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Global Governance and the Democratic Aspect of Cross-Border Communications

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Introduction

The technological intensification of the communication channels across the globe has opened up new spaces for economic and political power to unfold (Habermas, 1991). Today, new media technologies, or Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), are associated with civil liberties like freedom of expression and privacy. At the same time, these civil liberties are increasingly in competition with state sovereignty, as it concerns national security, sensitive state information and are tied to competitive trade agreements.

Although ICTs have been lauded for bringing about a “borderless, frictionless world,” major international controversies concerning the use of new media technologies in the past few years have raised concerns about governing the democratic aspect of communication channels across borders.[i] They include the Wikileaks incident, with the release of sensitive diplomatic cables by Julian Assange (2006),[ii] Hilary Clinton’s Internet freedom speech down at Washington DC which called for American companies to push back against requests for surveillance and censorship from repressive governments (2011),[iii] and the Edward Snowden disclosures about expansive surveillance by the United States’ National Security Agency (NSA) (2013). In the Middle East, there was the Egyptian Internet outage in 2011, where authorities shut down Internet cables across the country so as to stifle internal dissent hours before a planned protest against then president Hosni Mubarak.[iv] These incidents suggest how technological intensification of the communication channels has triggered the need to govern the democratic aspect of communications across borders.

This paper argues that the technological intensification of the communication channels across the globe will trigger the need for governing the democratic aspect of communications across borders.

In the first section, this paper will present a general overview of the key outcomes of new media technologies, otherwise used interchangeably with the term Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs). In the next section, it will examine the arguments in support of the view that technological intensification of the communication channels across the globe *will not* trigger the need for governing the democratic aspect of communications across borders. The penultimate section will provide counter-critiques to this view. By way of a counter-argument, I argue the number of ways that the technological intensification of the communication channels across the globe will trigger the need for governing the democratic aspect of communications across borders. The last section will then conclude by posing the question: what kind of governance is needed? To conclude, I will propose some means to govern communication channels.

Key Outcomes of New Media Technologies or ICTs

This section presents an overview of the key outcomes of new media technologies, or ICTs.

Firstly, with the advent of satellite dishes, radio waves, fiber optic cables, satellites, as well as wireless telegraphs and communications, this led to the emergence in new media technologies in forms as the television, radio and more

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recently, the Internet. Globalization has improved the pace, volume and scale of such network flows. Naturally, this has led to expanding communications infrastructures in the existing media technologies (television, film, radio, Internet).

Secondly, in the 21st century, the technological intensification of the communications channels has seen the gradual intertwining of traditional and modern forms of communication channels. For instance, by 1922, the telephone and microphone technologies were enterprisingly hitched to the radio to give meaning to the term “broadcast.” Public radio operated within invisible airwaves, hence transcending the point-to-point limitations of cable in terms of its reach and area coverage. According to Alan Chong, the term ICTs in the 21st century not only includes general IT such as computers and storage disks, but also acknowledges the intensified possibilities of computers merging with communication forms such as the telephone, modem, radio, television, video, and satellite. This rests on two ideas. Firstly, today, these intensified possibilities of ICTs have materialized in the form of audiovisual and telephone networks with computer networks. In addition, laptops, cell phones and smartphones are well equipped with multiple technological functions, enabling its users to create, access and manipulate information in innovative and creative ways. Secondly, due to the transnational ease of communications today, the structure for reporting and making news has become wider, more complex, and more accessible to other actors in addition to states and corporations. This has thereby portended to the possibilities for greater future and continued growth in ICTs.

Thirdly, the rise in new media technologies has coincided with the growth in capitalism. According to Castells, informational capitalism first gained traction in the 1970s. The quest for new commercial forms of profit corresponded with the gradual demise of the industrial age (Castells, 1996). Intensification of new media technologies has increasingly provided new avenues for commercial profit in developed as well as in developing countries.

