SPECIAL ISSUE

Preface: International Relationships in the Information Age

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Communication technologies have repeatedly impacted a broad range of human relationships in ways great and small. Nowhere has this been more the case within the past decade than in relationships between governments and the governed. Social media has arguably transformed the potential for individual citizens to organize for political action; information and communication technologies have empowered private citizens to challenge official monopolies on "the truth," even as they allow governments to reach out in new ways to broader audiences than ever before. The possibilities for mobilizing social forces and affecting governance within and across nations have never before seemed as significant as they do in the modern Global Information Age.

And yet it is an age that presents possibilities as well as risks. Pro-social as well as anti-social actors and organizations have learned to use digital media for their respective purposes. We sense the possibilities of opposing official repression that decentralized communication affords, but we are also well aware that governments around the world are adept at harnessing these technologies to harass political opponents, to undermine foreign adversaries, and to misinform unwary consumers. Moreover, the consequences of unleashing new social forces are hard to predict. Facts, meanings, and identities are potentially up for grabs, and the consequences for governance locally and internationally are complex and only beginning to unfold. Many of these issues were explored at the 2011 Annual Meeting of the ISA, the theme of which was "Power, Principles and Participation in the Global Information Age." Chosen prior to the events giving rise to the Arab Spring of 2011, this call for papers turned out to be one of the more timely themes in recent years. The 2011 meeting spotlighted the changing influence of information technologies on international affairs and the way we as researchers pursue our research.

The essays collected in this Presidential Issue represent a cutting-edge effort to grapple with political realities within and across states in the face of new digital —and potentially global—information and communication technologies (ICT). They deal with new identities and power relationships (Singh) and the possibilities for democratic transition and governance (Fung, Gilman and Shkabatur; Hussain and Howard). They reveal new patterns of power and influence, as once latent coalitions find common ground and mobilize to realize their interests (Sell; Hussain and Howard). They highlight traditional bureaucracies' fumbling efforts to adapt and to benefit from new ways of packaging their messages (Cull), but also note tensions between the networked organization of the digital

world and traditional state hierarchies (Mueller, Schmidt and Kuerbis). Finally, these contributions touch on vulnerabilities and the construction of insecurities in response to new information and communication technologies (Dunn Cavelty; Mueller, Schmidt and Kuerbis).

Setting a theme that runs through many of the contributions to this Presidential Issue, JP Singh invites us to think about the radical impact that new information technologies have on the organization of power among social beings. New information has the potential, he notes, to "foster interactions that change the identity of the actors and the meanings of issues in global politics." New factual information is only the beginning; also at stake are broader patterns of assigning meaning, of understanding our interests and even understanding who we are and who may be friend or foe. As information diffuses in a networked setting, actors in communication may experience an "awakening of consciousness" that challenges parochial boundaries and fosters new communities of meaning. Singh argues that the possibility of new, territorially-unbounded communities will contribute to cosmopolitanism that may well weaken the central role of the nation state in the new networked order.

A central concern for those who live in democratic polities is to think through how—and to what extent—the Global Information Age supports citizen participation in democratic governance. It is hard to imagine a modern state in the early twenty-first century that does not reach a virtual hand out to its citizens in some way. Some analysts welcome the Internet into politics with open arms; others are skeptical of its potentially corrosive consequences for democratic deliberation. Embracing neither pole in this debate, Archon Fung, Hollie Russon Gilman, and Jennifer Shkabatur explore six models that describe the integration of global information technologies with democratic politics and processes. They take a critical look at whether and to what extent information and communication technologies have the potential to transform public participation in democratic politics; and whether these technologies will lead to digitally enabled self-organization and public action; whether these technologies improve connections between officialdom and citizens. Information and communication technologies have arguably empowered citizen watchdogs, helped to mobilize political campaigns, and opened up the possibility of crowd-sourcing techniques to monitor and respond to official actions, decisions, and policy implementation. Fung, Gilman, and Shkabatur conclude that the most promising impacts of information and communication technologies on established democracies will likely be quite incremental, involving primarily advocacy, mobilization, and monitoring of government officials.

If new information and communication technologies are likely to have incremental impacts in established democracies, their role in democratic transitions may be more radical. Muzammil Hussain and Philip Howard look at the role of information technologies in the "cascading" of popular protest movements across the Middle East and North Africa. What role did digital media have in these protests? While recognizing that transitions are complex, they observe that dictators have been deposed most rapidly where civil societies appear to be the most tech-savvy (Egypt, Tunisia), but protracted civil wars have tended to be the result where civil societies have much less access to social media. Hussain and Howard analyze various movement phases—from movement preparation to the ongoing struggles to shape civil society and political life—that continue once the immediate purpose of the protest has been accomplished. Their research suggests that digital media may well have an important role to play in political transitions. High levels of cell phone use seem to be a facilitating factor in the relative success of demands for democratic transition, while low levels of Internet use are associated with weak Arab Spring movements. In every case they examine, digital media was important in inciting a protest movement demanding greater democratic participation.

Furthermore, in the countries where civil society is most savvy, they argue that political organizations have adapted by launching media campaigns of their own.

