continue as these issues have not been resolved. Of course, these are not the only trials facing the reset; President Obama has also encountered a host of challenges.

Obama's Reset and its Limitations

Referencing the historic meeting at the Elbe,²³ Obama noted in 2010 that American national interests were best served through cooperation with Russia.²⁴ Obama then appeared determined to put ideological differences

aside and approach relations with Russia pragmatically. Unlike his predecessor, he has taken care not to link the fate of Russia-US relations to expectations for democracy and freedoms in Russia or to out-dated assumptions about Russian interests.²⁵ It is worth noting here that Obama marks a departure from past Democratic presidents (such as Clinton), who were more likely to press for democratic reforms. Given the realities of President George W. Bush's wars, his administration became focused on issues such as regime change and democracy building. That Obama's approach has been more strategically pragmatic is a noteworthy change. The US needs Russia's cooperation, especially in the areas of terrorism and non-proliferation,²⁶ and Obama has zeroed in on how to get it: reassurance. The reset, it seems, was meant to generate a political climate in which Russia would face less criticism regarding its domestic political shortcomings and be reassured as to American motives. Obama has been able to deliver on some of this (with the important exception of his firm support for Georgian sovereignty), but this climate of reassurance is not guaranteed in his second term.

There was an understanding between Medvedev and Obama that Russia and the US do not agree on everything. They are divided by serious issues, notably what to do about a potentially nuclearized Iran, the on-going civil war in Syria, and the Russian occupation of Georgia in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. While it is true that Georgia did finally approve Russia's entry into the WTO, this was the result of intense diplomatic pressure by the United States. Russia and Georgia are deeply divided, therefore US support for Georgia during the 2008 Russian invasion and for Ukrainian and Georgian membership in NATO (albeit under President Bush), set back relations with Russia. Russia's obstruction of intervention in Syria at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), as well as its support for Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy—viewed by Washington as an important step toward weaponization—have also been damaging. Obama may want to move beyond such short-term obstacles in order to achieve larger objectives, but his opponents in Congress are not so keen to step out of the way.

The reset has been the subject of criticism within Congress, vocal members of which accuse Russia of deliberately obstructing American objectives. Obama's political opponents also fear that reducing US criticism of Russian domestic politics (a contributor to the animosity between Washington and Moscow under Putin) is akin to abdicating American responsibility as a proponent of democracy and human rights. The Speaker of the US House of Representatives, John Boehner, had harsh words for the reset and Russia's entry into the WTO:

Instead of downplaying Russia's disregard for democratic values and human rights, we should call them on it. Publicly, forcefully, frequently...the United States should insist Russia 'reset' its own policies. If those appeals require teeth, the House stands ready to provide them.²⁷

In Obama's first term, Boehner warned that a Republican House would not support legislation to end barriers to bilateral trade with Russia until Obama pressed Medvedev to recognize Georgian sovereignty. While Congress was unable to prevent Russia from joining the WTO, it did slow the process of allowing the full benefits of Russian accession to be realized in the US.²⁸ Russia joined the WTO in August 2012, but Congress dragged its heels on a Russian exemption from Jackson-Vanik,²⁹ another Medvedev priority supported by Obama. Shortly after his re-election, however, Obama was able to see his desire for permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) with Russia realized with the December 2012 repeal of Jackson-Vanik (though it was attached to the Magnitsky Law—discussed below—at the urging of Congress). Congress, sceptical of the Russia-US reset, scrapped one law formally banning trade with an undemocratic Russia, while simultaneously instituting new ways to pressure Russian officials over democracy and human rights concerns.

There has been much criticism of Obama's Russia policy, with much of it arguably rooted in Cold War era beliefs about Russia-US relations, which renders creative thinking about the new relationship challenging.³⁰ In this spirit of Cold War-style thinking, there have been some recent diplomatic skirmishes that threaten to set back the reset, the Magnitsky Act chief among them. In July 2011, the US State Department refused to issue visas for a number of Russians they claimed were involved in the 2009 detention and death of Sergei Magnitsky. His case was particularly politically charged because he worked for a British investment fund and publicly accused a number of Russian tax and law enforcement officials of tax fraud. He was arrested and imprisoned for over a year without trial, and died in pre-trial detention after being denied medical attention.³¹ The individuals—known as the "Magnitsky List"—were banned from travel to the United States in diplomatic protest over Magnitsky's treatment. Foreign Minister Lavrov was furious and responded with a 2011 travel ban on top American officials believed to be responsible for human rights abuses at the US Detention Center in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.³² Undeterred by Russia's response, the US Congress moved forward with the Magnitsky Act, which freezes the US assets of Russian officials believed to have committed human rights abuses and denies them visas. President Obama unsuccessfully opposed linking the Jackson-Vanik repeal with the Magnitsky Act. Experts have warned the Act could set back Russia-US re-

lations, possibly even signalling the onset of a new Cold War.³³ Russia was furious; the Russian Duma began drafting legislation that would similarly penalize US nationals guilty of violating the rights of Russians. President Putin, meanwhile, referred to the “hostile act” as “purely political and unfriendly,” expressing surprise that Russia-US relations would be sacrificed for domestic political gain.³⁴ Despite his March 2012 assurances to Medvedev that he would have more flexibility on contentious issues after the November election, it appears as though Obama continues to face a Congress that is not fully on board with his reset agenda.

Further problematic was Lavrov’s quick November 2011 dismissal of proposals to apply further sanctions on Iran through the UN Security Council due to improper nuclear activities detected by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).³⁵ The issue of Iran has long tested Russia-US relations, but it had seemed as though Russia was prepared to support this latest round of US initiatives in the UNSC. The firm views of the Foreign Ministry have raised concerns about how easily the reset agenda can be derailed. This follows severe Russian criticism of the 2011 NATO bombing campaign in Libya that ousted Muammar Gaddafi, and an unwillingness to support US initiatives on Syria. Though the Russians did abstain from a UNSC resolution on Libya, they were vocal in their condemnation of NATO’s subsequent operations. However, the aggressive language often did not come from Medvedev himself, and it is an open question as to whether he shared the negative views of Foreign Ministry officials. He did not repudiate them, so one can assume that he was sympathetic to the concerns expressed by Lavrov and others.

Medvedev has also been known to fall back on Cold War-style rhetoric himself. In response to US plans to install missile defence facilities in Eastern Europe to target “rogue” nations, Medvedev warned that Russia was prepared to deploy Iskander missiles (ballistic missiles with a range of up to 500 kilometres) to Kaliningrad³⁶ and southern Russia, close to Turkey, a NATO member state. Medvedev also threatened to pull Russia out of the New START Treaty if plans for the US missile shield in Romania and Poland moved forward.³⁷ This caused many analysts to question seriously the strength of the reset during Medvedev’s tenure, as Putin’s blunt language since taking back the presidency raises more questions regarding its staying power. However, if the reset is viewed not as an end in and of itself, but rather as a means to an end—in other words, as a way for each side to make gains in areas of common interest—then perhaps labelling it a failure is premature. Perhaps the reset has been little more than a reset of the post-Cold War relationship that *preceded* Putin and Bush and therefore reflects a relationship marked by good intentions

but profound disagreement. If this is all it has amounted to, then it marks only a small change in relations.

Obama and Medvedev seemed to prefer to find areas of compromise rather than tirelessly discussing issues of division. On a critical area of disagreement—Georgia—NATO maintains that it does not recognize any country's natural right to a "sphere of interest."³⁸ This is problematic for Russia, which feels entitled to a secure region along its borders in which it exercises influence. Obama seems content to "agree to disagree," with regard to the Georgia question, and to find a way to both skirt Congress' vigorous criticisms of Russia and his own Russia policy and simultaneously address core threats to American security toward which the Russians can make a constructive contribution. The extent to which Obama has the power to make this happen is questionable, especially in light of the Magnitsky Act. Congress' role in foreign policy is strong, and this limits what the President can do.³⁹ On Obama's end, the reset may be in trouble. Medvedev, on the other hand, enjoyed more freedom to carry out his agenda and therefore was better positioned to prioritize the reset. Whether President Putin will continue Medvedev's commitment, however, remains to be seen and will be taken up in the following section.

The Russian President, Foreign Policy, and the US

All foreign policy involves structure and agency; the trick is figuring out the balance between them. This paper holds that both agency and structure are crucial to understanding post-Soviet Russian foreign policy and notes the wealth of literature underscoring this connection.⁴⁰ Russian political institutions, and the individuals that operate within them, must be considered in any assessment of foreign policy decisions and outcomes. However, not all relevant political institutions within the realm of foreign policy warrant equal consideration. Russian foreign policy-making features an executive-centred decision-making process often at odds with the institutional structure. Institutional players with a constitutionally-prescribed role in foreign policy-making participate in decisions dependent upon their proximity to the president.

While Russia may not be alone in its overlooking of constitutionally-elaborated foreign policy roles in favour of practical realities (the American Constitution arguably gives the US Congress more of a role in foreign policy making than it typically exercises), strong executive "super-presidential" powers enable the president and his closest advisors to dominate foreign policy making in ways that dwarf the institutional presence of other actors. As the stakes of the Russia-US relationship are

so high, and because so much of post-Soviet Russia's own identity is viewed through the prism of the West, this policy area in particular bears the personal imprint of the president. Powerful personalities—Yeltsin, Putin, and, perhaps to a lesser extent, Medvedev—have exercised a tremendous amount of personal discretion in relations with Washington. Strong executive-centred institutions combined with weaker legislative ones accentuate the importance of the president, thereby revealing the magnitude of both structure and agency in Russian foreign policy making. Given the fluctuation in the tone and priorities of foreign policy toward the US under all three post-Soviet Presidents, it is fair to say that structure enables agency in important ways.

Articles eighty and eighty-six of the 1993 Russian Constitution grant foreign policy making powers to the president.⁴¹ He is afforded the right to “determine the basic guidelines of the state’s domestic and foreign policy” and to “exercise leadership of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation.”⁴² The president selects foreign policy advisors formally and informally, including members of the Russian Security Council and Ministers of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Defence. The Russian Duma is afforded some foreign policy oversight by the constitution but, as Richard Sakwa notes, is really meant to enable the implementation of foreign policy already determined by the president.⁴³ This is borne out in practice; the bodies involved in foreign policy decision-making are the Security Council and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the security and defence agencies, and the prime minister. Interestingly, the power ministries—Foreign Affairs and Defence—answer directly to the president and not to the prime minister, rendering the PM, as the head of government, a relatively weak player in foreign policy. Post-Soviet prime ministers have not been overly active in foreign affairs, with the notable exception of Putin.

Responsibility for foreign policy, like so many other policy areas in Russian governance, is nominally given to a number of relevant bodies and agencies, but leadership and ultimate authority resides with the president. Neil Malcolm et al. produced one of the most thorough accounts of the structure of Russian foreign policy making, and the internal influences on post-Soviet Russian foreign policy under Yeltsin.⁴⁴ Their overwhelming conclusion is that while other players have had an impact upon policy, they have done so at the pleasure of the president. Ultimately, the president dominates the foreign policy process, delegating powers to designated officials as he sees fit.

This presidential influence was established by Yeltsin and continues under Putin. Yeltsin’s two Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Kozyrev and Yevgeny Primakov,⁴⁵ were given much latitude to influence foreign policy when their views were consistent with Yeltsin’s (which, in turn,

were often in flux).⁴⁶ The Russian Duma, largely at odds with Yeltsin's agenda and consisting of predominantly communist and ultra-nationalist deputies, was able to influence foreign policy only marginally through public opposition to what many Russians perceived as weakness, especially when it came to dealing with the West. This opposition came in post-Soviet Russia's early years—before the media crackdown that continues to the present—and therefore had an impact upon domestic foreign policy debates. This influenced the directives Yeltsin issued to his foreign ministers (and the ultimate ousting of Kozyrev) but, overall, his policies were due in large part to the overall lack of policy leadership, the absence of a coherent agenda and the growing political pressure from a belligerent opposition. The Duma did not, and does not, enjoy a powerful oversight capacity when it comes to foreign policy. Influence over foreign policy—and Russian politics generally—depends upon proximity to the president. Other institutions may play a role only if allowed.

Because of the tremendous power the president enjoys in Russian politics, his personal role in foreign policy-making is considerable. Attempts to capture the nature of presidential power in Russia are found in such labels as “super-presidentialism” and “managed,” or “sovereign” democracy, all of which refer to the consolidation of Russia's authoritarian-style electoral democracy. Critics of Russia's failed democratic experiment view the strong role of the president—the super-president, or perhaps even hegemonic president—as the “most antidemocratic feature” of Russian politics.⁴⁷ The office of president is the single most powerful institution in Russian politics, rendering secondary institutions impotent and forced to rely upon whatever derivative power might flow from connections to the president. Since the constitution was implemented in 1993, hundreds of new presidential powers have been added, prompting opposition leaders to decry that the Russian president is more powerful than the Tsars,⁴⁸ bolstered by the fact that his authority is purportedly derived from the electoral will of the people.⁴⁹

While the constitution is democratic, democracy itself has become less a feature of Russian politics over time. Richard Sakwa calls this the “gray zone” of Russian democracy,⁵⁰ arguing that Russian democracy is not dead, but subject to an historical tendency to blur the lines between the state and its ruling party.⁵¹ The system can be described as bifurcated; there is a dual system of constitutional and administrative processes. Sakwa holds that, “on the one hand, elections are held according to the appropriate legal-normative framework,” yet this operates opposite a “parallel para-constitutional system...in which the regime imposes its preferences and where factions seek to influence outcomes through a closed and shadow political system.”⁵² This means that there

has been a great “tension in Russia between popular choice and managed democracy,”⁵³ enabling the most influential to harness and consolidate power. On the first day of his third term, Putin issued thirteen decrees in multiple policy areas, all in the absence of a new cabinet, which had yet to be chosen.⁵⁴ While Putin’s obvious nominee for prime minister—Medvedev—was approved by the Duma the same day by more than enough votes, Putin registered his displeasure that more Duma deputies did not endorse his choice.⁵⁵ Democratic procedures may be on the books, but there should be little doubt about who governs Russia.