Fourthly, as a result of the technological intensification of new media forms, there has been an increase in control of new media technologies by global media conglomerates. Global media conglomerates like AOL Time Warner and the Walt Disney Corporation in the United States, News International in Australia; Bertelsmann in Germany; Thomson in Canada; and Fininvest in Italy, have major stakes in the global media industry today.[v] Hollywood for instance continues to consolidate its foothold over the global film industry through box-office hits, and it has done so by enhancing the appeal of their films through sophisticated computer generated imagery (CGI) technologies afforded by technological intensification of new media. Global news agencies like CNN and BBC also perpetuate a particular brand of global news due to their global reach and 24-hour news broadcast. While a growing number of semi-global media corporations (Channel News Asia and CCTV) are located in the Asia-Pacific, the technological intensification of communications channels worldwide has benefited the global media corporations mostly concentrated in the West the most.[vi]

Fifthly, one of the most striking media and communication developments has been the rapid commercialization and expansion of the Internet. This has corresponded to a rise in Internet and social media platforms such as Twitter, Blogger and Facebook.[vii] Consequently, there have been more opportunities for public to make their views heard = ‘diverse messages to diverse publics.’ Due to the two-way feedback loop based on a horizontal communications pathway consisting of multiple senders, messages and receivers, the Internet serves as an ideal platform where anyone can get one’s voice heard in the public domain.

Sixthly, the saturation of information is evidenced by the advent of computer networks and broadband cables. This has led to tighter, more transnational networks that traverse time and space and hence provide people with rapid access to more abundant information. Research has shown that there is a high correlation between the volume of Internet usage and the level of information flows embedded in a given society. In one such study, statistics of global Internet users indicated that the heaviest and earliest adopters of the Internet were countries such as Finland, South Korea and the United States. These countries were regarded as more of information societies than some of the later adopters of the Internet, such as Greece, Mexico and Kenya.[viii] This point is further reinforced by the idea that the spread of national, inter-national and genuinely global information exchanges (between and within banks, corporations, governments, universities and voluntary bodies) coincides with the proliferation of tighter and more complex communication networks. The rise in technology is so pervasive that even the most rudimentary places today are suitably equipped with access to some basic technology (Connors, 1993).

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Seventhly, in a bid to promote equality of opportunities and two-way exchanges, the information media can also foster uninterrupted dialogue between communities, cultures and individuals. This has resulted in a coincidence of culture and communications. This exemplifies the role of the media as a 'double-edged sword'—to reconcile communities after civil conflict and contribute to peacebuilding. Few organisations working in conflict zones have adopted media interventions as part of their peacebuilding efforts. One example is the intellectual agency of UN, UNESCO, for instance, which assists in strengthening communication capacities by developing independent and pluralistic media and improving media access to ICTs. It has done so in particular through the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). Two IPDC supported projects in Moldova and Armenia encourages the development of independent and pluralistic media on the local and community level. UNESCO has also contributed to rebuilding media infrastructures in conflict and post-conflict areas as well as in post-disaster situations. To further the role of communications in promoting cultural progress, UNESCO's Constitution states that its objective is to work for "the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth and the free exchange of ideas and knowledge...[and] to increase the means of communication between peoples".[ix]

Other major outcomes include the transformational changes in socio-cultural landscape in modern and urban societies with the insertion of technological tools; rise in transnational state and non-state interactions; the decline in interpersonal, face-to-face contact; and the overall increase in leisure time.

Arguments for why the technological intensification of the communication channels across the globe will not trigger the need for governing the democratic aspect of communications across borders

Neo-liberalism, with its emphasis on free trade and institutions, places the market at the center of social organization (Leon, 2003). Habermas explained the public sphere as "a network for communicating information and points of view" (Habermas 1996, 360). In light of the technological intensification of the communication channels within the public sphere, neo-liberalism would hold that the physical spaces of free trade and institutions are structured on the basis of communication networks (Low and Smith, 2006). Consequently, the media has played a major role in the social organization of these markets (Castells 1996, 2004; McChesney 2007; Lull 2007; Cardoso 2006; Chester 2007).