A more limited but more clearly causal case of the use of new technologies to mobilize political action is the defeat of a specific piece of legislation to protect traditional intellectual property (IP) rights, as described in Susan Sell's article. For a century, these rights have been taken as an article of faith in the United States, largely because IP protection is favored by some of the most politically connected and economically powerful interests in the country. Sell shows us how the organizations within a countercoalition of "engineers, academics, hackers, technology companies, bloggers, consumers, activists, and Internet users" were able for the first time in history to defeat a major property rights measure supported by a phalanx of incumbent industries whose views typically have prevailed in American politics. The Stop Online Privacy Act (SOPA, introduced in the House of Representatives) and Protect Intellectual Property Act (PIPA, introduced in the Senate) were ultimately defeated by tech-savvy activists who used the latest information technologies to orchestrate advocacy, protest, and Internet-based education to stimulate and mobilize opposition to these bills. These actors framed Congress as a club of luddites deigning to control the free download of data from the Internet. Sell makes a compelling case that the Internet 2.0 made possible a noisy political movement that defeated entrenched interests in IP protection. She concludes that this is one example of the "generative properties that constitute new actors and new forms of political organization," in a fashion compatible with Singh's theory of meta-power in the information age.

Three papers deal with themes of how traditionally hierarchical and bureaucratic government authority has attempted to come to grips with the new forms of high-tech communication. Milton Mueller, Andreas Schmidt, and Brenden Kuerbis raise the issue of how the Internet itself should be governed, arguing that there may be tension between a technologically appropriate network model and a hierarchical model typical in state security matters. Here is the central dilemma for governance: private actors control (*de facto*) the Internet's technical components and the data flowing through them, yet states clearly have an interest in the security of this vast information network. Can hierarchical state security structures adapt to networked governance in modern global communications, or should we expect ongoing irreconcilable conflict? After all, as these authors say, "implementing a hierarchical regime that is truly global and effective raises profound issues of power, institutional design, and legitimacy." Networked governance seems almost inevitable, as states want to avoid reliance, for example, on a single "trust anchor" for Internet routing. The authors see no clear way for states or even clusters of states to act as a monopoly with the ability to enforce their preferred cyberspatial outcomes. The authors envision a world in which private actors continue to develop networked organizations to address cyber-security with substantial state input, while eschewing a hierarchical structure that would significantly damage the efficient operation of the system as a whole.

Clearly, states are still in the process of forming their views about appropriate governance, and there have been a range of voices trying to define the nature of the issues involved. How, for instance, have we come to understand what counts as a threat when it comes to cyber-security? Myriam Dunn Cavelty takes us on a tour of the discourse surrounding cyber-security and the national interest. Drawing from securitization theory, she argues that various actors seek to assert their view of risks and threats in order to influence the discourse and policy on cyber-security. Rapidly changing technologies constitute a frontier for meaning-making, and actors are taking the opportunity to shape understandings along this frontier. Business actors and law enforcement point to nonstate cyber-crime, while the intelligence community worries about cyber-spies; both tap theme of

lawlessness and anonymity. The military, national security, and civil-defense experts describe disruptions in critical infrastructures, nonstate cyber-terrorists, and state-controlled cyber-commands, highlighting themes of vulnerability and inevitability. Dunn Cavelty's paper thus elucidates how cyber-security is presented as a national security issue, and the discourse that gives rise to the "securitization" of informational and communication technologies. She describes a struggle over defining the nature of threats and what should be done about them.

Finally, Nicholas Cull explores the uses of the Internet and social media in US public diplomacy over time. Public diplomacy is "the conduct of foreign policy by engagement with a foreign public." Information and communication technologies have been important in this area for years, from the days of Voice of America to the present. What is new in the Global Information Age is the interactive and horizontal nature of the new technologies and their capacity to sustain "virtual communities." Cull notes that in some cases the real value of information technologies has been hampered by bureaucratic considerations and practices, especially at the State Department. Nonetheless, he argues that "the advent of Web 2.0 has fundamentally changed the operating environment of public diplomacy" by making it possible for people to get information on US policy through horizontal networks of peers rather than from industrial media sources. This is a possibility that the traditional bureaucracy is only beginning to fully realize.

The essays contained in this special issue are remarkable for their depth and breadth of engagement with issues of human relations in the Global Information Age. Of course, this Presidential Issue of ISR would not have been possible without the highly professional attention to its scholarly content at every step by JP Singh. Professor Singh recruited these top scholars, applied for special funding from the ISA for a preliminary conference at the 2012 Annual Meeting in San Diego, gave each paper detailed comments and suggestions, and shepherded the entire project through the peer-review process at ISR. Special thanks to the ISA Grants Committee, chaired by Cameron Thies, for accepting our proposal for a conference of Presidential Issue papers, and also to the ISA for generously funding it. Daniel Drezner provided detailed feedback on every paper at the ISA. Marianne Franklin, Alexandre Grigsby, Jeff Hart, and Ben Wagner participated actively in our workshop. The editors at ISR—Editors-in-Chief Jennifer Sterling-Folker and Mark A. Boyer and Managing Editors Susan Williamson and Kristy Belton—have been incredibly helpful in the major undertaking of finding reviewers and keeping track of all communications. Many anonymous referees provided constructive critiques within a short period. We are grateful for their help and pleased to offer this Presidential Issue as a forum for research and, hopefully, ongoing discussion.