

On the Mechanism of the Internet's Impacts on International Politics

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Abstract: The Internet expands the field for international politics. It unveils its inner operational logic by exerting its influence on international politics. The Internet, by either guiding or negating the conducts of actors through its own unique innate quality, forces these actors to obey its inherent laws so as to better maintain their own interests. Firstly, this paper attempts to reveal, through level analysis, how the Internet made an impact on international politics, namely by the route of the individual, state and international system. Secondly, taking state interest, power and security as the core of Internet's action on international politics, it demonstrates that there is no absolute Internet freedom and that the interests and security of the state come before all. The third part of the paper illustrates the catalytical, synchronical and constructional role of the Internet in promoting the transition of international structure. As an information medium, the Internet helps promote changes in international politics. As an advanced technology, it helps international politics constantly identify itself with the development of the times. The all-inclusive interactive communication following the advent of microblogs and Social Networking Services (SNS) helps provide conditions in which international society is evolving itself into a world society in the world of Internet.

Keywords: Internet, individual, state sovereignty, state security, the international system

1. Proposition and Literature Review

Since the day it was born, the Internet has had a very extensive impact on international relations. Such impacts are most profound in the most critical issues that affect international dynamics: national interests, national power and national security. This

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paper believes exploring and mapping out the mechanism behind such impacts are valuable for two main reasons.

Firstly, a mapped out mechanism could be a strong breaking point to better understand the Internet's potential strength. The extensive and intensive impact of the Internet, as has been demonstrated in its application, is an external reflection of its internal mechanism. When we try to figure out other potential the Internet might have in the future, it is both the Internet as we see it and the mechanism behind it that we base our analysis and judgments on, as the mechanism by its very nature holds the key to as why the Internet has had an extensive impact on international relations in the past, or what future impact there might be.

Secondly, a mapped out mechanism of impact will make theories and studies of international politics more time relevant, and will facilitate rational decision making and better comprehension of the Internet's political connotation for the state. Globalization is one of the major concerns of international politics today while the Internet is one of its salient manifestations. Non-traditional security issues, non-state actors and clashes between civilizations are all areas where the Internet constitutes a key element; hence it is never a topic to be disregarded in the studies of how the times impact international politics. Studies of the mechanism of impact should not only address the impacts of the Internet and ask how should the state respond to them, but also ask how the Internet should be perceived so as to understand how international politics has been shaped by its time via the Internet.

Based on these two reasons, I venture to look into the mechanism of how the Internet impacts international politics by focusing on processes and effects.

The literature reviewed for this paper, selected via the Analytic Hierarchy Process, was categorized into three types.

1. Literature about the Internet and individuals, from the areas of psychology, sociology and the study of ethics. In *Creating Second Lives: Community, Identity and Spatiality as Constructions of the Virtual*, the authors elaborated on the features of individuals in the world of the Internet.¹ In "IT for a Better Future: How to Integrate Ethics, Politics and Innovation," the author identified the consequences of IT technology interacting with the society.² In "Information and Political Engagement in America" which focuses more on an individual Level, the author use data analysis to demonstrate that in political engagement, information has more cognitive functions than merely being a tool.³

2. Literature about the Internet and states, looking into issues of sovereignty and national security in an era of globalization. *Networks and States* identified four realms of Internet governance: intellectual property rights, Internet security, content

1 Astrid Ensslin and Eben Muse, eds., *Creating Second Lives: Community, Identity and Spatiality as Constructions of the Virtual*, New York and London: Routledge Press, 2011.

2 Bernd Carsten Stahl, "IT for a Better Future: How to Integrate Ethics, Politics and Innovation," *Journal of Information, Communication & Ethics in Society*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (September 2011), pp. 140-156.

3 Bruce Bimber, "Information and Political Engagement in America: The Search for Effects of Information Technology at the Individual Level," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (March 2001), pp. 53-67.

regulation and critical Internet resources.⁴ “Social Media and Mobilization to Offline Demonstrations: Transcending Participatory Divides?” examines how the use of social media affects participation in offline demonstrations.⁵ In-depth analysis was also seen in the paper “National Security Interests in the Age of the Internet” by Chinese scholar Tang Kechao.⁶