Scholars like Blumler and Gurevitch (1995), for instance, argue that the media plays four roles: namely, surveillance of the socio-political environment; reporting of political events likely to impinge on welfare of the public; advocating plurality of social voice; and facilitating dialogue between official and informal actors. In the wake of communication channels that have evinced a role in assisting with the overthrow of regimes during the Arab Spring revolutions, these four roles of the Internet have gained greater momentum. Similarly, this concept of the Internet as an extension of a new public space has also been frequently highlighted. Habermas (1989, 1996, 2006), argued that there were three so-called "institutional criteria" which served as the preconditions for the public sphere: disregard for status, the formation of a domain of common concern, and inclusivity. The next section explores the democratic aspect of communication channels.

A central hallmark of democracy is the freedom to speak, the freedom to engage in political conversation, to discuss public issues, and to deliberate about the common good (Held, 2000; Galtung, 2000; Bellamy and Jones 2000). Ancient political thinkers have long stressed the importance of public discourse and debate to achieving politically democratic outcomes. The 4th century Athenian orator and statesman, Pericles recognized discussion among the citizens of the polis as an "indispensable preliminary" to political action. Aristotle articulated an extensive philosophical rationale for the importance of this process, noting that "the art of legislation" was impossible without reasoned dialogue and deliberation. Modern philosophers, too, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, and Edmund Burke — while diverging in their positions on how individual opinions are formulated — are unified in their views on the importance of public discourse. Rousseau deemed it essential to the formation of a "general will," while Mill outlined a philosophical rationale for something he called "government by discussion." On the other hand, Edmund Burke was convinced that political parties were important as part of the social structure, conducive to defining and helping to fulfill one's social and moral obligations. Burke emphasized governance by the state, even though he held the view that a pluralist society is necessary for man to fulfill his social commitments and obligations. He defined governance by the state as the only form of prudent rule by 'the wiser, more expert, more opulent'

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(Rawnsley, 2005: 37).

There have been varying stands on how much the state should permit differences in public opinion without fundamentally putting to risk its control over the nation-state. In spite of all these, public discourse and its democratic salience cannot be denied. It is deeply entrenched as a fundamental principle of the United States Constitution. The idea of the US sovereign state, developed under specific set of laws in the 19th century, was organized around a system of deliberative discussion. The technological intensification of communication channels today has helped to intensify the freedom to engage in public discourse (Rawnsley, 2005). Democracy, as Lewis H. Lapham put it, “flows from the capacity of its citizens to speak and think without cant, from their willingness to defend their interest, argue their case, say what they mean.” In saying that, Lapham hints at the idea that democracy is dependent on a multiplicity of voices. Hence, the common aphorism “all roads lead to Rome” holds true in democracy. While not all of the individual voices necessarily lead to democratic outcomes, the multiplicities of voices do set the precedence for a path to true democracy.

Based on the above definition of democracy, it is expected that the rise in participation of citizens in decision-making through the Internet is one of the most obvious democratic outcome of the technological intensification of communication channels (Hamelink, 1995; Castells, 2008). For this very reason, the technological intensification of the communication channels across the globe is widely assumed to bring about greater democratic implications for new media technologies and eliminate the need for governing. This is due to two reasons. Firstly, the enhanced two-way “horizontal” structure of the Internet allows for greater feedback loop between governments and the civil society. Secondly, at a global level, the Internet evens out the structural access to information, and is therefore the basis for an interactive and neo-liberal political order (Lipset, 1959; Huntington 1991; Norris 2004; Schudson 2003).

This section discusses the arguments for why the technological intensification of the communication channels will *not* trigger the need for governing the democratic aspect of communication channels across borders.