Ol’ga Kryshchanovskaya and Stephen White confirmed the prevailing view that “formal position has always counted for very little in Soviet or Russian politics.”⁵⁶ They examined the composition of the Russian elite in Putin’s first presidential term and their interactions with Putin. They noted Putin’s preference for working outside formal institutions, opting to create ad hoc bodies that would informally advise the president on various matters. They identified members of Putin’s “inner circle,” noting that he made strategic decisions and sought advice on the basis of regular meetings with hand-selected officials. Putin met publicly each week with members of the government at the Kremlin, and then privately on the weekend with personal advisors who were not necessarily chosen for their institutional affiliations.⁵⁷ While two of his weekly meetings generated a public record of items discussed, an unpublicized third group also met at Putin’s official residence, allegedly called the “tea drinking group,” which consisted of personal friends of the President, some of whom were members of the *siloviki*.⁵⁸ This group allegedly discussed foreign policy matters, but because the details of this group’s composition were not well known or publicised, it is difficult to appreciate fully the nature of this group’s influence over foreign policy decisions. What we can derive from this is that Putin, like his predecessor, enjoyed the executive freedom to chose and empower foreign policy decision-makers, to surround himself with personal confidantes—assigning them powerful ministry and government portfolios—to, when necessary, reduce select bureaucratic influence, and to affect the decision-making process personally.

The Kremlin’s dominance of foreign policy making is also visible in the numerous decrees issued over the years. This dates back to Yeltsin’s first decree following the dissolution of the Soviet Union banning the Communist Party, previously the institution with the capacity to make, manage, and implement foreign policy. From there, foreign policy, and those responsible for it, had to be re-built. Presidential foreign policy decrees have included official state recognition for sovereign states, the adoption of various foreign and national security policy documents, and the designation of primary responsibility for foreign policy to the Min-

istry of Foreign Affairs.⁵⁹ While the use of decrees declined, but did not disappear, in favour of the legislative process (eased by United Russia's dominance in the Duma) under Putin and Medvedev,⁶⁰ they are still used in foreign policy (e.g. the 2011 decrees on sanctions on Libya). Medvedev himself announced in 2010 that Russia would work toward better relations with the West, notably the United States, and instructed Russian foreign policy agencies and departments to take a more open view of the West, as it was simply good economics. This formed the foundation for the reset and came largely as a directive from the Kremlin, rather than as a response to an internal demand for shifting priorities.

It is difficult to know for certain the inner workings of the tandem. Prime Minister Putin enjoyed unprecedented (for a Russian PM) foreign policy making authority under Medvedev, presumably because of his expertise and interest, and even more likely as a result of some prior arrangement wherein Medvedev acted as the presidential figurehead, while Putin retained tremendous power. Interestingly, President Medvedev remained, at times, an influential front man for foreign policy regarding the United States. Perhaps this was due to the perceived need to warm relations with Washington that soured on Putin's watch, or perhaps it was due to the relationship of trust between the two men. Medvedev became a very close Putin advisor in the years leading up to his appointment as Putin's successor.

Despite his selection of a more liberal successor (or place holder), Putin's return to the presidency in 2012 consolidated the "sovereign democracy" built during his first two terms.⁶¹ While Medvedev introduced some political reforms to make it easier for political parties to organize and gain seats in the Duma, and spoke of the need for liberal reforms to the legal and political system, he exerted Kremlin authority assertively. His efforts with regard to the reset with the United States received criticism at home, leading to speculation about whether PM Putin shared his views on US relations. Though Medvedev's imprint on the relationship seems to have made a difference, one wonders if that work was in vain. Should Putin turn away from the reset (and early evidence suggests he may), this will yet again be a testament to just how much influence the president enjoys.

It is not just Putin's style and tone toward the United States that raises questions about Russian commitment to the reset. The fact is that relations with the US worsened under Putin's second term. While his first years in office demonstrated a willingness to cooperate with the West, the conciliatory tone did not last, and the relationship deteriorated fairly rapidly. Putin initially cooperated with American leaders in areas of shared interest, such as the fight against terrorism, arms control negotiations, and NATO-Russia cooperation.⁶² This, in concert with his

overtures toward President Bush following 9/11 and the camaraderie the two seemed to share in the early days, led many to see promise in the Russia-US relationship. However, there was a reason why Russia-US relations needed a reset in 2009. The American failure to recognize Russia as a great power, deserving of respect and possessing spheres of interest served a fatal blow to the relationship.

At times, Putin has used rhetoric reminiscent of the Cold War, and seems reluctant to acquiesce to assumptions of American hegemony. He angrily responded to American support for the coloured revolutions in Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004), as well as its backing of Georgia in the 2008 war with Russia. Russian leaders perceived an American disregard for Russia's interests, highlighted by the US pursuit of NATO expansion into Eastern Europe, its support for Georgian and Ukrainian membership in the Alliance, and its termination of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Added to this was the ramped-up rhetoric from the Bush Administration regarding Russia's democratic deficit, evidenced by the suspicious deaths of journalists critical of the Kremlin and its handling of the Khodorkovsky affair. This met with a frosty response from Putin, who warned the West to stay out of Russia's domestic affairs.⁶³ By summer 2008 (and the Russo-Georgian war), relations hit an all-time low in the post-Cold War era. With alarming warnings of a "new Cold War," it was not long before leaders on both sides realized the relationship had to be repaired. Medvedev was the man empowered to get this done in Moscow and, with a new occupant in the White House, characterized by a different worldview and opinion of Russia than those of his Cold War-trained predecessors, the time was right to hit the reset button.

Conclusion: Putin and the Reset

With Obama's re-election, the outlook for relations with Washington may be more optimistic than under a President Romney (who saw Russia as a Cold War-style enemy). However, given Putin's own track record with the United States, there is still room for concern as to how he will assert Russia's interests, especially in areas of intense disagreement such as Iran, Syria, and Georgia. While it is true that changes in the White House also make a difference—Obama promoted a reset with Russia that Bush scarcely would have considered, while his 2012 challenger, Mitt Romney, pointed to Russia as the United States' number one geopolitical foe—the US president independently making foreign policy while subordinating other bodies to the White House is simply impossible. The nature of executive power in Russia would make American presidents blush. So much

depends upon the Russian president to shape the principles and priorities of foreign policy, unencumbered by a legislative branch that might actively oppose or undermine his goals. When it comes to the reset, it is thus more useful to assess the commitment of the Russian president than his American counterpart when gauging its chances for success.

Some claim that while there has been an atmospheric improvement in Russia-US relations, such change remains superficial. Well into Putin's third term, it is questionable whether the reset can withstand differences over Syria, the Magnitsky Law, and the confrontational rhetoric colouring recent exchanges. Putin himself has made some remarks that resemble the sour tone of his previous terms, such as his criticism that "America doesn't need allies, it needs vassals."⁶⁴ He was especially critical of NATO's 2011 air campaign in Libya, accusing the Americans of using drones and special forces, and killing Muammar Gaddafi "without court or investigation."⁶⁵ Given the nature of executive power in Russia, and Putin's brash style of governance and apparently lingering mistrust of Washington, this may be enough to pull the plug on the reset. The true test of Putin's intentions regarding the US may be visible at the macro level in the UNSC, his participation (or absence) in NATO summits, and the extent to which he obstructs American objectives as a form of "soft balancing" against hegemony. It is certain that Putin enjoys tremendous power by virtue of his office; to what extent his personal views about America and its role in the world—and Russia's—will influence his orientation towards the West remains to be seen. The structure of Russian politics and foreign policy making enable strong presidents to personally influence decisions, and it is difficult to imagine a stronger personality than Putin.

Though he was able to secure a second term, Obama faces fierce political opponents who attack his conciliatory approach to foreign policy, especially when it comes to Russia. With a Congressional configuration scarcely different from that of his first term, Obama faces many of the same criticisms about the reset. Therefore, in forecasting the reset's medium-term prognosis, it is more useful to consider President Putin's commitment, given his greater influence over Russian foreign policy. By virtue of the power of his office, Putin's influence and preferences face scant legislative or popular limitation. Should Medvedev remain the front man for US relations, perhaps the reset is more likely to survive the transfer of power.

It may be the case that Putin's choice of Medvedev as his successor reflected the acknowledgement that if the Russian economy was to become modernised, diversified, and capture foreign investment, it would require an outsider (not of the *siloviki*) who could bring about some de-

gree of liberalization.⁶⁶ It appears as though this approach was successful. It is questionable, however, whether the momentum generated by the reset will survive the intense disagreements over Syria, Iran and Georgia. Russia's response is entirely Putin's choice. ■

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Notes

* An earlier draft of this paper was presented to the International Studies Association Annual Convention in San Diego, California, April 1-4, 2012.

¹ Dan Peleschuk, "The Reset Needs a Reset," *Russia Profile*, October 27, 2011, <http://russiaprofile.org/politics/48017.html> (accessed January 21, 2013).

² The White House, Remarks by Vice-President Biden at 45th Munich Conference on Security Policy, February 7, 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-vice-president-biden-45th-munich-conference-security-policy>.

³ Stuart Williams, "Russia plans shift to pro-West policy," AFP, May 11, 2010. Cited in Johnson's Russia List 2010-#92, May 11, 2010. <http://www.russialist.org/>.

⁴ Kari Roberts, "Jets, Flags and a New Cold War? Demystifying Russia's Arctic Intentions," *International Journal* 4 (2010): 957-976.

⁵ Kari Roberts, "Détente 2.0? The Meaning of Russia's Reset With the United States," *International Studies Perspectives* 13, no. 4 (2012): 6.

⁶ Caroline Wyatt, "Bush and Putin: Best of friends," *New York Times*, Saturday, June 16, 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/1392791.stm>.

⁷ I discuss the conceptualization of the reset in "Détente 2.0? The Meaning of Russia's Reset with the United States." See also Robert English, "A 'Reset' for Relations? Understanding Russian Grievances," *Global Dialogue* 11 (2009): 50.

⁸ Roberts, "Détente 2.0?"

⁹ Roberts, "Jets, Flags and a New Cold War?"

¹⁰ See Roberts, "Détente 2.0," and Samuel Charap, "The Transformation of US-Russia Relations," *Current History* (October 2010): 283.

¹¹ See Roberts, "Détente 2.0" and Samuel Charap, "The Transformation of US-Russia Relations," 283.

¹² Roberts, "Détente 2.0." See also Stuart Williams, "Russia Serious About Change, Medvedev Tells West," AFP, June 18, 2010, <http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-world/russia-serious-about-change-medvedev-tells-west-20100619-yn7c.html> (accessed January 13, 2013).

¹³ The region, just outside of Moscow, is dubbed the “Skolkovo Technology Park” and will prioritise research in five key areas: energy, information technology, communications, bio-medical research and nuclear technology.

¹⁴ “Microsoft, Skolkovo High Tech Hub Agree on Start-up Finance Boost,” *RIA Novosti*, Moscow, November 9, 2011, <http://en.rian.ru/business/20111109/168551963.html> (accessed January 13, 2013).

¹⁵ Charap, “The Transformation of US-Russia Relations,” 283.

¹⁶ Georgia was the final WTO member to approve Russia’s bid. See “Russia Signs WTO Agreement with Georgia, Negotiators Say,” *Bloomberg*, November 9, 2011, <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-11-09/russia-signs-wto-agreement-with-georgia-negotiators-say.html> (accessed January 13, 2013).

¹⁷ “US Agrees to Russia Joining WTO, US Trade Official Says,” *Bloomberg*, November 10, 2011. Available at: <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-11-10/u-s-agrees-to-russia-joining-wto-u-s-trade-official-says.html> (accessed January 13, 2013).

¹⁸ Russia formally joined the WTO in August 2012.

¹⁹ The New START Treaty was ratified by Russia and the US in 2010. It replaced the incomplete START III negotiations and the SORT Treaty of 2002 set to expire in 2012. The New START followed a series of treaties aimed at measurably reducing the number of deployed strategic offensive nuclear weapons held by each nation and to establish new verification procedures for their dismantlement. Its predecessor, START II, was never actually ratified due to the frosty political climate under the previous regimes; as a result the nuclear arms reduction process had stalled. Though it had its critics, New START was hailed as reinvigorating the arms reduction dialogue, which would be integral to the credibility of each country’s contributions to the non-proliferation regime.

²⁰ “Medvedev Calls NATO-Russia Summit Historic,” *RIA Novosti*, December 6, 2010, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20101206/161644312.html> (accessed January 13, 2013).

²¹ United States Department of State, “The United States and Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission,” <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/ci/rs/usrussiabilat/index.htm> (accessed January 13, 2013).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Russian and American troops famously met at the River Elbe in Germany in April 1945, which symbolized their cooperative efforts to defeat Germany in World War Two.

²⁴ The White House, “Remarks by President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia at Joint Press Conference,” June 24, 2010, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-and-president-medvedev-russia-joint-press-conference>.

²⁵ Roberts, “Détente 2.0,” 8.

²⁶ Jeffrey Mankoff, “Generational Change and the Future of U.S.-Russian Rela-

²⁷ John Stanton, "Boehner Asserts Himself on Russia Policy," *Roll Call*, October 25, 2011, <http://www.rollcall.com/news/Boehner-Asserts-Himself-on-Russia-Policy-209751-1.html> (accessed January 13, 2013).

²⁸ Anton Altman, "Boehner, Kasparov: Obama's Reset is Not Working," *The Foundry New Blog from the Heritage Foundation*, October 27, 2011, <http://blog.heritage.org/2011/10/27/boehner-kasparov-obamas-russia-reset-is-not-working/> (accessed January 13, 2013).

²⁹ Jackson-Vanik is part of Title IV of the 1974 United States Trade Act, which placed conditions on trade with countries that were not market economies or restricted emigration. The repeal of Jackson-Vanik was signed into law by President Obama on 14 December 2012.

³⁰ Richard Sakwa laments the profound inability to think creatively about what a normal relationship between Russia and the United States would look like. See Sakwa's "New Cold War or Twenty Years' Crisis? Russia and International Politics." *International Affairs* (2008) 2: 241-267.

³¹ Andrew Osborne, "US Slaps Travel Ban on Russian Officials Implicated in Sergei Magnitsky Death," *The Telegraph*, July 26, 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/8664119/US-slaps-travel-ban-on-Russian-officials-implicated-in-Sergei-Magnitsky-death.html> (accessed January 13, 2013).

³² "Russia's Response to US 'Magnitsky List' has 11 Names," *RIA Novosti*, November 3, 2011, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20111103/168395877.html> (accessed January 13, 2013).