3. Concerning the relations between the Internet and the international system, the analysis is mainly focused on national strength from the perspective of realism. Among the literature in English, *Mobile Communication and Society: A Global Perspective* probed into the relations between communication and development, as well as the probabilities of transforming the international structure.⁷ The earlier and representative cases in China include “Globalization in the Age of the Internet: Origin and Economic Characteristics” by Yan Xianjun, as well as “The Impact of Internet on Contemporary International Politics” by Cai Cuihong.⁸

Comparing the research on the Internet and international politics in both the Chinese and international context, it could be observed that the studies in the international arena focus more on the quantitative analysis concerning some specific effects of the Internet. Meanwhile, related research in China pursues two approaches. Firstly, some research attempts to analyze the effects of the Internet from the view of its features and characteristics. Secondly, other research starts from one particular field or perspective and study the specific effect of Internet in it. The first approach makes it easier to establish the connection between the Internet and other factors. However, the judgment and conclusion of the effect of Internet is consequently based on its own features, lacking elaboration on the underlying logic and the whole procedure. It would not be feasible to have a theoretical presentation of the in-depth significance of the Internet towards international politics, as the first approach is short of research on the effect mechanism. The second approach, by comparison, aims at detailed analysis on one particular topic, rather than offering a general perspective. In order to have a general picture of the effect mechanism of Internet on international politics, it is necessary to analyze comprehensively the impact of Internet on the multiple levels of the international political system. With this approach, we should be able to unveil the influencing mechanism of the Internet on the overall situation of international politics, rather than on certain fields with international political impact.

4 Milton L. Mueller, *Networks and States*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010.

5 Bernard Enjolras, Kari Steen-Johnsen and Dag Wollebæk, “Social Media and Mobilization to Offline Demonstrations: Transcending Participatory Divides?” *New Media & Society*, November 26, 2012.

6 Tang Kechao, “National Security Interests in the Age of the Internet,” *Contemporary International Relations*, No. 6 (2008), pp. 59-62 (唐克超:《网络时代的国家安全利益分析》,载《现代国际关系》,2008年第6期,第59-62页)。

7 Manuel Castells and Mireia Fernández-Ardevol, eds., *Mobile Communication and Society: A Global Perspective (Information Revolution and Global Politics)*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009.

8 Yan Xianjun, “Globalization in the Age of the Internet: Origin and Economic Characteristics,” *World Economics and Politics*, No. 4 (2003), pp. 43-48 (鄢显俊:《互联网时代的全球化:缘起及经济特征》,载《世界经济与政治》,2003年第4期,第43-48页); Cai Cuihong, “The Impact of Internet on Contemporary International Politics,” *World Economics and Politics*, No. 9 (2001), pp. 24-27 (蔡翠红:《试论网络对当代国际政治的影响》,载《世界经济与政治》,2001年第9期,第24-27页)。

2. The Path of the Internet's Impact on International Politics: the Individuals, the State and the International System

The Internet is exerting its impact on international politics in its own unique pattern. Compared with the individual actors that exist universally, the Internet is a technical entity, a virtual platform of communication and exchanges that is convenient and accessible. Nevertheless, the Internet has permeated into each actor in its own way, as one of the independent variables in international politics. With its own inherent rules, the Internet either guides or denies the behaviors of these actors and forces them to obey its inherent rules so as to better safeguard its own interests. Such an impact of the Internet on the actors of international politics is definitely projected onto interactions among them. That is to say, it impacts the frequency and scope of interaction and increases the means of interaction. By exerting impacts on the "interior" and "exterior" of these actors, the Internet therefore successfully impacts international politics. To put it generally, the Internet is an independent variable, while the intermediate variable refers to the actors of international politics and the dependent variable is the consequences of the Internet's impact on international politics. The path of Internet's impact on international politics will be elaborated in the following three levels.

2.1 The Individual Level

The individual level is mainly composed of three factors: human nature, organizational behaviors and characteristic behaviors, which constitute the linkage among individual perception, judgment and behavior. The Internet's impact on individuals is displayed by the corresponding changes of these three factors.