Firstly, new media technologies play an inherently socializing role in that it creates opportunities for greater cross-cultural understanding across transnational borders. This is enhanced by the role of the Internet and the relative ease of sharing information (through blogs, Facebook and Twitter websites) and connecting instantaneously with others (through multimedia applications like Instant messaging, Skype, Viber, and Whatsapp) all within the public domain. At a regional level, new media technologies play an important role in enhancing coordinating efforts between countries for common causes such as disaster relief, thereby serving to buttress national security. For instance, in response to anti-piracy incidents in the surrounding seas, particularly in the Straits of Malacca, the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) Information Sharing Centre[x] was set up in Singapore in 2006. ReCAAP has helped to facilitate communication between national agencies so as to safeguard the good order of sea-lanes.

Secondly, there is also the belief that due to media’s reach, it remains an information source that is most likely to generate public pressure for intervention in foreign conflicts. This argument holds the promise that the mass media will bring about greater global transparency and hold governments accountable by keeping them in check. For instance, citizens who see graphic footage of human suffering are then more like to pressure their governments to do something. Some have argued that the media played an important role in placing the massacres very graphically on the front pages in Europe and the US, which made it necessary for NATO to decisively intervene in the Kosovo. According to Martin Shaw, the emotive and highly critical coverage of Kurdish refugees fleeing from Saddam Hussein’s forces led to the first case of UN-legitimated humanitarian intervention. In order to shield Kurds from attacks by Saddam Hussein’s forces, there was the virtually unprecedented proposal for Kurdish safe havens. (as quoted in Robinson, 2002: 7). In yet another example, during the war in Afghanistan, efforts to brand US soldiers as credible defenders of democracy and legitimate harbingers of peace were thoroughly eroded when a soldier massacred Afghan villagers and videos of US Marine scout-snipers urinating on Taliban corpses were leaked to the media. This supports the argument of how media plays a credible role in bringing about not just transparency, but also to expose the faults of governments to ‘right their wrongs.’

Third and finally, new media technologies serve as a means for economic development and provide avenues of

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pleasure, relaxation, culture and distraction rather than information, through communications channels. Increasingly, new media technologies/ ICTs such as smart phones allow its users to engage in electronic entertainment such as videos and games, as well as the entertainment of social media. The growing prevalence of users visiting and posting on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter is a reflection of the increase in entertainment avenues afforded by the technological intensification of communication channels, and a further indication of economic affluence.

Counter-Arguments

While the intensification of communication channels has increased the potential for technologies to increase democracy through greater citizenship, at the same time, the effects of mass media has given rise to homogeneity in public opinion. As a result, liberal outcomes of democratic deliberation and participation can only significantly be operationalized through institutions and advanced by mechanisms and procedures that are specifically designed to realize such goals.

This argument holds the view that one implicit outcome of the rise in communication channels is an undesirable rise of users who are uniform in their views. As such, democratic deliberation and participation can only significantly be operationalized through institutions and advanced by mechanisms and procedures that are specifically designed to realize such goals. Even if such institutions successfully implement the mechanisms and procedures, counter-resistant/anti-democratic forces do exist, ironically as an effect of the democratic aspects of communication channels. In some studies for instance, they have also shown that in discussion forums on the Internet, the common aphorism that “empty vessels make the most noises” holds true. In one such study, discrete assertions of opinions by scattered individuals were found to predominate in an atmosphere in which the loudest and most aggressive contributors prevailed.[xi] This point can be logically extended into the realm of politics. The fact that promoters of populist and participatory schemes in broadcasting or national and local government are going through such motions to gain popular consensus for profit-making justifies their role in using the Internet for chiefly instrumental ends. The Internet has thereby come to embody an anti-democratic or a false democratic force as media institutions are increasingly serving an instrumental role in their dissemination of information.

With the Internet made free-for-all, the improved feedback of information flows has inadvertently intensified the competition between sovereign states and their society. This has triggered the need for autocratic regimes to tighten their repressive controls by governing the democratic aspects of communication channels. As Jurgen Habermas (1996: 341) writes, the “communicatively generated power” of the public sphere has come in competition with “the administrative power of office holders.” This is a view that has gained further currency in light of governments of authoritarian societies like China and Iran who are increasingly viewing the Internet as an affront to governments’ control over information.[xii] The main criticism leveled at Internet is that an increase in citizen participation will mean the greater possibility that some might covertly exploit such mediums to undermine the state. Calls to govern the democratic aspect of communications channels work as a safeguard against potential leaks of highly classified information or dissenting voices.