³³ Stephen Cohen was quoted as warning of the grave consequences of the Magnitsky Act for Russia-US relations. See "Magnitsky Act Suggestive of Aggressive Street Gang Behavior," *RIA Novosti*, December 17, 2012, <http://english.ruvr.ru/2012-12-17/Magnitsky-Act-suggestive-of-aggressive-street-gang-behaviour-Cohen/> (accessed January 13, 2013).

³⁴ "Obama Signs Magnitsky Act into Law," *RIA Novosti*, December 14, 2012, <http://www.en.rian.ru/world/20121214/178164443.html> (accessed January 13, 2013).

³⁵ Ellen Barry, "Russia Dismisses Calls for New UN Sanctions on Iran," *New York Times*, November 9, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/10/world/europe/russia-dismisses-calls-for-new-un-sanctions-on-iran.html?_r=1&ref=nuclearprogram (accessed January 13, 2013).

³⁶ Kaliningrad is a small Russian enclave on the Baltic coast, situated between Poland and Lithuania, both NATO members.

³⁷ "Medvedev Threatens Missile Deployment on EU borders," *Agence France-Presse*, November 23, 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/>

russia/8910909/Dmitry-Medvedev-threatens-US-over-planned-missile-defence-shield.html (accessed January 13, 2013).

³⁸ Jim Nichol, "Russian Political, Economic and Security Issues and US Interests," *Congressional Research Service Report to Congress # 7-5700*, June 13, 2011, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33407.pdf> (accessed January 13, 2013).

³⁹ The US Constitution grants foreign policy making powers to both the President and Congress though the president is often the primary initiator of foreign policy, subject, of course, to Congressional oversight. The overlapping responsibilities of each branch render foreign policy making intensely complex.

⁴⁰ See Neil Robinson, *Institutions and Political Change in Russia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Celeste Wallander, *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996); Strobe Talbott, *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy* (New York: Random House, 2002); Michael McFaul, "A Precarious Peace: Domestic Politics in the Making of Russian Foreign Policy," *International Security* 22, no. 3 (Winter 1997/98); Neil Malcolm, Alex Pravda, Roy Allison and Margot Light, *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Robert H. Donaldson and Joseph L. Noguee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests*, 4th Edition (New York: ME Sharpe, 2009).

⁴¹ *The Constitution of the Russian Federation*, ratified December 12, 1993. English text available at: <http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/constit.html> (accessed January 13, 2013).

⁴² Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 357.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Malcolm, Allison, Pravda, Light, *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*.

⁴⁵ Andrei Kozyrev and Yevgeny Primakov were Ministers of Foreign Affairs from 1991-1996 and 1996-1998 respectively.

⁴⁶ Russian Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov quoted by Paul Goble, "Russia's Ever-Expanding Super-presidency Degrading Other Institutions," *Eurasia Review*, April 2, 2011, <http://www.eurasiareview.com>.

⁴⁷ Andrei Ryabov, "Legislative-Executive Relations," in Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov and Andrei Ryabov, eds, *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russian Post-Communist Political Reform* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004), 84.

⁴⁸ Russian Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov quoted by Paul Goble, "Russia's Ever-Expanding Super-presidency Degrading Other Institutions," *Eurasia*

Review, April 2, 2011, <http://windowoneurasia.blogspot.ca/2011/04/window-on-eurasia-russias-ever.html>.

⁴⁹ Robert Donaldson, "Yeltsin's Foreign Policy Legacy," *Tulsa Journal of Comparative and International Law* 7 (1999-2000): 297.

⁵⁰ Richard Sakwa, *The Crisis of Russian Democracy: The Dual State, Factionalism, and the Medvedev Succession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2-3.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁴ Alexandra Beluza and Alexander Sadchikov, "Decreed Exchange: Vladimir Putin's First and Dmitry Medvedev's Last Instructions Reveal a Difference in Priorities," *Moskovskiy Novosti*, May 10, 2012. Translated in Johnson's Russia List 2012-#85, <http://www.russialist.org/>.

⁵⁵ Medvedev was confirmed by the Duma in a vote of 299-144. See Anatoly Medetsky, "Putin Scowls After Duma's Underwhelming Vote for Medvedev," *Moscow Times*, May 9, 2012.

⁵⁶ Ol'ga Kryshantovskaya and Stephen White, "Inside the Putin Court: A Research Note," *Europe-Asia Studies* 57, no.7 (2005): 1065.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1067. Kryshantovskaya and White report that Putin's public meetings usually involved the Prime Minister, the Deputy Premier, the Defence, Foreign, and Interior Ministers, the Ministers of Economic Development and Trade, Social Welfare and Health, the Head of the Government Apparatus, Head and Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration, and a key Presidential advisor. This list could change depending upon the issue discussed. The Saturday sessions saw a smaller group assembled that usually consisted of some of the same members, but without some of the less powerful ministries and lower ranking members of the first group. "Inside the Putin Court," 1067-1068.

⁵⁸ Kryshantovskaya and White, "Inside the Putin Court," 1069. The *siloviki* are members of the Russian political elite who, like Putin, possess a military or security background.

⁵⁹ Yeltsin did this in 1995.

⁶⁰ United Russia, formed in 2007, is associated with Putin and Medvedev, and enjoys a majority of seats in the Russian Duma.

⁶¹ "Sovereign democracy" is a term often used to describe the blend of electoral democracy and statism that characterises Russian democracy. While the country's

constitution declares it a democracy, Russia's political institutions function largely at the will of the executive presidency.

⁶² Tor Bukkvoll, "Putin's Strategic Partnership with the West: The Domestic Politics of Russian Foreign Policy," *Comparative Strategy* 22 (2003): 223.

⁶³ Journalist Anna Politkovskaya and writer Alexander Litvinenko were suspiciously murdered in 2006 following their rigorous public criticisms of the Kremlin. Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a notorious Russian oligarch and the former CEO of Yukos, also critical of Putin's leadership, was targeted by the Kremlin in 2003, subjected to what many consider an unfair trial, and subsequently imprisoned for nine years. He is due to be released in 2017, following an extended prison term imposed for additional crimes of embezzlement and money laundering.

⁶⁴ Harvey Morris, "Russia's Reasons for Saying 'No' on Syria," *International Herald Tribune*, January 31, 2012, <http://rendezvous.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/31/russias-reasons-for-saying-no-on-syria> (accessed January 21, 2013).

⁶⁵ Dmitry Zaks, "Putin Slams John McCain, US Role in Gaddafi's Death," *Agence France-Press*, December 15, 2011.

⁶⁶ Gordon Hahn elaborates on this question in, "Medvedev, Putin and Perestroika 2.0," *Demokratizatsiya* 18, no.3 (Summer 2010): 230.

Unpacking Sino-African Health Diplomacy: Problematizing a Hegemonic Construction

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ABSTRACT

The practice of health diplomacy aims to prioritize the health care aspects of humanitarian aid as a mechanism for political economic negotiations between donor and recipient nations. Existing research concerning health diplomacy failed to assess the context-appropriateness of the health care aid transferred, the manner in which health diplomacy is implemented, and the political and economic ideologies embedded in such transfers. This paper examines how health diplomacy may be understood in terms of the above-mentioned criteria using specific illustrative examples of Sino-African health diplomacy over the past sixty years. China's health diplomacy is contrasted with examples of that of the US in order to assess whether the former constitutes a distinct alternative to the normative health diplomacy of the global North.

Introduction

This paper examines the historical trajectory of Sino-African health diplomacy from the Chinese Communist Party's first health care transfers to African states in the 1960s to the present. Previous analyses of health diplomacy have predominantly focussed on health transfers from the global North to the global South. In general, the discourse of health diplomacy appears to assume that all such diplomacy follows a normative, Western paradigm and should be considered beneficent simply by virtue of the transfer of biomedicine. In contrast, by examining China's health aid to African states this paper attempts to provide a more nuanced understanding of health diplomacy through an example of South-South

health transfers that has provided a mechanism for further political and economic negotiations. In doing so, this paper analyzes if, and how, China's health diplomacy is distinct from Western health diplomacy. More specifically, this paper critically assesses the political and economic ideologies embedded in international health care transfers and the context appropriateness of the types of health aid transferred. By excluding these primary considerations, the existing health diplomacy literature has implied that all health care transfers are inherently beneficial and equivalent. The accuracy of such assumptions is problematized in this paper.

Defining Health Diplomacy

Several definitions of health diplomacy can be identified in the literature.¹ In general, health diplomacy is defined as any health care activity characterized by the underlying intention of improving political, economic, and/or cultural ties between donor and recipient countries in keeping with the foreign policy of the donor state. Health diplomacy is an example of what Nye refers to as "soft power",² as health care aid is used to foster international relationships and achieve foreign policy goals.

Although health care transfers have historically been perceived as an inherently beneficial form of diplomacy, it is naïve to assume that all health diplomacy is conducted in the same manner and leads to the same outcomes in different recipient contexts. According to Adams, Novotny, and Leslie, "the most effective international health interventions are carried out in an ethical manner that is sensitive to historical, political, social, economical, and cultural differences between nations and peoples."³ Hence, regardless of the donor's intentions or the value of the particular health care intervention and/or technological transfer, context appropriateness is a key consideration for effective health diplomacy.⁴ Though health care is often represented as a neutral scientific domain, political, economic, and cultural ideologies remain as embedded in international health aid as they are in domestic health care policies. Correspondingly, the range of activities falling under the rubric of health diplomacy should not be understood as a singular, unquestionably beneficial monolith. This point is highlighted by the following comparative and historical analysis of health diplomacy, which problematizes this universalizing conceptualization of health diplomacy.

Some of the first instances of historical health diplomacy were the nineteenth century economic and trade policies relating to maritime quarantines.⁵ The focus of these early international health relations concerned “international collaboration to protect human and commercial interests against the spread of particular infectious diseases.”⁶ However, these concerns were less a tool for engendering foreign relations than a means of preventing commercial interruptions. Similarly, the colonial legacy of international health can be categorised as “a protectionist response against the importation of foreign-born diseases or a medical defence for colonists, armies, and national commercial interests.”⁷ Early health diplomacy can also be identified in historical international missionary work that, despite its often-humanitarian practices, has served as a form of colonial control.⁸ In the post-WWII era, health interventions became an increasingly common aspect of international diplomacy through the creation of international development programmes and the growth of organizations such as the European Development Fund (1957), the United States Agency for International Development (1961), and, more recently, the UK’s Department for International Development (1997).⁹ Similarly, over the last hundred years, private philanthropic foundations have also played an integral role in health diplomacy. For example, in the early twentieth century, the Rockefeller Foundation used international health as a safe, irrefutable means by which to disseminate an American ideology across the globe and “lay the foundation for American international dominance in trade.”¹⁰ Health diplomacy may thus contain coercive elements intended to foster a donor’s influence over recipient societies.

As argued by Navarro, moreover, power differentials between states may be exacerbated through the transfer of high-technological and expensive medical equipment, which often result in a form of economic and knowledge-based dependency.¹¹ Similarly, it is essential to question the absorptive capacities of recipient governments in managing health diplomacy. The larger the percentage of government spending supplied by external sources, the greater the chance that “a country may lose control of its priorities, programmes and strategies, yielding all control to the donors.”¹² Hence, in order to safeguard state autonomy and sovereignty, it is crucial to incorporate the concept of recipient government ownership into health diplomacy.

Chinese Health Diplomacy: Truly Alternative, or Alternative Packaging?

China has a long, often unacknowledged history of providing foreign aid to Africa, building upon a common colonial experience to forge what China refers to as mutually beneficial partnerships.¹³ The overall amount of this contemporary aid is substantial. In 2009, China pledged a package which included supplying US\$3 billion in soft loans and US\$2 billion in subsidized credit to trade partners; establishing a US\$5 million development fund to encourage Chinese companies to invest in Africa; forgiving the debt of the poorest countries that have diplomatic relations with China; opening the Chinese market to African products through the removal of customs duties on most goods; and opening economic and trade cooperation areas.¹⁴ At the 2012 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, China doubled its 2009 package, pledging US\$20 billion to Africa over the next three years.¹⁵ This aid will: specifically target the development of infrastructure that facilitates trade within Africa; build agricultural technology centres; support the construction of wells; and train medical and other professional personnel.¹⁶ In 2009, China overtook the United States to become Africa's largest trade partner.¹⁷ If this trajectory continues, China is projected to overtake the World Bank as Africa's most important financier.¹⁸

Current health sector assistance constitutes more than a quarter of China's foreign aid to Africa.¹⁹ Of the US\$462 million 2006 Sino-African assistance package, \$126 million was specifically targeted for health care.²⁰ Improving Africa's public health has received particular emphasis from China. In 2006, four health-related priorities were identified, emphasizing: 1) the need to develop and promote effective treatments for malaria; 2) the exchange of medical personnel and information; 3) a commitment to disseminating medical teams and equipment to improve medical facilities and train more doctors throughout Africa; and 4) increased technical support, including research exploring the potential of traditional herbs in treating and preventing HIV/AIDS.²¹ In late 2009, China pledged additional measures to strengthen Sino-African health cooperation, including plans to train 3,000 practitioners across Africa and a US\$73.2 million assistance package, facilitating the construction of thirty hospitals and thirty malaria prevention and treatment centres.²²

Although all donor countries imply their foreign policy and health diplomacy are motivated by the pursuit of mutual benefit for the donor and recipient, China's intentions in Africa have been a source of particular criticism, especially from the West.²³ Brautigam problematizes numerous

aspects of the Western depiction of China's African diplomacy, particularly its presentation of aid as a mere mercenary attempt to exploit the natural resources of Africa.²⁴ The accuracy of such an assertion is fundamentally challenged by the fact that many of the African countries receiving China's health aid have no natural resources.²⁵ Furthermore, the Chinese government has explicitly characterized their relationship with African countries as one of "*mutual cooperation and benefit*," confronting such accusations of harbouring a "hidden agenda."²⁶ Overall, China's motivations for providing aid are likely similar to those of the US with respect to "strategic diplomacy, commercial benefit, and a reflection of the society's ideologies and values."²⁷ But, as Brautigam notes, "China's aid and economic cooperation differ [from traditional donors], both in their content and in the norms of aid practice."²⁸ For the purposes of this paper, however, the question of aid motivation is bracketed in favour of a greater emphasis on the manner in which health diplomacy is conducted and the outcomes of such practices.

Practices of health diplomacy do not share a standardized, systematized, or universalized ideology, meaning that not all health diplomacy is equivalent in terms of perceived appropriateness or effectiveness. The following sections thus analyse whether, and how, China's health diplomacy differs from that of the West: a) ideologically; b) technologically, in terms of specific interventions and technological transfers; and c) structurally, in terms of execution and implementation.