2.1.1 Human Nature

Human nature is the most fundamental hypothesis of the Internet's impact on international politics. It consists of the cognitive factor, the psychological factor and the physical factor.⁹ Cognitively speaking, rather than valuing the authority of information, the Internet demises it and fragments the information, so that it is difficult to achieve a unanimous cognition of people. On the other hand, as it is convenient to have access to information via the Internet, it tends to be easier than before for the incorrect information to arouse the compassion of the general public. People are attracted by information that could trigger their interest, leaving the informative pieces unattended. Psychologically speaking, individuals are empowered by the Internet to communicate while staying indoors, thus making them bolder, more self-centered and anxious to share all kinds of information. When an individual becomes isolated, his or her thinking tends to break away from authority. However, isolated individuals crave the attention and acknowledgement of the general public. Such a contradiction makes it

9 John T. Rourke, *International Politics on the World Stage* (9th Edition), translated by Song Wei et al., Beijing: Peking University Press, 2005, p. 131 ([美] 约翰·罗尔克编著:《世界舞台上的国际政治》(第九版), 宋伟等译, 北京: 北京大学出版社 2005 年版, 第 131 页).

easier for rumors to spread as well as to die out. Cyber space could also provide access to vent senses of humiliation, decadence and despair. Yet does the Internet truly play a constructive role for these physical factors in individuals? It depends on whether the government can pay attention to such negative feelings online and deal with them in reality. Anti-government forces will also spot such feeling as well. Sometimes such forces state their opinions or further provoke, with the hope that these negative physical factors might evolve into destructive actions in real life.

2.1.2 Organizational Actions

The Internet exerts influence onto organizational behaviors by impacting the behaviors of individuals and group decision-making.¹⁰ Firstly, anonymity and equality are the features of individual behavior on the Internet. It is sometimes difficult to determine the stance of certain speech and therefore more difficult to determine its real purpose. The same applies to association management. Once an association in real life transforms into an online one, it would mean waving goodbye to the law that applies to association management in real life, as online associations do not require registration. Secondly, the behaviors of online group decision-making reinforce the contingency of collective behaviors and the restriction on government decision-making. By transforming the way in which individuals form groups (instantly or universally), the Internet grants more contingency to the logic of collective behaviors. Meanwhile, public opinion online could grow into an emerging power that constrains government behavior, imposing stronger restrictions on government decision-making.

2.1.3 Characteristic Behaviors

The characteristic behaviors of individuals are also subject to the impact of the Internet, the same as human nature and organizational behaviors. Characteristic behaviors consist of five aspects: personality, physical and mental health, aspiration and ambition, political history and personal experience, as well as opinions.¹¹ Regarding personality, the generation of the Internet era believes more in the spirit of pioneering and equality than their predecessors; their behaviors are more self-centered and trend-oriented. Regarding the other four aspects, the Internet reveals more of such information about political candidates, political leaders and other states. The political evaluation, both domestic and international, has to face the fact of excessive supply of information against the thinking capacity of people. Meanwhile, such a situation also means the relative malfunction of traditional political tricks such as blockades or beclouding.

The Internet enjoys great power of communication, therefore influencing individual opinions on different levels. As a significant invention, the Internet is based on the invention of computers, whose theoretical foundation is cybernetics. Consequently

10 John T. Rourke, *International Politics on the World Stage*, p. 142 ([美]约翰·罗尔克编著:《世界舞台上的国际政治》,第142页)。

11 John T. Rourke, *International Politics on the World Stage*, p. 147 ([美]约翰·罗尔克编著:《世界舞台上的国际政治》,第147页)。

it could be observed that individuals are integrated via the Internet into one colossal technical system. The information sent from any place could be sent throughout the whole system in no time. During such a process, the people involved are not free. Individuals become the independent submissive. The so-called continuous supply of the latest information online is mainly supported by the preferences of the general public and is concealed to some extent, among which explosive information travels the fastest. The Internet serves as the amplifier for it. At the same time, individual opinions become short of characteristics due to excessive disturbance of others' opinions, where the Internet plays the part of reducer.

2.1.4 Synthesis

The various types of hypothesis about human nature remain the same, yet they are synthesized in the virtual space of the Internet. The Internet is merely another platform applicable for the objective law of human nature, offering a platform for individuals to communicate with the public. Types of hypothesis all share uniformed perspective – that only one of the possible types of human nature could be achieved by numerous individuals at the same time – be it the realist hypothesis of human nature as evil, the liberalist hypothesis of rational human beings, the constructivist hypothesis of human nature depending on identity and roles, the Marxist hypothesis of human nature depending on the class or the reflectivist hypothesis of human irrationality. The Internet brings a rapid extension of the means of interpersonal relationship, removing the indirectness of interpersonal communication, offering real-time interpersonal interaction, and therefore providing the sandwich effect of multiple hypothesis of human nature. That is to say, the multiple hypotheses of human nature are no longer argued as a whole. The focus shifts onto the three-dimensional human nature after synthesis, as well as the fragmentation, decentralization, diversification and uncertainty of human nature within groups.