This justification for governments to pre-empt a potential challenge by governing the democratic aspect of communications channels is further confirmed by recent events: the dissemination of revolutionary sentiments during the Arab Spring Revolution and the release of highly classified documents through Wikileaks. The 2012 ouster of Chinese politician Bo Xilai – and the litany of public online criticisms by Chinese society calling to restrict the CCP’s power– also highlighted the potency of communication channels to provide discreet spaces for societies to challenge their authoritarian government’s existing monopoly over information.[xiii] The similarities of the public space and virtual space is highlighted by Habermas’ explanation of the ‘public sphere,’ characterized by 1) a disregard for status; 2) a domain of common concern; and 3) inclusivity.[xiv] Hence, these governments would take pre-emptive precautions to exercise an iron-grip control over information. These incidents support the view that the continued intensification of new media technologies will trigger heightened levels of control by repressive regimes.

Increasing control is being concentrated in the hands of a few major multinational corporations with multimedia companies around the globe. For this reason, there are concerns that the mass media plays a complicit role in

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generating a 'mythical vision of the world' through uniformity and standardization of the message. These MNCs include AOL Time Warner and Walt Disney in the US, have dominated the mainstream media industry. The US film production industry has been a tight-knit club effectively controlled by six or seven studios since the 1930s.[xv] Similarly, news media conglomerates like CNN and BBC news have broadcast a particular brand of news that have seemingly manufactured consent in its viewers. Similarly, fears that levels of public accountability, as well as media pluralism will consequently be reduced have also triggered the need for governing the democratic aspect of communication channels (Norris 2004; Bogart 1995; McChesney 1999).

These political or bureaucratic measures over the media may lead to intellectual sterility, or the manufacturing of public consent, and will trigger the need for governing the democratic aspect of communications channels across borders. For instance, official regulations, legal restrictions, and censorship can seriously restrict press freedom. State-controlled monopolies exert control over access and content of information of Internet service, constraining the spaces for multiple voices to surface. At the same time, controversial issues or viewpoints that could produce 'flak' are likely to be excluded from the news as they bear a costly risk for the media outlet. Institutions, corporations and governments have the power of producing far-reaching and influential 'flak', which increases their hold on the media output (Herman and Chomsky, 1994: 26). Political and economical constraints faced by the media in liberal societies can lead to the manufacturing of public consent even if journalists perceive themselves as critical and objective in selecting the news (Herman and Chomsky, 1994). According to Herman and Chomsky, there is 'a liberal and adversarial bias in the media, which serves the crucial function of setting the boundary of critical thought' (Herring and Robinson, 2003:554).

Pro-government bias on television and radio can fail to provide a level playing field during elections. This is exemplified in the election campaigns in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Mozambique. This exemplifies how institutionalized communication can be used to manipulate opinion, to give information an official aspect, to create a monopoly in the sources of information, and to abuse the principles of 'secrecy' or 'security' by concealing facts.

Revelations by Edward Snowden of mass surveillance of the Internet by the US National Security Agency have heightened criticisms of the US and weakened its moral high ground. ICANN, the US-funded and California-based Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, controls a core function of the Internet. In recent times, the increased calls for the IANA functions to be 'globalized,' reflect how continued technological intensification of communication channels have coincided with the monopolization of communication by the US. In recent times, public confidence in the US has gradually eroded and hence this will trigger the need for governing the democratic aspect of communications channels.