Ideology: An Alternative to Western International Development

China's health diplomacy is undertaken in accordance with a particular ideological understanding of the function, structure and role of aid in diplomatic relations, developed in the 1950s. In general, the ideologies that have become embedded in China's foreign policy and health diplomacy derive from both Beijing's particular political agenda and a distinctively "Asian" perspective on foreign policy. In April 1955, China and other developing countries began to establish both political and economic ties to Africa at a conference in Bandung, Indonesia.²⁹ One of the primary outcomes of this conference was the development of a novel regional approach, that was to become a normative ideology, characterizing Asian foreign policy and international cooperation, offering a marked alternative to the predominant Western ideology emanating from post-World War II reconstruction and the Truman Doctrine.

Central to this ideology are the so-called “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.” The Five Principles, first articulated by China, India, and Burma, established the foundations of Chinese and Indian foreign policy, as well as Asian regional diplomacy in general, particularly within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).³⁰ The Five Principles include: “1) mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty; 2) mutual non-aggression; 3) mutual non-interference in internal affairs; 4) equality and mutual benefit; and 5) peaceful coexistence.”³¹ As the Five Principles apply to the conduct of all foreign policy, health diplomacy was to be similarly executed.³²

The ideological framework for Beijing’s foreign policy, however, extends beyond the Five Principles. For example, China has consistently represented itself as a “natural ally of third world countries in the fight against imperialism and hegemony of the superpowers.”³³ Unlike the Soviet Union, the Chinese government presented itself to African states as a patron that rejected the imperial mandates of Western powers and understood the unique struggles of peasant movements.³⁴ China successfully characterized its relationships in Africa as equal, strategic partnerships—of similarly-developing “sister” countries—where mutually-beneficial cooperation replaced colonial paternalism.³⁵

In 1964, Zhou Enlai announced that Beijing’s policy toward sub-Saharan Africa would be based on both the Five Principles and “Eight Principles of Economic Aid”: equality and mutual benefit; economic cooperation with respect for recipient’s independence; provision of interest-free or low-interest loans; projects with low investment that could be accomplished in a timely manner; provision of quality equipment and resources at market prices; effective technical assistance; fees for experts set according to local standards; assistance in the development of recipient country’s self-reliance; and assistance with no conditions attached.³⁶ The idea that aid should not violate the recipient’s sovereignty, and offered without conditionalities, has remained the cornerstone of China’s foreign aid practices.

Furthermore, unlike the numerous political and economic conditionalities historically imposed on governments by, for example, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, no such conditionalities have been attached to China’s loans to African countries. (Indeed, many African debts to China have been forgiven. In 2000, 2003, and 2006, US\$1.2 billion for thirty-one African countries; US\$750 million; and US\$1.3 billion were forgiven respectively.³⁷ However, to categorize China’s policy as entirely free of conditionalities is not accurate. In order to be considered for Chinese aid, states have been obliged to support the “One China” policy, wherein the Republic of China (Taiwan) is not

recognised.³⁸ Regardless of the presence of this ideological conditionality within a discourse of “no strings,” China has successfully presented itself as a natural ally of low-income countries, and enhanced its credibility amongst African governments.³⁹

Technology: Specific Health Diplomacy Interventions

In addition to these ideological differences, the actual health care interventions and structure of health diplomacy further differentiate Chinese and Western health diplomacy. In order to distinguish the actual health care practices that have been transferred from China to African contexts, unstructured interviews were conducted in Beijing with approximately thirty Chinese and African stakeholders, in conjunction with archival research. The majority of interviews were conducted at the “Third International Roundtable on China-Africa Health Collaboration” in Beijing, from June 12 to June 13, 2012.

The particular interventions and technology transferred from China to Africa have markedly differed from those transferred by the West. Professional human resources have always been a central component of Sino-African health diplomacy. For example, “since the first medical team arrived in Algeria in 1964, more than 15,000 Chinese medical personnel have served in forty-seven different African states and treated at least 180 million patients.”⁴⁰ Historically, Chinese Medical Teams (CMTs) have been specifically targeted for rural, under-served communities⁴¹ with limited access to health care.⁴² CMTs are also noteworthy for including practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine (e.g. acupuncturists and herbalists), in addition to conventional biomedical personnel.⁴³

According to several informants, distinctly “Chinese” health care transfers appear to have been particularly appropriate for local recipient contexts in Africa, and are well utilized by local communities.⁴⁴ For example, Chinese herbal remedies were welcomed in most African communities, where many local informal health care economies are dominated by herbal use.⁴⁵ Additionally, the Chinese herb *Artemisia annua* provides the starting compound for *artemisinin-combination therapies*,⁴⁶ which have proved particularly successful in treating malaria and are endorsed by the World Health Organisation.⁴⁷

In addition to human resources, essential medicines, herbs, and acupuncture, China has also been integral in the development of health care infrastructure, both through the construction of hospitals and clinics throughout Africa and in the on-going training of African medical students in China.⁴⁸ According to interviewed informants, these health

care provisions have both enhanced China's image in the eyes of ordinary Africans and engendered a trust in Chinese medical products.⁴⁹ Furthermore, preliminary evidence from interviews and the literature suggests a general satisfaction with the outcomes of China's particular health diplomacy in Africa. For example, upon visiting a number of medical clinics sponsored by the Chinese government throughout the continent, it became clear to one researcher that rural CMTs represented one of the most successful forms of current aid to Africa.⁵⁰ The Chinese medical teams were noted for focusing on disseminating basic preventative care to rural areas previously lacking proactive public health care.⁵¹ Sustainable health care development is thus promoted in recipient countries' health care infrastructure through the creation of horizontal primary health care programmes, as opposed to the singular focus on vertical programmes for specific disease eradication, as commonly practised in Western health diplomacy.

This contrast illustrates that such interventions cannot accurately be considered independent of their ideological framework. Political, economic, and cultural ideologies embedded within health diplomacy interventions are as relevant to outcomes in local health care systems and population health as the intervention itself. Introducing high-technological health care transfers that are predominantly accessible to elites in metropolitan areas, for instance, may subsequently require a greater allocation of state health care resources to be redistributed toward investment in urban hospitals. The health care budget, resources, and access available for more rural, and often poorer, populations are thereby reduced. Hence, technological transfers that are inappropriate for a given context have the potential to increase disparity and inequity. It is thus imperative to consider these factors in order to improve local health care systems and population health.

Structure: Partnerships in Chinese Health Diplomacy

There are also inherent structural differences between Chinese and Western health diplomacy. Whereas Western health assistance comes from a combination of public, private, and multilateral sources, China's health diplomacy is almost entirely public in nature, and often decentralized to the level of a Chinese province. Typically, a Chinese province is paired with one or more African countries.⁵² Although the Chinese central government negotiates health aid with African states, the implementation of health diplomacy, generally through the deployment of CMTs, is carried

out by individual provinces.⁵³ According to the Director-General of the Department of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Health of China, this decentralized structure facilitates better recruitment of medical personnel and reduces logistical problems.⁵⁴

Furthermore, the process of health diplomacy is typically initiated by the prospective recipient government. One informant from China noted, "If they don't ask, we don't provide."⁵⁵ In general, an African government will propose a health project in accordance with their assessment of the needs of their population. Hence, if the recipient government is seeking CMTs, they will specify what kind of practitioners and specialists they require, and where they wish them to work. The Chinese government then assesses whether it can fulfil the demands of the proposal in terms of human and material resource availability.⁵⁶ As a result of this structure, interventions are commonly recipient-led from the onset. They are thus more context-appropriate than if China was to devise a health care intervention according to its own estimation of local need.⁵⁷ The greater specificity of this process could serve to inform Western health diplomacy.⁵⁸

China's health diplomacy is structurally distinct not only in terms of planning, but also in implementation. Chinese medical teams travel as a cohesive group, typically consisting of twenty members, who work together in a single medical facility for a minimum of two years.⁵⁹ Furthermore, China's health interventions are also distinguished by the overall time commitments allotted to projects. Health interventions from the West are usually of a specific duration, and often lack a follow-up from which sustainability can be assessed. Brautigam observes: "For the West, once a project ends, it is turned over to the government, and donor involvement usually ends."⁶⁰ One outcome of the "Western approach" is that even if projects have fulfilled the donors' specific short-term goals, many are unsustainable in the long term. However, both Chinese and African informants report that China will usually maintain a project until it may be viably assumed by the recipient government.⁶¹ Additionally, follow-ups were considered common, particularly in the case of hospitals in need of repair.⁶²

Overall, then, the type of health interventions that China delivers and the manner in which these interventions are carried out may be considered distinct from those of the West. To further illustrate the ways in which the type of health care transfer, manner of delivery, and underlying ideology can impact recipient health care, the paper turns to the case of Chinese and US HIV/AIDS health diplomacy.

China and US HIV/AIDS health diplomacy in Africa: A Comparative Case Study

African countries represented seventy-six per cent of the 2.1 million deaths due to HIV/AIDS in 2007.⁶³ These deaths were not believed to be a consequence of a lack of viable anti-retroviral (ARV) therapies, but rather due to a lack of accessible and affordable ARV pharmaceuticals.⁶⁴ It is estimated that the cost of ARVs would need to be reduced by as much as ninety-five per cent in order to be accessible to all populations.⁶⁵

Unfortunately, as a result of the 1994 World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights agreement (TRIPS), the cost of HIV/AIDS pharmaceuticals is far beyond the income of the average citizen in a low- or even middle-income country.⁶⁶ Under TRIPS, a generic product cannot be registered without the patent holder's agreement for the life of the patent, which can last up to twenty years.⁶⁷ This policy has been criticized as a globalization of US patent law for the sole benefit of US and European transnational pharmaceutical corporations.⁶⁸ TRIPS and US HIV/AIDS policies can be understood as reflections of the so-called Washington Consensus, which is grounded in Western notions of political liberalization and economic reform—such as the radical neo-liberalization of markets and the privatization of public goods.⁶⁹ As a result of the Doha Declaration of the Fourth WTO meeting in 2001, developing countries can override drug patents by issuing compulsory licenses to manufacture or import cheaper versions of a pharmaceutical product, if a national health emergency can be justified.⁷⁰ It is specified, however, that such a compulsory license would need to “be authorised predominantly for the supply of the domestic market of the Member authorising such use.”⁷¹ Therefore, countries lacking domestic pharmaceutical industries—which includes almost all African countries—do not have the sufficient manufacturing capacity to produce significant quantities of generic pharmaceuticals.

China joined the WTO a month after the Doha declaration was endorsed, but strongly sided with developing countries in criticizing TRIPS and its addendum as perpetuating an imbalance in the rights and obligations of developing countries.⁷² China argued that public health rights should take priority over intellectual property rights in government decision-making.⁷³ Additionally, China had already been active in the African pharmaceutical sector for over three decades, developing pharmaceutical factories in the 1970s that produced drugs for local use in “Zanzibar, Mali, Cote d’Ivoire, Kenya, Egypt, and Sudan.”⁷⁴

Currently, China is the world's largest exporter of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs).⁷⁵ According to a Chinese informant, low profit margins and regulatory barriers to the production of generic ARVs have resulted in a primacy focus of Chinese pharmaceutical companies on the production of APIs rather than generic ARVs.⁷⁶ Informants identified that currently eighty per cent of Africa's ARVs are imported from India, and eighty per cent of the APIs needed for India's ARV production comes from China.⁷⁷ In recognizing the capacity of the Chinese pharmaceutical industry to supply generic ARVs, the joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is currently working with the government of China to establish policies that would incentivize Chinese companies to produce generic ARVs for Africa.⁷⁸ China is also in the process of developing an alternative to over-dependence on ARVs. There has been a marked interest among a number of African governments in collaborating with China on research exploring the use of African herbal medicines to treat HIV/AIDS.⁷⁹ The goal would be to generate sustainable cost-effective HIV/AIDS treatments that offer a viable alternative to cost-prohibitive ARVs, and the many issues noted with generic ARVs production.⁸⁰

Yet, beyond political-economic ideological differences in HIV/AIDS health diplomacy stemming from the divergence between the Washington Consensus⁸¹ and China's economic development model of "a long-term pragmatic strategy, emphasising sustainability and equality, with the ultimate objective of self-determination" (or the Beijing Consensus)⁸²—it is also possible to consider the effect of US Christian fundamentalist ideology on the policies of the US HIV/AIDS programme known as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). PEPFAR, though providing the single greatest monetary donation to HIV/AIDS organizations in Africa for counselling, prevention, and treatment, is also replete with conditionalities for African HIV/AIDS patients that may result in different outcomes depending on context. PEPFAR policy has been criticized for insisting that ARV therapies be made available only to those individuals willing to abstain from sex and to those organizations that counsel abstinence and refuse to distribute condoms.⁸³

In interviews, informants from local-level African NGOs stated that PEPFAR's demands were unrealistic and counter-productive, often exacerbating the social stigma affiliated with AIDS in local settings and potentially serving to increase the rate of HIV infection via the infeasibility of insisting on abstinence from sex as an effective intervention.⁸⁴ Furthermore, a country's eligibility to receive the substantial benefits from PEPFAR is contingent upon their compliance with TRIPS.⁸⁵ Thus, health diplomacy that contains conditionalities that are inappropriate for a giv-

en context may result in deleterious outcomes, thus problematizing the normative understanding of health diplomacy as inherently beneficent.

Population perceptions can provide a useful means by which to assess health diplomacy. In 2007, the Pew Trust conducted public opinion polls throughout Africa.⁸⁶ This research found that China was perceived as having both a more positive than negative impact on African countries in general, and a more positive impact in Africa overall than the United States in all African countries surveyed, except South Africa.⁸⁷ These perceptions may be a result of the particular interventions experienced (e.g. PEPFAR, which was fully implemented by June 2004) and/or may be related to the perceived asymmetry of power between African recipients and the United States. According to Gergen and Gergen: “when a state appears to be highly affluent, its aid is less impressive to the recipient.”⁸⁸ However, the Pew Trust findings can be criticized for making statements from highly aggregated averages of the data. Informants interviewed for this paper had numerous criticisms of China’s work in Africa. For example, one African informant reported that “the general opinion is that Chinese products and China’s work are of low quality.”⁸⁹ Additional challenges to Sino-African health diplomacy are identified in the following section.

