

Proposal for a Pre-ISA Workshop on

International Relations in the Information Age

Saturday, March 31, 2012

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Abstract and Introduction

The proposed workshop will bring together well-known scholars to present papers being prepared for the 2012 ISA Convention Theme "Power, Principles, and Participation: International Studies in the Global Information Age." The workshop will provide an opportunity to generate discussion on the new theoretical, empirical, and methodological developments. After undergoing double-blind peer review, the papers will be published in the *International Studies Review* Presidential issue for March 2013. An extended workshop is necessary to analyze contributions in depth and provide feedback to authors in order to ensure rigor and provide coherence.

Each of the contributors to the workshop was chosen to represent both an important theoretical tradition in international relations and an empirical issue-area of concern. Collectively, the authors represent realist, liberal, interpretative, sociological, historical, and critical traditions. Their methods vary from ethnographic to quantitative. Issues-areas include security, global political economy, human rights, cultural identity and diversity, and international development. The papers also cut across many enduring themes in international relations and politics such as democracy, diplomacy, governance, sovereignty, and power. Furthermore, in attending to the technologies of the information age, they include everything from old-fashioned telegraph and telecommunications networks, to the present day of Web 2.0, cloud computing, and social media.

Proposed Contribution

The most important contribution the workshop contributors will be to add to our theoretical understanding of the impact of information technologies in what we believe to be the third wave of scholarship on these issues. In the first wave, lasting until the early 1990s, scholars mentioned technologies in their perspectives, but they remained under theorized and under explored. The role of technologies in global politics was understood in an instrumental fashion, either enhancing the power of international actors, or constraining the power of others. Gilpin's (1962 & 1981) research is illustrative of the former, while Marxian and radical scholarship has made the latter point (Cox 1987). Scholars such as James Rosenau (1990) paved the way for a new generation of scholarship on information technologies underscoring the effects of technology in making for a polycentric and turbulent world. Nevertheless, even Rosenau's scholarship in the late 1980s and early 1990s on the issue of information technologies made many bold pronouncements without quite specifying the conditions or the evidence for the claims.

The second wave of scholarship on information technologies and global politics, roughly until the middle part of the last decade, began to theorize the effects of these technologies

carefully while also attending in depth to particular issue-areas. Thus, all the various paradigms in international relations could claim scholarly works that spoke to the assumptions of that tradition. Neo-realists argued that information technologies within the perspective of national power (Rosecrance 1996) and that global rules governing these technologies could also be explained from the perspective of relative state powers in the international system (Krasner 1991). Similar straightforward applications of liberal international relations theory brought in perspectives dealing with multiple actors and international cooperation fostered through global institutions (Zacher 1996; Keohane and Nye 1998). Critical theory perspectives often showed how information technologies helped to delay the crisis of capitalism, while deepening its instruments of exploitation through production and consumption (Comor 2004 & Henwood 2004).

Building upon these early second wave perspectives, scholars soon began to cross-fertilize various paradigms to argue variously that information and communication technologies were not just mere instruments to constrain or expand the power capabilities of global actors, be they nation-states or classes, but that they also provided a way to understand major transformations in global politics (what Gilpin at one time called changes *of* the system rather than *in* the system) and also that global politics itself could be understood from a communication perspective. For example, Deibert (1997) combined Harold Innis and Marshal McLuhan's medium theory with international relations theorizing to show how world orders had evolved along as communication technologies changed from parchment, to printing, to the current hypermedia. Rosenau and Singh (2002) brought together various first wave and second wave scholars to analyze the role of information technologies in global politics to provide various sorts of theoretical syntheses and also demonstrate the changing and transformative patterns in power and governance.

In the last decade, information technologies have received close scrutiny; scholars studying these issues can no longer get away by mentioning these technologies in passing as the first wave scholars did. The establishment and growth of the international communication section with the ISA is also demonstrative of this trend. Most foundations and endowments now have set up programs to encourage scholarship and research, usually interdisciplinary, to explore the role of information technologies in our midst. The preferred term at the U.S. National Science Foundation is 'cyber-infrastructure' to highlight the convergence of computational and pipeline capabilities.

The 2012 ISA theme reflects the maturity of information age issues within the study of global politics, but it is also emblematic of the recently begun third wave of scholarship on these issues that has both expanded as well as deepened these enquiries. The expansion has come from showing the relation between just about every issue-area within international relations and these technologies. For example, while only a few theorists who imagined the links between security, or commerce, and information technologies in the first wave, it has now become impossible to speak of these issues without some reference to these technologies (Buzan and Hensen 2009; Singh 2008). The deepening has come from the rigor and the multiple methods being used to demonstrate these results. Therefore, subjects such as Internet governance have emerged as a field of study

in their own right (deNardis 2009; Mueller 2010). Multiple methods from ethnographies (Fylverbom 2011) to quantitative designs (Milner 2006) have been employed to examine the issues. Simmons (2011) argued in her presidential address that the Internet search engines themselves suggest new forms of enquiry and questions for scholars to examine.