Many scholars have researched on the potential impact of the Internet on democracy and social progress and found that this positive correlation is contingent upon practical issues that still need ameliorating. These include: closure of the digital/literacy divide (political freedom), which might be further reinforced by mass media; as well as access to online political resources, basic information about jobs, educational opportunities, news, and social networks (accessibility). Today, many poorer populations in large swathes of Sub-Saharan Africa, South-East Asia, and Latin America continue to be afflicted by low levels of political freedom and accessibility, thus indicating the limited role of the media in influencing positive political outcomes (Norris, 2001). The imbalance in news circulation, the one-way flow of messages and ideas, is a common concern of all countries and goes to show how the technological intensification of communication channels has triggered the need for governing the democratic aspect of communications channels.

The growth of transnational networks is readily evident in the growth and spread of transnational NGOs. The increased participation by more people in communication activities should trigger the need for some form of governance of the communication process and expansion of multidirectional information flows — up, down and across — from a multitude of sources.

Commercial interests and concerns in information, entertainment and culture, as organized today in many parts of the world, provide productive links with the audience as interpreters of its tastes and interests. This has triggered the need for governing the integration between commercialism with broad social and cultural goals and the need to

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curtail extreme adverse effects.

The benefits of the information revolution have been fully enjoyed by only a small proportion of the world's population and that gap between those who are rich and poor with respect to their access to information is huge. This points to the digital divide in information and communications. For example, while North America and Western Europe cornered, respectively, 43.5 and 28.3 percent of the world information technology market in 1995, the comparable figures for Latin America on the one hand and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa on the other were 2.0 and 2.6 percent. Put even more starkly, while in 1995 the numbers of personal computers per one thousand were 1.6 and 10.0, the comparable figures for those in newly industrialized economies (NIEs) and high-income economies were 114.8 and 199.3 (McChesney, 2008). Further democratization of communication channels poses a serious problem to the digital divide, as failure to keep and technological advances apace with social/economic development in developing countries can only mean an increasing dehumanization and alienation between people.

The 9/11 attacks dominated global media new headlines as it unfolded. The choice to attack the World Trade Centers and kill thousands of citizens was calculated not only a tremendous amount of damage to the American and international economy, but also to broadcast spectacular images of the US in ruins in news channels across the globe. The cultural symbolism of the towers was also of great significance to the terrorists. As Hoffman (2008) explained, "without the media's coverage, the act's impact is arguably wasted, remaining narrowly confined to the immediate victim(s) of the attack, rather than reaching the wider 'target audience' at whom the terrorists' violence is actually aimed." Today, society faces the potent threat of extremist Islamic terrorist groups who are increasingly using the Internet as a medium to propagate ideas of Holy war. It was reported that the Internet had been used to send coded instructions from Bin Laden's headquarters in Afghanistan to agents in his al Qaeda network in the field.[xvi] In the wake of the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings, it was revealed that the perpetrators were self-radicalized terrorists who relied on the Internet to assemble pressure cooker bombs. Today, with the range of Internet Web sites, chat rooms and virtual lectures have led dissenters to find their ways surreptitiously around government censorship.[xvii]

Hence, while the media plays a complicit role in creating a 'spectacle' to reinforce the terrorists' message, the Internet is increasingly playing an indirect role in facilitating the rise of self-radicalized extremists. Therefore, faced with the potent challenge of self-radicalization and the spread of violent Islamic radicalization, this has triggered the need for governing the democratic aspect of communication channels.

With the rise of communications channels, critics have argued that cyber-warfare is increasingly a transnational challenge of all governments as it is fought in virtual space and involves covertly attacking the enemy's homeland infrastructure without first having to defeat its land, sea, and air forces in conventional military engagements. In the 21st century the spread of global computer viruses have evidenced the extent of cyber-threats (software conflicts and computer bugs) in exploiting the structural vulnerabilities and lead to system crashes and wipe out sensitive government systems.[xviii] and this has triggered a need for governing the democratic aspects of communication channels across borders.