Identified Challenges to Sino-African Health Diplomacy

Conditionalities and State Sovereignty

Technical support, without political “strings attached”—beyond the aforementioned agreement on the “One China” policy—has remained a significant aspect of China’s support for African states.⁹⁰ That said, though China’s current policy of non-interference in sovereign states has earned the respect of African leaders, it has consistently received the condemnation of the West for inadvertently perpetuating abuses to human rights through “blind funding.”⁹¹ Similarly, it may be asked whether the requirement of agreeing to a “One China” policy should be categorised as non-interventionist.

It must be recognized, however, that not all conditionalities have the same potential to undermine state sovereignty. Tull suggests that China offers “an attractive alternative to Western governments who undermine the sovereignty of African governments by attaching developmental assistance to reform programmes, such as structural adjustment programmes and democratic reforms.”⁹² According to Thompson, China

encourages its African partners to develop their economies through trade and investment in infrastructure and social institutions without demanding particular political or economic reforms.⁹³ Beijing's patent rejection of the unpalatable aspects of neoliberal development, such as economic "shock therapy"⁹⁴ or radical economic and political reform, has made China a welcome partner throughout Africa.⁹⁵ Thus, agreeing to "One China" may be considered far less disruptive to state sovereignty than particular economic reforms.

True Sustainability

Attention to the sustainability of health projects has been identified as a strength of Sino-African health diplomacy. And yet, the manner in which China attempts to ensure sustainability may also potentially compromise it. The sustainability of Sino-African health diplomacy can be analyzed and critiqued in several ways, beginning with the locations where CMTs are deployed. Many African countries experience a rural to urban "brain drain." African physicians and medical staff who do not want to work in rural areas are conveniently replaced by CMTs. The CMTs may thus be understood as facilitating this rural human resource migration by making it appear that African governments do not need to seek long-term solutions or create incentives for African health workers to work in rural areas. This situation was reinforced by the Chinese Minister of Health's announcement at the Third International Roundtable on China-Africa Health Collaboration that CMTs would remain in Africa for "as long as they are needed."⁹⁶ The prospect may thus be raised that Sino-African health diplomacy may be inadvertently thwarting the development of a sustainable solution to rural health care disparities in African states. Even more so, it is questionable whether the continual provision of Chinese human resources, without the transfer of necessary knowledge to local levels is actually facilitating the sustainability that Beijing advocates, or is, in fact, creating a permanent dependency on China.

These issues of sustainability may, at least in part, result from a lack of focus on the effectiveness of knowledge transfer in Sino-African health diplomacy. For example, many informants noted that true sustainability may be compromised by culture and language.⁹⁷ Significant language barriers were identified as detrimental to the sustainability of programmes. One informant noted that in a project in Zambia, instructions for medical equipment were often written in Mandarin, rendering it inoperable for local recipients.⁹⁸ Furthermore, although several Chinese informants identified predominant issues in the ability of Africans to maintain projects, it was also observed that mechanisms to foster the transfer of management

skills, necessary for successful project transfers to African stakeholders, were seriously lacking.⁹⁹ Neither were there necessarily smooth transfers between the Chinese staff itself, as one informant identified gaps in transitions between old and new medical teams as an issue.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, although CMTs were reported to meet annually in China, it is not clear if the experiences of CMTs and other Chinese participants in health diplomacy are ever utilized to render more effective interventions. Almost all informants lamented the lack of project evaluations.¹⁰¹

China's domestic needs were also identified as a potential threat to the sustainability of Sino-African health diplomacy. Firstly, pressures on China's health care system, and the outcome of current health reforms, may prevent provinces from being able to deploy medical teams throughout Africa. Health reforms in China have resulted in marked domestic health care disparities, especially, ironically, with respect to human resources in rural China.¹⁰² Such limitations began to surface when, in 2006, China offered to send medical teams to Africa to the "extent it could."¹⁰³ In 2007, approximately 4,000 general medical practitioners were working at community hospitals in China, yet the government estimated that a minimum of 160,000 additional medical personnel were required to meet China's domestic medical needs.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, provinces are finding it more difficult to assemble medical teams, due to a dearth of volunteers willing to leave their families for a period of two years to be paid the equivalent of local African wages.¹⁰⁵ Thus, in combination with finite medical resources available and a dearth of CMT volunteers, increased domestic demands for health care have the potential to significantly compromise China's ability to send medical personnel to Africa in the future.

According to informants, sustainability is also being threatened by the growing presence of unregulated private Chinese doctors, acupuncturists, and herbalists in Africa, acting as non-state actors and potentially interfering with state-driven health diplomacy. Private Chinese medical, acupuncture, and herbal practitioners have aggressively entered the informal health care economy of many African cities, and are reportedly affecting the cost of, and access to, health care.¹⁰⁶ One informant from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, reported that acupuncture and Chinese herbs were found in urban areas, and though herbs were identified as especially popular, they were also often expensive.¹⁰⁷

Finally, sustainability has also been compromised by China's reluctance to engage with local NGOs and other representatives of civil society, by virtue of its adherence to principles of non-interference with governments and the various internal social factions of countries.¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, the intended beneficence of adhering to non-interference

could ultimately thwart sustainability precisely because civil society must be engaged in order to engender sustainable interventions.

Structure

Sino-African health diplomacy can also be critically assessed in terms of structure. The same structure that is so distinct from that of the West is also open to critique. Health care systems are complex and require an holistic analysis, meaning that the effectiveness of a health care system is brought into question when projects are not assessed in conjunction with former and current ones. Chinese informants revealed that projects are often planned in a haphazard manner and are, as mentioned, never evaluated.¹⁰⁹

Furthermore, a significant strength of historical Sino-African health diplomacy has been its horizontal structure focusing on building infrastructure and establishing primary and preventative health care. However, informants note that China's horizontal focus is currently being compromised by collaborations with Western states, INGOs and multilateral agencies that insist on a more vertical approach to health care.¹¹⁰ One informant observed that "previously aid from China did not value cooperation with NGOs and other governments."¹¹¹ And yet, the Third International Roundtable on China-Africa Health Collaboration appeared to be dominated by organizations such as The Gates Foundation, USAID, and DfID. "We want closer collaboration with WHO and other organizations," offered one Chinese informant.¹¹² Evidence for this development can be found in the growing focus on health diplomacy projects directed toward, for example, malaria and HIV/AIDS treatment. These distinctively vertical programmes do not effectively strengthen health care systems in general.

Interestingly, this shift toward more Western programming is accompanied by a parallel shift in political economic ideology clearly evident in many of the speeches presented by Chinese representatives at the Third International Roundtable on China-Africa Health Collaboration. One Chinese informant argued: "Our assistance to Africa has been a public economy...we should tap into liberal markets and the private sector."¹¹³ It remains to be seen if what has appeared to be a marked alternative to Western health diplomacy will eventually merge with the Western approach. And yet an African informant representing the African Union asked, "How do we move away from silos [sic] of interventions and begin to address weak health systems?"¹¹⁴ It is doubtful whether her query will be heard by a China seemingly-eager to forge alliances with Western health and development organizations.

Conclusion: Not All Health Diplomacy is Equal

Although Brautigam argues that “China’s engagement in Africa often simply repeats patterns established by the West, and especially Japan in China,” the Chinese have added their own interpretation to development practices in disseminating what “they believe worked for their own development”.¹¹⁵ This paper has demonstrated that China’s health diplomacy in Africa does offer an alternative to Western (or North-South) health diplomacy, particularly with respect to the structure of health interventions; the specific kind of interventions; the outcomes of interventions; and the ideological framework underlying such health diplomacy.

Until now, the literature on health diplomacy has been almost singularly concerned with its intentions. However, as illustrated in this paper, the intentions of health diplomacy may not be as relevant to health care systems and population health as the practices being implemented; how they are implemented; and the actual outcomes of such practices. Additionally, any purported beneficence of health diplomacy must be justified with respect to the appropriateness of a particular form of health diplomacy for a given local context. Though somewhat counter-intuitive, preliminary research indicates that “low tech” health care transfers from China may yield more successful outcomes in local African contexts than higher tech Western transfers, primarily due to the context appropriateness of the technology and the corresponding emphasis on building local health care infrastructure.

Further assessments and comparisons of these different approaches will identify the strengths and weaknesses of each, thereby providing an evidence base from which health diplomacy can produce increasingly positive and sustainable outcomes for health care systems and recipient populations. In this manner, donors may begin to learn from one another. Future research should consider the lessons to be learned from China’s experience in health diplomacy (as well as other examples of South-South health diplomacy) with the aim of informing future practice. Interestingly, representatives from the WHO, World Bank, and the Gates Foundation have praised China’s programmes for their positive contributions to African development.¹¹⁶ On China’s part, as one Chinese informant stated, “We are willing to learn from other countries, from their work in Africa.”¹¹⁷ Going forward, these differing approaches to health diplomacy need not remain in opposing camps. ■

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Notes

¹ For example, see Vincanne Adams, Thomas Novotny, and Hannah Leslie, "Global Health Diplomacy," *Medical Anthropology* 27, no. 4 (2008): 315–23; Harley Feldbaum and Joshua Michaud, "Health diplomacy and the enduring relevance of foreign policy interests," *PLoS Medicine* 7, no. 4 (2010); David Fidler, "Asia's Participation in Global Health Diplomacy and Global Health Governance," *Asian Journal of WTO and International Health Law and Policy* 5, (2010): 269–300; Jeremy Youde, "China's health diplomacy in Africa," *China: An International Journal* 8, no.1 (2010): 151–63.

² Joseph Nye, "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy* 80, (1990): 153–71.

³ Adams, Novotny, and Leslie, "Global Health Diplomacy," 316.

⁴ The author's research at local levels in the Philippines has identified that global health policies that assume a universalised beneficence can actually wreak havoc at local levels in which the policy is contextually inappropriate. Paul Kadetz, "Assumptions of Global Beneficence: Health care disparity, the WHO, and the effects of global integrative health care policy on local levels in the Philippines," *Biosocieties* 6, (2011): 88–105.

⁵ David Fidler, "The Globalization of Public Health: the first 100 years of International Health Diplomacy," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 79, no. 9 (2001): 842–9.

⁶ Youde, "China's health diplomacy," 151.

⁷ Thomas Novotny, Hannah Leslie, Vincanne Adams, *et al.* *Health Diplomacy: A literature Review*. (Technical report for UCSF/IGCC/CDC Project on Health Diplomacy 2008), 4.

⁸ Ka-che Yip, "Health and society in China: Public health education for the community, 1912–1937," *Social Science & Medicine* 16, no. 12 (1982): 1197–1205.

⁹ See European Commission, "European Development Fund," <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/edf—en.htm> (accessed December 30, 2012); USAID, "USAID History," <http://transition.usaid.gov/about—usaid/usaidhist.html> (accessed December 30, 2012); Department for International Development "History," <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/about-us/history/> (accessed December 30, 2012).

¹⁰ E.R. Brown, "Public Health in Imperialism: Early Rockefeller Programs at Home and Abroad," *American Journal of Public Health* 66, no. 9 (1976): 897-903, 899.

¹¹ Vicente Navarro, *Neoliberalism, Globalization and Inequalities*. (New York: Baywood 2007).

¹² Novotny et al., *Health Diplomacy*, 4.

¹³ For more on the history of China's diplomatic and aid relations with Africa, please refer to Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁴ Paola Agnelli, "Chinese Health Cooperation in Africa", in "Global Health and Development Assistance: Rights, Ideologies, and Deceit" (report, Italian Global Health Watch, 2009).

¹⁵ Associated Press. (2012) "China pledges \$20 billion in credit to Africa over the next 3 years," *The Washington Post*, July 19, 2012.

¹⁶ Trade between China and African states reached US\$166 billion in 2011; a three-fold increase from 2006 (Associated Press, "China pledges \$20 billion").

¹⁷ OECD. *OECD Factbook 2011-2012: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics* (OECD Publishing, 2012). <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/factbook-2011-en/04/01/05/index.html?contentType=&itemId=/content/chapter/factbook-2011-37-en&containerItemId=/content/serial/18147364&accessItemIds=&mimeType=text/html> (accessed September 20, 2012).

¹⁸ Associated Press, "China pledges \$20 billion".

¹⁹ Yiding Jiang, *The role of Global Health Diplomacy in China's Health Assistance to Africa* (Unpublished MSc Dissertation. London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and The London School of Economics 2011).

²⁰ Deborah Brautigam, *China's African Aid: Transatlantic Challenges* (Washington, DC: German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2008).

²¹ Youde, "China's health diplomacy".

²² Lai-Ha Chan, Lucy Chen, and Jin Xu, "China's engagement with global health diplomacy: Was SARS a watershed?," *PLoS Medicine* 7, no. 4 (2010).

²³ For example, see Carola McGiffert, ed., *Chinese soft power and its implications for the United States: competition and cooperation in the developing world: a report of the CSIS smart power initiative*. (CSIS: Washington D.C. 2009); Associated Press, "China pledges \$20 billion"; and Brautigam, *Dragon's Gift*.

²⁴ Brautigam, *Dragon's Gift*.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The phrase “mutual cooperation” was echoed by almost every Chinese national presenting at the Third International Roundtable on China-Africa Health Collaboration held in Beijing, June 2012. However, it should be noted that according to Brautigam: “aid figures remain state secrets. The Chinese government releases only the barest of information about the quantities of aid it gives” (Brautigam, *Dragon’s Gift*, 12).

²⁷ Brautigam, *Dragon’s Gift*, 15.

²⁸ Ibid., II.

²⁹ Lai-Ha Chan, “China Engages Global Health Governance: A Stakeholder or a System-Transformer?” (PhD dissertation, Griffith University, 2008).

³⁰ Fidler, “Asia’s Participation.”

³¹ Ibid., 272.

³² Fidler theorizes that consistent application of the Five Principles in practice “strengthened collective action on many global health problems and domestic health concerns” and could be employed “to avoid disputes and controversies on global health issues in relations with non-Asian nations.” See “Asia’s Participation,” 295.

³³ Primarily in reference to the United States and Russia. Chan, “China Engages Global Health Governance.”

³⁴ Youde, “China’s health diplomacy.”

³⁵ Chan, “China Engages Global Health Governance.”

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Brautigam, *Dragon’s Gift*.

³⁹ Agnelli, “Chinese Health Cooperation in Africa”. Furthermore, Brautigam notes that the sentiment that “China gives Africans more respect than they get from the West” was shared by several African ambassadors she interviewed in Washington. See Brautigam, *Dragon’s Gift*, 68.