Workshop focus and plan

As noted above, the proposed workshop will bring together scholars to push the boundaries of this third wave of scholarship to present state-of-the-art theoretical, methodological, and empirical essays. These essays will build upon and add value to scholarship in their areas of enquiry, while opening opportunities for future scholars by showing methodologically how to deal with the vast amounts of qualitative and quantitative data/information available to analyze the scope of their enquiries. The essays will, therefore, attend to their chosen set of theoretical, methodological, and empirical concerns underlying international studies in the information age.

The workshop plan will be simple. Participants who register for the workshop will be sent the essays in advance by March 1, 2011. All the contributors will also act as discussant for at least two other papers. We will then spend 45 minutes on each paper. As everyone would have been expected to read the paper in advance, we will begin each session with short critiques from the discussants (10 minutes each), which will then allow up to 25 minutes of discussion for each paper. Beth Simmons and Daniel Drezner will provide overall critiques for the entire project.

Contributions

The individual contributions from the authors are summarized below:

Paper 1: "Information Technologies, Metapower & the Transformations in Global Politics." J.P. Singh, Georgetown University

This essay will provide an overview of the current intellectual landscape of information technologies and global politics to argue that the transformational impact of these technologies cannot be ascertained through a summation of capabilities and constraints of global actors. The concept of metapower captures a new and transformational understanding of power to account for the meanings that arise for global politics from technological interactions. Power as usual is about strategy and constraints once we know what we want. Power, in these accounts, is an instrument or a resource to get others to go along with predefined and commonly understood goals. Metapower captures the transformative understandings of the meaning of security, global economy, and human rights. Both descriptive and content analysis will be provided to illustrate the new meanings of issue-areas and the identity actors themselves in global politics.

Paper 2: From Cyber-Bombs to Cyber-Fallout: Virtual (In-)security Logics and Real World Consequences. Myriam Dunn Cavelty, ETH, Zurich

Information has always been a significant aspect of power, diplomacy and armed conflict. Recently, however, the importance of information as a factor in political matters has spectacularly increased due to the triumphant proliferation of information and communication technology (ICT) into all aspects of life. The ability to master the generation, management, use and also manipulation of information with the help of these technologies has become a much-desired power resource in international relations. But where there is opportunity, there is threat. The *cyberthreat* story is a story initially shaped and told by American security professionals. This paper presents the results of a content analysis of selected US and European cyber-policy documents in order to a) describe and make inferences about the characteristics of

the communication elements, mainly the channel, the message and the recipient and b) make inferences about the consequences of this type of communication. In particular, there seems to be a steady drumbeat of alarmist rhetoric about the potential for virtual catastrophe, which, though lacking clear evidence of a real threat that could be verified by the public, aims to increase federal spending on cybersecurity and calls for stricter regulation of the Internet.

Paper 3: Revising Theories of International Politics in the Information Age

Jeff Hart, Indiana University

How should the introduction of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in recent decades be reflected in reformulated theories of international politics? This paper reviews the efforts of a variety of IR scholars to accomplish this task. The concept of power is central to realist and neo-realist approaches, several re-conceptualizations of that concept have been proposed. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these proposals? In addition, several authors have commented on the impact of ICTs on the world economy, focusing particularly on the acceleration of the pace of globalization. How can this be reconciled with the focus on regime change as the primary enabling factor for globalization in other work on international political economy?

Paper 4: Everything Old is New Again: Intellectual Property and Competitiveness

Susan K. Sell, George Washington University

The Obama administration has resuscitated the “competitiveness” and “jobs” discourse of the 1980s to justify imposing ever-higher standards of intellectual property protection abroad. This time the target is China instead of Japan. Examining the merits of these claims and the empirical basis for U.S. foreign economic policy is crucial because the policies we push today will have a lasting effect of information technology, innovation, and economic performance. If only backward-looking stakeholders disproportionately influence American policy, future generations will pay a high price in terms of missed opportunities and misguided constraints. By focusing on the short-term, the U.S. may promote policies that ultimately will be damaging to American interests in the long run.