Media sometimes plays a functional role by operating in a one-way direction. The use of the media as a propaganda tool is common in both autocratic and democratic societies as well. Herman and Chomsky (1994:2) explained that the deregulation of the media market, in combination with the high costs of financing a media company limits the media ownership, and leads to an increase in media concentration. Additionally, the quest for profit opens the door for banks and investors to buy large shares of media enterprises. As a consequence, corporations and banks' strong ties to the media ensure that information contradicting their interests is less likely to be included in the news output. Mass media can succeed in transmitting the values and norms fostered by the dominant group to a public which, in a large measure, fails to find in them any reflection of its own vital concerns and aspirations. For this reason, this has triggered the need for governing the democratic aspect of communications across borders.

Conclusion: What kind of governance is needed?

In conclusion, this paper has argued that the technological intensification of the communication channels across the

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globe will trigger the need for governing the democratic aspect of communications across borders. In face of the need for governance, this section attempts to propose some examples of legitimate forms of governance particularly in the face of credible threats in the 21st century.

Firstly, in the wake of 9/11 and the rise of violent religious fundamentalism, the Internet has served as a platform for facilitating communication by violent and oppressive groups. The recruiting, raising money and spreading of propaganda by such groups like Al Qaeda is a serious transnational issue for governments and therefore should be disrupted. To this end, it is crucial to take online measures to counter the cyber activities of terrorists. Countries should have the political will to install effective cyber terrorism measures, which can include intelligence tracking of their activities on online forums, following their conversations and activities on social media, preventing the spread of radicalizing materials from specific websites. In addition to that, enacting criminal laws at national level to punish the ones using the Internet to provoke the public, recruit and train, and propagandize seditious material. Governments should also integrate a soft approach to counter the threat of cyber terrorism, engaging and educating the public about safe use of Internet.

To this end, in the field of policy making, there should be a strong community of epistemic and practitioners, namely, academicians and policy practitioners who apply a constructivist analysis to international communications. The use of terms such as information “warfare” and “electronic Pearl Harbor” convey a special meaning: that which is digital by nature but which has, nonetheless, physical consequences comparable to those of conventional war. Constructivist analysis stress the function and impact of language and cultural symbols, and can therefore contribute to revealing and understanding the significance of such rhetoric and symbolic actions so as to design policies that will preempt cyber attacks and better educate individuals in their usage of the virtual spaces.

Secondly, the role of news media as gatekeepers of information holds true to this day, in spite of the general proliferation of news media channels and the abundance of information flows worldwide. Governments should provide assistance to media organs by being transparent about giving the political context and background of any political or terrorism-related act or story at their discretion, with the ultimate goal of correctly informing the public. To this end, a media companies should form a close partnership with their governments so that they are better informing the public, whether in refuting speculation, or in the case of terrorism, in refuting their world-views or in depriving them of the publicity they need.

Thirdly, governments should exercise control over information by using “soft” methods and by weakening the link between information flows and political change (Lord, 2006: 93). In the case of Singapore, the government has been able to govern the democratic aspect of communications across borders by tying its control of information to the overall narrative of security and survival, as well as its economic and political success. However, political, economic and social realities must be taken fully into account, in the case of authoritarian nations. No single form of governing communications across borders could be devised that could be introduced in developed and developing, or in capitalist and socialist countries.

Fourthly, in developing countries that lack proper media laws or institutions of law, this can lead to self-help and cooperative (or forced) efforts among media competitors in the field. In these countries where governments lack the political willingness, self-regulatory bodies should operate as a substitute for a governing body to hold information accountable.

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[i] The proliferation of new media technologies/ICTs have led to a widespread discounting of the capacity of the state to maintain control over the flow of images and information within its borders. States, as a consequence, react.

[ii] See <http://www.theguardian.com/media/wikileaks>. See also, Beckett and Ball, "Wikileaks: News in the Networked Era," Polity Press: 2002.

[iii] See <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/POLITICS/02/15/clinton.internet/>

[iv] See http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/27/egypt-internet-goes-down-_n_815156.html

[v] See <http://www.forbes.com/sites/vannale/2014/05/07/global-2000-the-worlds-largest-media-companies-of-2014/>

[vi] See "Media Concentration in the U. S. and European Union: A Comparative Analysis", http://www.cem.ulaval.ca/pdf/albarran_mierzejewska.pdf.