⁴⁰ Youde, “China’s health diplomacy,” 151. In 2009, thirty-five Chinese medical teams (CMTs) comprising 860 health care professionals worked in thirty-seven African countries. See Agnelli, “Chinese Health Cooperation in Africa.”

⁴¹ However, informants I interviewed specified that CMTs were currently primarily

being utilised at district hospitals and usually not to be found at primary or secondary level rural health care facilities (Multiple informants. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12-13, 2012).

⁴² Elisabeth Hsu, "Medicine as business: Chinese medicine in Tanzania" in *China returns to Africa : a rising power and a continent embrace*, eds. Christopher Alden, Daniel Large, and Ricardo Soares de Oliveira (New York: Columbia University Press 2008).

⁴³ Multiple informants. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12-13, 2012.

⁴⁴ Multiple informants. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12-13, 2012.

⁴⁵ Hsu, "Medicine as business."

⁴⁶ In the 2006, Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, China promised a grant of US\$38 million toward supplying artemisin to the thirty malarial treatment centres which China proposed to build throughout Africa (Brautigam, "Dragon's Gift," 72).

⁴⁷ Elisabeth Hsu, "Chinese Propriety Medicines: an Alternative Modernity? The Case of the Anti-malarial Substance Artemisinin in East Africa," in *Medical Anthropology: Cross-Cultural Studies in Health and Illness*, eds. Elisabeth Hsu & Gunnar Stollberg, special edition of *Globalizing Chinese Medicine* 28, no. 2 (2009):111-40, Merlin Willcox, "Artemisia species: from Traditional Medicines to Modern Antimalarials – and Back Again," *Journal of Complementary and Alternative Medicine*. 15, no. 2 (2009):101-109.

⁴⁸ Youde, "China's health diplomacy."

⁴⁹ Multiple informants. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12-13, 2012.

⁵⁰ Youde, "China's health diplomacy."

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ren, Minghui. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 13, 2012.

⁵³ Jiang, *The role of Global Health Diplomacy*.

⁵⁴ Ren, Minghui. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 13, 2012.

⁵⁵ Anonymous. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12, 2012.

⁵⁶ However, one informant identified "They all request different teams, but they usually want high tech professionals. They want heart and lung surgeons." However, the informant identified that such requests were usually not feasible for China to provide for more than a short visit. (Anonymous. Interview with Paul Kadetz.

⁵⁷ However, it should be noted that depending on a country's financial ability, African countries are currently subsidising expenses for visiting Chinese medical personnel that include: international airfare, stipends for the doctors and support staff, and pharmaceuticals and medical equipment brought by the visiting medical team. See Drew Thomson, "China's Soft Power in Africa: From the Beijing Consensus to Health Diplomacy," *China Brief* 5, no. 21 (2005). Though, China continues to cover many CMT expenses through loans and grants where necessary. See Youde, "China's health diplomacy."

⁵⁸ A sentiment echoed in Little's recommendation: "as the United States engages with the developing world, it would do well to cultivate greater receptivity to what country leaders see as vital needs" (Little, "China's Smart Power," 36).

⁵⁹ C. Zhang, "Health diplomacy and soft power development — case of Chinese medical teams to Africa," *Contemporary International Relations* 3 (2010).

⁶⁰ Brautigam, *Dragon's Gift*, 58.

⁶¹ Multiple informants. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12-13, 2012.

⁶² Multiple informants. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12-13, 2012.

⁶³ Chan, "China Engages Global Health Governance."

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ TRIPS was aggressively pushed forward by the U.S. pharmaceutical company Pfizer at the Uruguay round of Trade negotiations of the WTO in 1995. See Kelley Lee, Kent Buse, and Suzanne Fustukian, *Health Policy in a Globalising World* (NY: Cambridge University 2002).

⁶⁷ Lee, Buse, Fustukian, *Health Policy*.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Drew Thomson, "China's Soft Power in Africa: From the Beijing Consensus to Health Diplomacy". *China Brief* 5, no. 21 (2005).

⁷⁰ Chan, "China Engages Global Health Governance."

⁷¹ African Union, "Local Pharmaceutical Production in Africa" (Report, 4th Session Of The AU Conference Of Ministers Of Health, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 4-8 May 2009), 10.

⁷² Chan, "China Engages Global Health Governance."

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Lucy Chen and Jin Xu, "The Development of China's Capacity for Supplying Generic Medicines to Africa," in *China-Africa Health Collaboration in the Era of Global Health Diplomacy*, ed. Lucy Chen (Beijing: World Knowledge Publishing House 2012), 124. However, these African factories have been deemed ineffective in producing generic antiretrovirals (ARVs) for HIV/AIDS.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Anonymous, Interviewed by Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 21, 2012.

⁷⁷ Anonymous, Interviewed by Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 21, 2012.

⁷⁸ Anonymous, Interviewed by Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 21, 2012.

⁷⁹ Youde, "China's health diplomacy."

⁸⁰ In 2002, China specifically convened a Sino-African forum on traditional medicine and pharmaceuticals, which was attended by participants from 21 African states. See Thomson, "China's Soft Power."

⁸¹ Brautigam observes: "Liberalization, privatization, and structural adjustment never quite achieved legitimacy as a development model in Africa." See *Dragon's Gift*, 16.

⁸² Jiang, *The role of Global Health Diplomacy*, 8.

⁸³ Multiple informants. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12-13.

⁸⁴ Anonymous, Interviewed by Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 13, 2012.

⁸⁵ Chan, "China Engages Global Health Governance."

⁸⁶ Andrew Kohut, "How the World Sees China," Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2007, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/656/how-the-world-sees-china> (accessed November 21, 2011).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Kenneth J. Gergen and Mary M. Gergen, "International assistance from a psychological perspective," in *Yearbook of World Affairs* 25 (1971): 87-103, 101.

⁸⁹ Anonymous. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Cambridge, UK, July 14, 2012.

⁹⁰ Thomson, "China's Soft Power."

⁹¹ Agnelli, "Chinese Health Cooperation in Africa."

⁹² Denis, "China's engagement in Africa: scope, significance and consequences," *Journal of Modern African Studies*. 44 no. 3 (2006): 459-79, 466.

⁹³ Thomson, "China's Soft Power."

⁹⁴ See Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Henry Holt, 2007).

⁹⁵ Thomson, "China's Soft Power".

⁹⁶ Zhu, Chen, Keynote Speech, Third International Roundtable on China-Africa Health Collaboration, Beijing, June 12, 2012.

⁹⁷ Multiple informants. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12-13, 2012.

⁹⁸ Anonymous. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 13, 2012.

⁹⁹ Multiple informants. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12-13. For example, one informant identified that many drugs that were shipped to Zambia remained in a warehouse and were never distributed to their final destinations, because the manpower was supposedly not available to distribute. Anonymous. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 13, 2012. Similarly, another informant identified gaps in the supply chain of drug distribution in Sudan where drugs were stored in a warehouse until they expired. Anonymous. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12, 2012.

¹⁰⁰ Anonymous. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12, 2012.

¹⁰¹ Several informants identified that the lack of evaluations is an outcome of the complex network of ministries through which health aid is channelled in China. (Multiple informants. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12-13, 2012).

¹⁰² Yuanli Liu, William Hsiao, and Karen Eggleston, "Equity in health and health care: the Chinese experience," *Social Science & Medicine* 49, no. 1 (1999): 349-56.

¹⁰³ Youde, "China's health diplomacy."

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Multiple informants. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12-13.

¹⁰⁶ Multiple informants. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12-13.

¹⁰⁷ Anonymous. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Cambridge, UK, July 14, 2012.

¹⁰⁸ Jiang, *The role of Global Health Diplomacy*.

¹⁰⁹ Multiple informants. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12-13.

¹¹⁰ Multiple informants. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12-13.

¹¹¹ Anonymous, Interviewed by Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 22, 2012.

¹¹² Anonymous. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 13, 2012.

¹¹³ Anonymous. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12, 2012.

¹¹⁴ Anonymous. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 12, 2012.

¹¹⁵ Brautigam, *Dragon's Gift*, 13.

¹¹⁶ Chan, Chen, and Xu, "China's engagement."

¹¹⁷ Anonymous. Interview with Paul Kadetz. Beijing, June 13, 2012.

Ronald L. Grimes, Ute Husken, Udo Simon, and Eric Venbrux, ed. *Ritual, Media and Conflict*.

New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. 299 pp. £18.99 (pbk).

ISBN: 9780199735235.

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In mid-November 2012, as Israel and Hamas exchanged rockets in an eight-day conflict that reportedly killed at least 158 Palestinians and four Israelis, a parallel firefight was raging online.¹ Through a barrage of threats, claims and counter-claims uploaded to Twitter and YouTube, the two sides wrestled for control over an increasingly contested virtual battlefield. Almost two years on from the so-called Twitter Revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt—which were said to mark the start of Arab Spring—observers were again prompted to question the role of social media in sparking, fuelling and mediating conflict.

They would do well to turn to the current title for some answers. In *Ritual, Media and Conflict*, twenty-four scholars assign themselves the task of approaching the following problem: “When ritual and media interact (either by the mediatizing of ritual or by the ritualizing of media), how do the patterns of conflict change?” (p. 6). It is an ambitious project and the responses are genuinely interdisciplinary – bringing together historians, anthropologists, sociologists, area specialists and others. As one of the authors, Michael Houseman, acknowledges, “In tackling the interplay of ritual, media and conflict, they have taken on a humanities equivalent of the unresolved ‘three-body problem’ in celestial mechanics: how to compute the mutual gravitational interaction of three masses” (p. 255).

Mindful of the weightiness of this endeavour, Robert L. Grimes elegantly draws together these various interdisciplinary strands in his introduction. He observes that ritual and media can both escalate conflict—as did the “suicide attacks, beheadings and [televised] so-called surgi-

cal bombings” that marked the most recent US-led war in Iraq (p. 3)—but they can also mediate it. He offers truth and reconciliation processes, such as those in South Africa, as an example of the latter. Provisional definitions of the three central concepts are mooted, but never fixed. Arriving at the end of this first chapter, the reader might be excused for feeling that he or she has been left with more questions than answers.

But this openness is also part of the book’s appeal. It allows for the discussion of an expansive range of case studies in the seven chapters that follow. From public debates about the Muslim call to prayer in European cities, to the incorporation of traditional folk dancing in India’s Republic Day parades, through to the impact of the publication of the infamous photographs from Abu Ghraib, in-depth case studies showcase the varied ways in which the conflict can be sparked, escalated or mediated when either “ritual is mediatized” or “media is ritualized” (p. 20).

The rich case studies in Chapter seven are particularly effective. Its authors compare two moments of violent conflict that closely intertwine ritual and media: the toppling of Saddam Hussein’s statue in Baghdad in April 2003, and the monks’ protests in Burma in September 2007. They demonstrate convincingly the multiple ways in which both moments were embedded in complex power relations and served — through ritual and media — to include some people while excluding others. Taken alongside the other chapters, these case studies lend strength to the position that, “contesting a ritual, as well as using a ritual to contest something else, are means of challenging authority, establishing agency, and negotiating power” (p. 121).

Aside from these kinds of statements, however, the reader is left without any overarching concrete conclusions about the relationship between ritual, media and conflict. The great breadth of case studies and the openness of definitions offered might render this difficult, though Michael Houseman deserves credit for attempting to draw some of the strings back together in his concluding chapter. Yet as Grimes cautions early on, “initial exploration rather than either sustained comparison or formal theory-building” is what the authors are after (p. 4). The practical matters at hand are also far from black and white. The social media space that constituted a virtual battlefield during the recent conflict between Israel and Hamas was the same fertile ground partly credited for the uprisings that swept the Middle East during the preceding two years. This original book is a timely reminder against drawing any quick and easy conclusions about ritual, media and conflict. But in a world where our “perception of the world is media based; [our] reality is media fed ... [and] the intensity of conflict is perceived and evaluated by the extent of media coverage” (p. 95), the temptation to do so will no doubt remain. ■

¹ "Israel and Hamas begin indirect Gaza ceasefire talks," BBC, November 26, 2012. Accessed 27 November. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20501144>.

Tom Head. *It's Your World, So Change It:
Using the Power of the Internet to Create
Social Change.*

Indianapolis, IN: QUE Publishing, 2010. 190 pp. £10.99 (pbk)
ISBN: 9780132629546.

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The emergence of the Internet has demanded a shift in traditional forms of activism, ranging from the reorganization of zones of protest to the reconfiguration of organizational tactics. While the last decade witnessed an explosion in literature examining the theoretical and practical implications of cyberactivism,¹ activists already convinced of the Internet's strategic necessity may find themselves still asking the seemingly perennial question of politics: what is to be done?² In Tom Head's *It's Your World, So Change It: Using the Power of the Internet to Create Social Change* they may find an answer.

Head seeks to provide activists with the practical tools they need to make use of the Internet, providing an articulate step-by-step guide from one's first encounter with the Internet to its use as an institutionalized medium for change. The book's chapters cover researching a problem using the Internet, creating a website, using social networking for the purposes of information sharing, raising funds, using multimedia, building coalitions and alliances, and finally creating social actions such as petitions or spreading information regarding actions taking place off-line. Head writes with a modesty that recognizes his book's temporality, noting that the Internet's timeless integration into the daily work of social justice will render his work "outdated" and even "silly" (p. 7).

Throughout the text, Head guides his readers with practical advice by analyzing both the imagery and text of successful instances of cyberactivism—for example, he surveys various layouts of methodical and persua-

sive social justice websites. He also examines the cogent usages of different social networking sites (e.g. Facebook) and the myriad ways in which these platforms lend themselves to conducting social justice work. For instance, Head explains how multimedia and social networking placed additional pressure on law enforcement agencies in California to seriously respond to the police murder of Oscar Grant, which, though minimal, resulted in the arrest of Officer Joe Mehserle. These cases function as useful models for successful cyberactivism. Ultimately, Head provides both basic and mildly technical, yet accessible, advice on using various platforms on the Internet to create and maintain campaigns for social justice that function in conjunction with traditional grassroots campaigning.