Paper 5: Internet Governance, Networks and Networked Governance in International Relations. Milton Mueller, Syracuse University, and Andreas Schmidt, Technology University of Delft

This paper critically examines the literature on networks and network organizations in international relations. It argues that three very distinct things have become conflated and confused in much of the literature: 1) mathematical techniques for *network analysis*, 2) the concept of the *network form of organization*, and 3) the concept of *policy networks*. The paper advances a set of conceptual distinctions intended to clarify the relationships among these concepts and shows why it is important and methodologically useful to keep them distinct. It then applies these concepts to show how the three approaches to “networks” can illuminate two concrete issues in internet governance: 1) the battle over the regulation of peer-to-peer file sharing protocols (which encompasses both copyright protection and network management issues); and 2) the discourse on cyber-security, and the role of peer production and networked governance in supplying a secure internet. It concludes by making a case that international relations scholars badly need a more robust and well-developed concept of networked governance to make sense of Internet governance.

Paper 6: Digital Media and the Arab Spring. Philip N. Howard, University of Washington

It has been 15 years since the last “wave” of democratization. Between 1989 and 1995, many remnants of the Soviet Union and failed authoritarian regimes in other parts of the world turned themselves into variously functional electoral democracies. By 2010, roughly three in every five states held a democratic form. As a region, North Africa and the Middle East was noticeably devoid of popular democracy movements—until the early months of 2011. Between January and April 2011 public demand for political reform cascaded from Tunis to Cairo, Sanaa, Amman and Manama. Democratization movements had

existed long before the technologies like mobile phones and the Internet came to these countries. But with these technologies, people sharing an interest in democracy built extensive networks. Looking back at events in early 2011, what concrete things can we say about the role of digital media in political uprisings and democratization during the Arab Spring? What do the events of the Arab Spring reveal about the contemporary narrative of democratization? What implications do the events of the Arab Spring have for our understanding of how democratization actually works today?

Paper 7: Technological Interventions in Politics: Mechanisms and Models. Archon Fung, Hollie Russon-Gilman, Jennifer Shkabatur, Harvard University

Will information and communication technologies improve the quality of democratic politics? Your answer to this question seems to depend upon your starting point. Many of those who approach this question as technologists are quite optimistic about the prospects for technological intervention. By contrast, many political scientists who have begun to study this question — such as Matthew Hindman, and Schlozman, Verba, & Brady, are attentive to the inequalities of online participation and so pessimistic. In this paper we offer several models and mechanisms of how technological interventions affect politics. Based on a comparative study of technological platforms in several countries, we argue that technology can improve the quality of democratic politics and governance through three mechanisms: truth based-advocacy, mobilization, and crowd-sourced social monitoring.

Paper 8: Waiting For Public Diplomacy 2.0: the digital dawn in public and cultural diplomacy. Nicholas Cull, University of Southern California

This paper will examine the extent to which the new media have penetrated into the realm of public diplomacy (here defined as an actor's conducting foreign policy by engaging a foreign public) and its sub-field cultural diplomacy, specifically I will examine the extent to which a new era of public diplomacy — public diplomacy 2.0 — has arrived. After tracking experiments with ICT among key actors including the US, UK and Israel I will show that despite admirable experiments the nation state 'end' of public diplomacy has proven remarkably tech averse. There are many cases of foreign ministries negating the time advantage of ICT by imposing the same clearance requirements on statements that they required in the era of the Morse code telegraph. The core of my argument will be that nation states have generally failed to exploit the interactive dimension of Web 2.0, with its ability to connect the public and the actor in new ways, but rather have tended to use ICT as another mechanism for 'broadcasting'. In a case study of Twitter within the US Department of State, I will demonstrate a significant disinclination to 'follow' anyone other than other American techies, and in most cases to follow anyone at all. This will be set against an argument about the remaining potential of web 2.0 technology in public diplomacy and specifically its potential as a mechanism of virtual exchange, collaborative creativity and real-time listening, some of which are being realised in the NGO sector.

Conclusion

The main deliverables from this project will be:

- A peer-reviewed issue of the ISA-owned journal *International Studies Review*
- Preparation of papers, circulated in advance, and workshop at the 2012 Annual ISA Convention.

**Proposed Budget for a Pre-ISA Workshop on
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Room rental and Audio Visual

Room Rental	200
LCD Projector	295
Flip Charts	45
Power Strip	25
Wired Internet for a laptop*	200
Skype costs for two hours	20
Sub-total	785

Participant costs

Hotel costs: 11x225	2475
per diems (75x11)	825
sub-total	3300

Meals/coffee

One coffee breaks (for 25 participants)	300
Lunch (off site for 25 participants**)	700
Sub-total	1000

TOTAL 5085

NOTES:

*internet needed to Skype in remote participation for Myriam Dunn Cavelty

**we will allow another 15 people to register for the workshop in order to ensure outreach