[vii] Blogs, for instance, which stand for web-logs, are written commentaries or online diaries. Blogs provide written remarks and observations on a person's life or on specific subjects. Primarily textual, blogs rose to prominence in the mid-1990s as rudimentary e(lectronic) (maga)zines. They have now proliferated enormously and are now often an important alternative media format for expression in authoritarian countries. The growth of the number of blogs to in excess of 150 million worldwide has largely been facilitated by the provision of free blog software by Google (Blogger.com) and the open source Word Press Foundation.

F. Wenxin, 'A Twitter knockoff has China talking', Bloomberg Business Week, 17 February 2011, at http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/11_09b4217039139980.htm, accessed 20 June 2011.

[viii] As quoted in See Orion A. Lewis (2013). "Net Inclusion: New Media's Impact on Deliberative Politics in China", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 43, No. 4, pp. 678-708.

[ix] See <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/moscow/communication-information/freedom-of-expression/>.

[x] See <http://www.recaap.org/>

[xi] See Orion A. Lewis (2013). "Net Inclusion: New Media's Impact on Deliberative Politics in China", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 43, No. 4, pp. 678-708.

[xii] See <http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2013/04/economist-explains-how-china-censors-internet>.

[xiii] See Nicholas Kristof's article on 'A Body, a Scandal and China,' *The New York Times*, April 21st, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/22/opinion/sunday/kristof-a-body-a-scandal-and-china.html?_r=0

[xiv] J Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois*

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Society, Cambridge: Polity, 1989, pp 36–37.

S Rizzo, 'The promise of cell phones: from people power to technological nanny', *Convergence*, 14, 2008, pp 135–143.

C Shirky, 'The political power of social media', *Foreign Affairs*, 90(1), 2010, pp 28–41; and Howard, *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*.

[xv] This remains the case; the six largest US firms accounted for over 90 per cent of US theater revenues in 1997. All but sixteen of Hollywood's 148 widely distributed films in 1997 were produced by these six firms, and many of those sixteen were produced by companies that had distribution deals with one of the six majors.

[xvi] See the 9/11 Commission Report, <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>.

[xvii] See Michael Dobbs, 'Online Agitators Breaching Barriers in Mideast', *Washington Post*, October 24, 2002, pp. A10

See also, George Packer, 'When Here Sees There', *New York Times Magazine*, April 21, 2002, pp. 13

See Joseph S. Nye Jr. and William A. Owens, 'Americas Information Edge', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75 March/April 1996, pp. 20-36; Richard Rosecrance, 'The Rise of the Virtual State', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75 Jul/Aug 1996, pp. 45-61; Ryan Henry and C. Edward Peartree (eds.), *The Information Revolution and International Security* (Washington DC: CSIS Press, 1998); Martin Libicki, 'Information War, Information Peace', *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 51, Spring 1998, pp. 411-28.

[xviii] The ILOVEYOU virus, for instance was a computer worm that attacked tens of millions of Windows personal computers on and after 5 May 2000. It started spreading as an email message with the subject line "ILOVEYOU" and the attachment "LOVE-LETTER-FOR-YOU.txt.vbs". The latter file extension (in this case, 'VBS' – a type of interpreted file) was most often hidden by default on Windows computers of the time, leading unwitting users to think it was a normal text file. The worm did damage on the local machine, overwriting image files, and sent a copy of itself to all addresses in the Windows Address Book used by Microsoft Outlook. The outbreak was later estimated to have caused US \$5.5-8.7 billion in damages worldwide, and estimated to cost the US \$15 billion to remove the worm. Within ten days, over fifty million infections had been reported, and it is estimated that 10% of internet-connected computers in the world had been affected. To protect themselves, The Pentagon, CIA, the British Parliament and most large corporations decided to completely shut down their mail systems. This virus affected over 45 million computers and was one of the world's most dangerous computer related disasters.

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