While the text's how-to chapters supply useful advice, Head dismisses the extra-legal possibilities of the Internet as an activist technology. For instance, the chapter entitled "Ethics and Etiquette" condones only legal forms of protest by rejecting what Head calls "deadly sins": engagement in hacktivism and violations of copyright and privacy. However, Head's approval of organizations such as Wikileaks casts doubt on his own respect for these deadly sins, as Wikileaks distributes censored and classified government documents, which violate both copyright and privacy. Head displaces the productive relationship between hacktivism and groups dedicated to democratizing the Internet, as forms of hacktivism ensure the free flow of information to organizations such as Wikileaks.³ Thus, a tension exists between Head's appeals to an increasingly democratic Internet and an uncritical attitude towards privacy and copyright, alongside a dismissal of the very hacktivist tools that enable the democratic structures he promotes.

Moreover, Head reduces protest to a form of rationalized efficiency, undermining the potential emotional impacts of cyberactivism. In conceiving of the Internet as a rationalistic "tool that we use to spread information that helps people to do [on the ground activism]" (p. 13), he displaces questions of the aesthetic and emotional implications of cyberactivism. By thinking of the Internet as *only* a tool to increase the field of rational policy discourse and spread information, he misses the political possibilities of an online media that works on an affective level, touching the user's embodied emotional registers.⁴ The absence and disavowal of a discussion on the productive relationship between media and emotions unfortunately misses some of the more creative and beneficial aesthetic usages of the Internet.

Ultimately, Head inserts a much-needed practical text into the emerging field of discourse around the Internet and activism. Rather than read *It's Your World, So Change It* as the definitive how-to guide on cyberactivism, one should situate it alongside more radical texts that

seek to challenge the legal boundaries of privacy and copyright that constrain this activism. Head has examined much practical terrain, from using the Internet to stay informed to planning a successful action; it would make a happy companion to a similar how-to guide that explores the intersection between imagery, affect, and the Internet. Overall, *It's Your World, So Change It* provides necessary and timely advice for any activists interested in deploying the Internet as a tool for creating social justice—a tool activists should acquire before they become technologically outdated and ineffective. ■

Notes

¹ John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt (Eds.), *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001); Wim Van De Donk, Brian D. Loader, Paul G. Nixon, and Dieter Rucht (Eds.), *Cyberprotest: New Media, Citizens and Social Movements* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004). Lincoln Dahlberg and Eugenia Siapera (Eds.), *Radical Democracy and the Internet: Interrogating Theory and Practice* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

² Mark Philp, "What is to be Done? Political Theory and Political Realism", *European Journal of Political Theory* 9 (2010): 466.

³ Peter Ludlow, "WikiLeaks and Hacktivist Culture", *The Nation*. September 15, 2010. Accessed December 9, 2012, www.thenation.com/article/154780/wikileaks-and-hacktivist-culture#

⁴ William E. Connolly, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

Jeffrey C. Alexander. *Performative Revolution in Egypt — An Essay in Cultural Power*

London: Bloomsbury, 2011. 144 pp. £12.99 (pbk)
ISBN: 9781780930459.

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What is striking about most analyses of the Egyptian Revolution is the fact that they focus mainly on two questions: first, what caused the uprising,

and second, what would the consequences of the Egyptian Revolution be? Less abundant, however, are works that analyse *how*, not primarily *why*, the revolution occurred. Jeffrey C. Alexander asks precisely this question in his new publication *Performative Revolution in Egypt —An Essay in Cultural Power*, where he argues that in order to understand *why*, we first need to take into account the crucial explanatory power of the procedural aspect, the *how*. Analysing the dynamics of the Egyptian Revolution from the perspective of cultural sociology, Alexander focuses on the aspect of performativity in the uprising, which he conceptualizes as a “living drama” (p. x) consisting of a complex web of competing narratives exercised in an exemplary fashion within the social microcosm of Tahrir square.

Alexander keeps the framework of analysis deliberately narrow by focusing exclusively on the period from January 25 to February 11, 2011. He argues that it is specifically within this short period that we witness the subjectivization of collective action. In other words: not the social facts themselves, but the individual representations of social facts that significantly influenced the course of events. These individual representations gained cultural power and were able to trigger collective action. The intellectual leaders of the protests skilfully orchestrated these *individual* representations in such a way that they formed a *collective* representation of social facts, thus creating a powerful narrative that was able to counter the formerly dominant narrative of Moubarak’s regime.

In this respect, this new publication is developing Alexander’s previously established theoretical concept of iconic consciousness¹ which builds on the Durkheimian notion that social value and meaning is created through symbolic material forms (i.e. through performativity). Alexander combines this with another Durkheimian concept in order to analyse the collective representations of meaning: the binary distinction between the Sacred and the Profane, originally used by Durkheim in his analysis of what he took to be a key aspect of religion. By defining believers’ individual concerns as mundane and fragmented (the *Profane*), religion affirms its own status by presenting itself as a unified and coherent system of religious thought and practice, thus situating itself in the realm of *Sacredness*. Alexander adapts this dichotomy to the context of the revolution – his findings suggest that both parties, the regime and the protesters, used these two categories to depict their opponents as violent and illegitimate and to present their own side in a favourable light; the regime opted for an image of stability and rationality, denouncing the protesters as “irrational” and “chaotic” (p. 24), while the protesters emphasized the unified support of the Egyptian population for the values of democracy and freedom. Alexander argues that the protesters were more successful in applying these binary categories.

They managed to integrate the vast majority of the population into the “sacred” category of their narrative, which, in accordance with Alexander’s theories of performativity and iconic consciousness, materialized into real support by the citizens. The regime’s supporters, on the other hand, were pushed into a minority position.

Although this complex theoretical approach is an attractive further development of Alexander’s earlier body of work,² it might constitute a potential weakness for this particular book. Alexander does not devote any significant part of this publication to explaining why he applies the sacred-profane dichotomy, originally used to describe religious systems, to a political context. While this is certainly original, readers who are neither familiar with Alexander’s previous work nor with Durkheim’s theory might find it difficult to understand the reasoning behind the use of this theoretical approach. In addition, it could be argued from a postcolonial perspective that the application of Christian faith-based analytical categories to the Egyptian context seems quite euro-centric. While it is consistent with Alexander’s overarching theoretical background to use these categories, the reasons for choosing this potentially problematic theoretical approach are not specified in the book.

Alexander’s analysis is based on a combination of insights from the most influential international news publications, from television and on-line coverage by Al Jazeera, as well as from activists’ field notes and the famous “We are all Khaled Said” Facebook page, an essential coordination hub for the activists. This broad selection of sources lends credibility to the analysis as it acknowledges the plurality of actors and takes into account the central role that social media played in the dynamics of this revolution.

One might argue, however, that Alexander’s analytical framework actually obscures the plurality of actors, since insisting on a strict division of all actors along the lines of the regime-opposition dichotomy seems to result in a reductionist account of collective agency. The idea that the vast majority of the Egyptian population acted as a unified group, simply following the lead of a small group of activists who “orchestrated” the uprising via social media like puppeteers, is not sufficiently justified on an empirical level in this book. While the argument that the strong anti-regime narrative successfully concentrated the power of the population is certainly persuasive in general, more nuanced models of social media use and activism that are able to better integrate individual agency might provide a more convincing basis for the argument.

Overall, *Performative Revolution in Egypt* provides a compelling and original theoretical framework that is suitable for application to the Egyptian context. Though not completely without fault, the book makes a significant contribution to the discipline of cultural sociology. It is also

highly relevant for scholars from the fields of international relations, political science and Middle Eastern studies, since Alexander's insightful analysis of the revolution offers a theoretical starting point that might lead to fruitful multidisciplinary reactions and insight into other revolutionary contexts. In addition, Alexander's clear and concise writing style makes this book easily accessible for a non-academic audience. ■

Notes

¹ J. C. Alexander, "Iconic Consciousness: the Material Feeling of Meaning", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26: 782–794.

² *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual* (Cambridge University Press, 2006); *The Performance of Politics: Obama's Victory and the Democratic Struggle for Power* (Oxford University Press, 2010), *Performance and Power* (Polity Press, 2011).

Francis Lee and Joseph Chan. *Media, Social Mobilization, and Mass Protests in Post-Colonial Hong Kong*.

London: Routledge, 2011, 288 pp. £95 (hbk).
ISBN: 9780415596060.

OLIVIA CHEUNG (St. Antony's College, University of Oxford)

"We are just simple traders who want to get on [with] our daily round and common task. This may not be very noble, but at any rate it does not disturb others."¹ This is how "highly" Governor Grantham spoke of the Hong Kong people under British rule. In the years following, the Hong Kong people's political orientation was variably stereotyped as one of "utilitarian familialism"² or, at best, "attentive spectators."³ A protest against the proposed Article 23 legislation with half a million participants seemed unimaginable. Yet it happened.

Lee and Chan's book represents the most serious and comprehensive scholarly effort to analyze the July 1, 2003 mass protest and its implications to date. It is a masterpiece that integrates traditional qualitative methods, like media discourse analysis, elite and focus group interviewing, with rig-

orous quantitative analysis. Who marched on July 1, 2003? Lee and Chan uncover their identity by using a logistic regression analysis with sixteen explanatory variables, eight of which are found to be statistically significant predictors.⁴ In addition, Lee and Chan draw extensively from ten on-site surveys conducted at the July 1 protests over the period 2003 to 2010, under the auspices of Robert Chung from the University of Hong Kong, a long time veteran of conducting public opinion polls in the city.

The book consists of two parts. The first analyzes the 2003 mass protest—the unimaginable political shock—as a “critical event” (p. 9), which fundamentally transformed the established view of the Hong Kong people’s political orientation and gave a long-awaited impetus to the pro-democracy movement. Public opinion was energized, and civil society was emboldened to challenge the ever more cautious government (see p. 11), all in a “rational, peaceful and orderly” (p. 80) manner that made the people proud. Part two of the book discusses the legacy of the 2003 mass protest, and explains how it has waned to “ritualistic” (see pp. 204-207). It has become relatively stable and repetitive, and has failed to rejuvenate Hong Kong’s democratization. Lee and Chan argue this may best be explained by the short life span of some new social groups and civil society actors, internal divisions among movement organizations, and a decline in public participation in collective actions (see p. 12).

The third chapter in particular merits attention: it contains a brilliant discussion on why the July 1, 2003 protest can neither fit in an ideal case of organization-centred mobilization nor a spontaneous coordination among individual citizens, but rather, deserves its own typology. Lee and Chan divide the July 1, 2003 mass protest into three stages: organization, communication and mobilization, and argue that the protest deserves its own typology because the pioneering actors in each stage are completely distinct from each other. The Civil Human Rights Front, a loose coalition of civil society groups, organized the protest. However, its role was virtually limited to organization. It was the news media, highly politicized in the pro-Beijing/pro-democracy political cleavage, which communicated the protest and fuelled it with strong emotional appeal, and the people who “self-mobilized” themselves to participate by utilizing interpersonal ties (pp. 57-63). Strangely enough though, when asked about their political orientation, the protest participants said they were “apathetic” (see pp. 173-177). This partially explains the disconnection between Hong Kong’s political society and civil society. The latter is extremely thin and weak, while the former is dense and vibrant. In fact, the July 1, 2003 protest, and the subsequent July 1 protests every year, can serve as textbook cases

to illustrate the prejudice and fear harboured by the civil society against the political society. This topic seems to be slighted in the book.

From 2003 onwards, the July 1 protesters gather annually and chant different slogans, unified under the demand for democracy. Despite this sign of ritualistic sustainability, the movement has failed to exert more concrete influence on the process of democratization (see pp. 127-128). Collective actions ranging from the annual July 1 protests, anti-high speed rail protests, anti-national education protests have certainly added weight to the pro-democracy movement, but are they leading us to the next step of Hong Kong's democratization process? At the same time, sadly, the collaborative police-activist relationship analysed in the book (see p. 50), which gave much freedom for social movements, has been eroding at an alarming pace. There is even a tightened sense of urgency to defend the right to launch a protest itself. The traditional news media was denounced as having been co-opted by Beijing, and some young activists went so far as to permit only independent news media, usually those with only online circulation, to interview them.⁵ Facebook seemed to have largely taken over the "communication" role of news media and became the tool for people to "organize" as well as "self-mobilize", as seen in the anti-national education protests. These aspects of social mobilization seem to suggest that some of the legacies of the July 1, 2003 protest assessed by Lee and Chan have already changed significantly.

Overall, this book is highly recommended because of the substantial contribution it makes to the social mobilization literature in Hong Kong. ■

Notes

¹ Siu-kai Lau and Chao-chia Liu, *Society and Politics in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1982), 36.

² *Ibid.*, 75-78.

³ Siu-kai Lau and Hsin-chi Kuan, "The attentive spectators: Political participation of the Hong Kong Chinese," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* 14, no. 1(1995): 3-24.

⁴ The eight factors that are statistically significant at the 5 per cent level or above are education, internal efficacy, collective efficacy, external efficacy, support for national security legislation, support for quickening democratization, reader of Apple Daily and reader of Ming Pao. See Table 3.4 "Factors predicting participation in 1 July 2003 protest", p. 55.

⁵ For example, protestors at the "Occupy Central" campaign in Hong Kong, a campaign that took place from October 15, 2011 to September 11, 2012.

Peter van Ham. *Social Power in International Politics*.

London/ New York: Routledge, 2010. 272 pp. £95 (hbk).
ISBN: 9780415564212.

ULRIKE ESTHER FRANKE (New College, University of Oxford)

In *Social Power in International Politics*, Peter van Ham proposes a new dimension to the notion of power in international relations. The author argues that in an age of globalization, a sheer focus on hard power no longer suffices, and needs to be complemented with what he calls “social power”. According to van Ham, social power is wielded if an actor succeeds in “uploading its norms and values to the global level” (p. 80), in establishing those norms in a way that they are seen as legitimate and desirable—and in doing all this “without resorting to coercion or payment” (p. 8).

After an introductory chapter, van Ham explores the relationship between social power and the realist world of geopolitics. Here, as in most parts of the book, he uses the US, the EU and China as examples. Chapter three then establishes the link between the constructivist school of international relations and the concept of social power. The following four chapters offer a compelling tour d’horizon of the aspects of social power’s workings, such as agenda-setting, framing, public diplomacy, and place branding. Thanks to the clear structure of each chapter, *Social Power in International Politics* is remarkably reader-friendly, which is a considerable achievement for a theory-focused book.

Van Ham’s assessment of European social power is particularly convincing. As Director of Global Governance Research at the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Clingendael and Professor at the College of Europe, he knows the EU’s inner workings better than most. He argues that “inside the EU, hard power counts for little (and only if it is deployed outside the EU), whereas social power is everything” (p. 37). Accordingly, “it is little wonder that the EU feels comfortable in an [...] environment which privileges social power. To all EU member states, playing the two-level game of balancing domestic and European politics has become second nature” (p. 73). In a field so clearly dominated by Anglo-American writers, it is intellectually stimulating to see an insider’s analysis of EU affairs. The EU, however, is not simply lauded as a perfectly

successful user of social power; van Ham for instance also discusses the shortcomings of the Union's branding strategy (see p. 145).

The chapter on place branding is the second most convincing (and novel) part of the book. Place branding, defined as the "effort to manage, if not necessarily wield, the social power of a geographical location by using strategies developed in the commercial sector" (p. 136),¹ has become an important element of the exercise of social power. Van Ham compellingly depicts different place branding strategies pursued by several countries. While the examples of Kazakhstan's and Denmark's experiences with "negative branding" are illustrative, a study of China's branding strategy, which would have been interesting, is unfortunately missing.

The book naturally has some shortcomings, one of which is that it never becomes entirely clear which actors have and can wield social power. States, non-governmental organizations, companies, advocacy groups and even individuals, all seem to have a stake. Furthermore, after all the discussion about the media and public diplomacy, van Ham has to admit that actions still speak louder than words (see for example p. 152). Social power seems almost impossible to control, which means that the only thing state actors can do is to be more conscious of social power's potential impact.

Overall, van Ham's book is a good introduction to the concept of social power and a comprehensive and comprehensible account of its actual workings. Social power is a complex concept and cannot conclusively be discussed in a single volume. Therefore, van Ham's call for more scholarship on social power is certainly justified. His book is a very important first step in this direction. ■

Notes

¹ The ideas discussed in this chapter can also be found in his 2008 paper "Place Branding: The State of the Art" (Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 616, No. 1).

Sabina Mihelj. *Media Nations: Communicating Belonging and Exclusion in the Modern World.*

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 220 pp. £20.99 (pbk)
ISBN: 9780230231863.

MYRO HALUSHKA (St Antony's College, University of Oxford)

In contemporary liberal discourse, the term nationalism could rival some of the better-known expletives on the merit of its inflammatory value. We may speak of national identity, but we do so tentatively, as if treading on eggshells. The idea that the post-1989 world of globalization and cross-cultural co-operation has no place for anachronistic notions of national monolatry rests on two assumptions: firstly, that nationalism is evil, and secondly, that if we ignore it for long enough, it will disappear. Sabina Mihelj's *Media Nations* throws down the gauntlet to both. "We cannot ignore the fact that nation-states remain the principal building-blocks of the world community", says the author, (p. 6) substantiating her argument with case studies of natural disasters, the Yugoslav Wars and the 9/11 attacks.

Nationalism is presented as both a particular type of discourse and as a principle of legitimization. In order to achieve legitimacy, an institution needs to act as a representative of a nation, or be otherwise devoted to serving the nation and its interests. Sabina Mihelj clearly places her work in the context of traditional and contemporary academic research on the subject, using Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*¹ as a reference point to underline the limitations of national skepticism. A nation, whether defined through ethnicity or political affiliation, is the only possible democratic source of power for the stage of development we are at. And while globalization is a useful theoretical concept, it does not provide the same mechanisms of legitimization that a theory of national imagining might.

The book's appeal lies in its ability to navigate through this exploration of the relationship between mass communication and national identity with sophistication and academic diligence, while maintaining a cultural sensibility throughout. It bridges the gap between theoreticians and casual commentators, insisting upon an interdisciplinary approach. The author believes that nationalism and nationhood are not mere theoretical

constructs, but rather a mesh of political, historical, and cultural strands through which members of a particular national community view the world and themselves. National identity is not inflexible, it is ever changing, responding to challenges to its worldview, and its polyvalent nature suggests its inherent subjectivity. One example given to illustrate this is the contrasting definitions of Britishness offered by the far right British National Party and the UK's Liberal Democratic Party.

A major strength of the work is its clear structure, where a chapter is awarded to the study of nationalism and media through the prism of a particular area of study, tackling a broad range of issues in the fields of mass communication and nationalism studies, but also drawing insights from other disciplines: political science, anthropology, war studies, gender studies, and art history. Chapter one develops an alternative approach to nationalism and mass communication, which combines the understanding of nationalism as a form of discourse with an emphasis on its link with power and politics. Chapter two addresses one of the key conceptual dichotomies that pervade recent thinking about media nations, namely one that pits globalization against nationalism. Chapter three details the encounter between the forces of globalization and local culture, while Chapter four moves beyond historical forms of nation-formation and mediated communication, and examines recent changes in media systems. Chapter five explores the role of media in peace and war. Chapter six discusses different types of media nations, namely the intertwining of nationalist, familial and gendered discourse in modern media. Finally, Chapter seven addresses Anderson's question about whether the media constructs the national imagination.

The author's syncretic interdisciplinary approach makes the analytical framework dense enough to capture the elusive media *Zeitgeist*. For this reason, the book would appeal to anyone who has an interest in how individuals interact through large networks at both a national and international level. Its style is both engaging and challenging in its frankness, and the author's enjoyment at dismantling stereotypes is felt throughout. ■

Notes

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York, 1991).

Christopher May, ed. *The Political Economy of Intellectual Property Rights*.

Northampton, Massachusetts; Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2010. 1,864 pp. £575.00 (hbk)
ISBN: 9781848440746 (3 Volume Set)

PETER S. HARRISON (York Law School, University of York, UK)

Christopher May has published widely on the history of intellectual property (IP), the information society, the open source movement, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and the political economy of the protection of ideas, creative expression and goodwill. In this 1848-page anthology of previously published research, May has collected papers from a wide range of scholars and disciplines. They touch on the, sometimes fractious, interface between the “strong” model of IP—which provides substantial exclusivity of use to rights holders—required under the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) and the social and economic requirements of developing countries. May’s introduction argues that a one-size-fits-all approach to IP laws may be inappropriate in a world where major economic and social imbalances remain.

The author suggests that the Western model of strong IP protection did not appear ready-formulated, arising out of a fundamental “natural law,” but evolved pragmatically alongside Western economic development. As economies became increasingly sophisticated, a series of social settlements were arrived at. Within each a certain level of ownership of knowledge was deemed acceptable at the expense of a freely accessible “knowledge commons,” and IP rights were accordingly limited to suit the economy, and culture, of the polity in which they had evolved. This alignment of IP protection with the state of economic development meant that Western economic actors were able to flourish within an IP environment which was, at any particular time, reasonably well suited to them and their society. For example, May points out that the appropriation of European technology by United States industry during the period in which the United States was still a “developing” country, was supported by an insular patent law that only acknowledged local inventions. As international trade in the West developed, so did the need for international mutual recognition and harmonization of IP. However, Western states

were free to sign up to the resulting international conventions as these became relevant, and advantageous, to them.

In contrast to this evolutionary development of “home-grown” IP systems, May argues that TRIPs has imposed across the globe a ready-formulated, strong-IP model that for many developing economies does not serve its stated aim of incentivizing innovation. He highlights the irony that, as a result, Western states are, through the TRIPs/World Trade Organization mechanism, preaching adherence to a stricter IP environment than they were themselves subject to at equivalent levels of development. Such a system could be seen as merely supporting Western interests in securing post-innovation rents for which a normal return has already been obtained in their home markets. It could also be criticised for failing to encourage the development by Western commercial entities of products relevant to non-Western markets. For May the unevenness of global development was recognised before TRIPs by a *de facto* acceptance of piracy outside of the West. Although he rejects a return to such acceptance, he suggests that the uniform TRIPs model needs to be revisited in the light of the social and economic conditions in each signatory state. He proposes a reintroduction of TRIPs transitional provisions for certain states, and/or a wider use of compulsory licensing.

Although much of the selection in this anthology reflects May’s introductory thesis, it is clearly designed more broadly to stimulate further enquiry. His expressed aim in assembling the 64 articles is to give scholars a way to “swiftly familiarise themselves with an important field that they may have avoided in the past due to its “technical” character” (p. xiv). The selection is unquestionably varied.

The first volume has an introductory flavour. It gives an overview of the key theoretical issues underpinning current scholarly discussion over the merits and demerits of IP systems. In part one, May has brought together papers which introduce and critique the classical philosophical justifications for the ownership of the products of intellectual effort. It ranges from Lockean ownership arising out of the application of labour to the commons and Hegelian ideas based on the extension of the personality, to utilitarian justifications of incentivizing innovation for the betterment of the common wealth.

Part two provides histories of the development of IP and includes a paper by May, supporting his introductory argument. Also relevant to May’s overall thesis is a paper by Dutfield and Sutharsanen, considering the appropriateness of the strong IP model to developing nations from a historical perspective.

Some have seen the propertization of the products of intellectual effort as being analogous to the enclosure of a *knowledge commons*, much

like the historical enclosure of common land in England during seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. May devotes part three to a detailed examination of this analogy. Hardin's "tragedy of the commons"¹ suggests that commonly owned land is prone to overexploitation and underinvestment. That the same problems would befall the *knowledge commons* has been taken by some with utilitarian leanings as a justification for proper-tization of knowledge and the validity of this argument is tested here in a variety of areas. May also includes work on the concept of a "tragedy of the anti-commons" (p.468) in which resources are in fact underutilized due to the growth of networks of blocking patents.

Finally, part four introduces economics to the broader discussion. It includes the application of economic analysis to questions of justice in IP law; the validity of economic analysis and price discrimination concepts in the justification of IP in the digital domain; the economic modelling of the impact of patent protection on trade flows; and the analysis of potential core errors in the economic analysis of IP.

With these broader concepts established, volume two of the collection examines specific debates concerning the justifications for IP. Part one looks at the history of TRIPs, including the process by which it was arrived at. The argument that the West has used a natural rights theory of IP to persuade the world to adopt a uniform standard is analysed, alongside why countries continue to adhere. One of the most publicized and debated impacts of TRIPs has been on the availability of affordable medicines in the global South and, in particular, the accessibility of anti-retroviral AIDS treatments. Part two describes the scope of this problem and examines the approaches to securing access to cheap medicines. However some developing nations have not always taken full advantage of TRIPs' flexibility to reduce medicines costs, and this too is described and examined in this section.

The interface—some might say the battleground—between copyright and the "frictionless" environment of digital technology in the age of the Internet has created substantial normative debate. In part three of volume two, May turns to the limitations on the free use of information created by the protection afforded by Western copyright law, covering the history of copyright; the philosophical justifications for copyright protection; the conflict between copyright law and human rights freedoms of expression and participation in cultural life; and the public perception of copyright. There is discussion of building public compliance with copyright through a rhetoric of responsibility teamed with a pithy and stimulating essay by Jessica Litman on why copyright is perceived by many to lack legitimacy.

Having dealt with copyright protection more generally, in part one of volume three, May moves on to the interface between IP and technology, which here mainly refers to information technology. The volume begins with an analysis of the political economy of software protection and software piracy; looks at the comparative copyright treatment of digital media between the United States and the European Union; and follows with a normative discussion of information technology as a priority for development in the developing world. The protection of technology more broadly is examined through a systems dynamics analysis of the flows that occur between scientific discoveries, technical innovation and the development and spread of new products and processes, with the impact of strong/weak IP models on those interactions also addressed.

May's overriding concern is whether the imposition of the Western IP model under TRIPs has affected technological and cultural growth in developing nations and part two moves back to the global South to address this question. It looks particularly at the interface between "rights to develop" and IP rights from historical, economic and philosophical perspectives, and includes empirical evidence of the pre- and post-TRIPs experience in developing countries. May argues that the narratives justifying IP have become part of the "common sense" of IP ownership but rely on the assumption that those subject to the rights have been part of the legitimate political process by which the rights were formulated. Part three examines this assumption and looks at the roles of Western liberalism, industry, corporate strategy and politics, and the WIPO in the development of trade-based approaches to IP harmonization.

Having provided a substantial factual, political, economic and philosophical background in the preceding parts, the final part of this anthology, entitled "Intellectual Property: Critique or Abolition?" is a strongly normative finale. It includes suggestions of what the politics of IP should look like, why we may need one, and social action proposals for achieving the removal of IP rights. The part concludes with an interesting historical counterfactual analysis by Dutfield, imagining a world without IP rights and considering the impact of such a state of affairs on the development of some crucial medicines through recent history.

May's collection supports an argument that the IP environment crucially affects economic and cultural development both globally and within individual states, and that an understanding of its role requires consideration of a wide range of academic disciplines. As he concedes in his introduction, notwithstanding the breadth and length of the anthology, its contents are not intended to provide definitive answers. May also stresses that the entire "waterfront" is not intended to be covered. The anthology is at its strongest in its analysis of the justifications for IP in the first vol-

ume; the consideration of the impact of TRIPs in part one of volume two; the normative discussion of the right to develop versus IP in part two of volume three; and the imaginings on the reform or abolition of IP in the final part. There is however a slight overall bias in the selection of topics towards the discussion of soft IP over that of “hard” patent rights. In particular, the papers on the protection of information technology (part one of volume three) are balanced towards the role of copyright rather than the thorny questions about the patentability of software or of business methods which have recently exercised senior courts in very many jurisdictions in the global North.² Relatively less attention is given to biotechnology protection issues such as patentability of lifeforms, biopiracy, rights in traditional knowledge, genetic resources, and plant varieties, which have created substantial political debate in the global South.^{3,4} The collection is clearly not an encyclopaedia, nor realistically without further (or even fatter) volumes could it be. It does, however, meet its stated purposes of stimulating further reflections on the core debates very effectively, by introducing a broad range of concepts, and providing a road map of the issues that should be sensibly considered. Although a more concise account of the broader debates can be found in May’s 2009 book on the same subject,⁵ this anthology is a useful research tool and hopefully its price will not deter investment in it at a time of straightened budgets. ■

Notes

¹ Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” *Science* 162, no. 3859 (1968), 1243–1248.

² See for example the 2010 decision of the United States Supreme Court in *Bilski v. Kappos*, 130 S. Ct. 3218 (2010).

³ Graham Dutfield and Uma Suthersanen, *Global Intellectual Property Law* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2008), 299–355.

⁴ Daniel F. Robinson, *Confronting Biopiracy: Challenges, Cases and International Debates* (Abingdon: Earthscan, 2010).

⁵ Christopher May, *The Global Political Economy of Intellectual Property Rights*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2009).