Due to this fragmentation and the three-dimensional human nature, there is a trend of growing uncertainty among individual and collective behaviors. The Internet, as a means of communication, establishes direct connections between individuals and information, skipping over the intermediacy and screening of other public media. Consequently, a new trend emerges in individual and collective behaviors. There would be great difficulty to reach a collective consensus, yet decreasing self-rationality and growing imitation in individual behaviors, due to the convenient access to information. These two trends converge into the fact that the interpersonal distance is excessively short.

Among current means of interactive communication, face-to-face communication realized in cyberspace is still the most convenient, unrivalled by other means (such as planes, trains or walks). Yet the negative significance of such a global village is the excessively short distance among people. The differences among people could not be overlooked when working towards a collective consensus. When an individual is making decisions about his or her own actions, however, it is impossible to stay free of the impact of others' behaviors.

2.2 The State Level

The impact of the Internet on international politics at the state level mainly lies in factors such as foreign policies, political culture and sub-national actors. They are the necessary chains beneath state actions. Under the impact of the Internet, these factors display changes as below.

2.2.1 Foreign Policies

The impact of the Internet falls primarily onto the hard output of a state – foreign policies, which differ according to five aspects: the changes of government types, disagreement between the leaders and the people, gender differences, situation types and policy types. Elaboration below is made from these five aspects of foreign policies.¹²

The differences between government institutions are highly distinct in reality yet blurred in cyber space. The rules of the Internet must be obeyed in order to utilize it, including technologies, equipment and technical standards. This made it possible for states to employ their identity as sovereign states rather than states of some specific institution. Such a cyber-identity can offer a compatible platform for the co-existence of states.

The era of the Internet has witnessed subtle changes in the relationship between decision-makers and the general public. The latter no longer unconditionally accept the retelling and analysis of events from their leaders. Instead, they are able to receive information almost at the same time as their leaders. The general public can then make judgment independently and are willing to post such opinions on the Internet. The leaders, on the contrary, become more concerned with trends of public opinion online, regarding either domestic or foreign affairs. There are even quite a number of events that showed up earlier on the Internet than on traditional media, which made it possible for the Internet to guide the opinion of the latter.

On the Internet, the operator is invisible. Thus it is impossible for traditional factors to interfere with people's judgment on the Internet, such as gender, family or appearance. The only evidence is the speech itself. Yet the policy difference yielded from such differences is very subtle on the Internet, unless it is proved by some research that certain types of people are more prone to voice themselves via the Internet while the other type prefers silence.

The Internet exerts different impacts on different types of policies. Regarding some types, the Internet tends to make people more aggressive, such as nationalism. Meanwhile people grow more reserved under the impact of Internet over some other types of policies, such as domestic social reform. This is because of the logic of collective actions, which makes people more aggressive in provoking actions and more stubborn in declining actions. In general, people tend to become more reckless, even exceeding the security bottom-line of individual behaviors, because individuals online are able to take actions in non-individual names.

12 John T. Rourke, *International Politics on the World Stage*, p. 101 ([美]约翰·罗尔克编著:《世界舞台上的国际政治》,第101页).

2.2.2 Political Culture

Political culture is the means and tool for a state to spread its ideology and mainstream values. Being a soft output, it is more radically impacted by the Internet. The political culture transmits via three channels: cultural products, self-promotion and information publicity.

Primarily, cultural products take their major form as entertainment products. Yet the traditional pattern of the cinema means that movies have all been censored by the government before being shown in front of an audience. However, it is not the same pattern of transmission for cultural products on the Internet. Via the Internet, people are able to access movies prohibited in the cinema. It could well be said that the Internet enables the general public of different nationalities to have more exposure to a diversified cultural environment.

Secondly, the channel of self-promotion could also be comprehended as promotional activities. Embassies of some countries have launched microblog accounts to communicate with the people of the country where those embassies reside. China's promotional videos are also popularized through the Internet. However, are people of two countries aware of their differences in judgment about national interests? That is an issue never touched upon by either liberalist or realist theoretical analysis of international relations. Yet the actual actions of countries are sending out welcome messages to have their culture better understood by other countries, which would contribute to the exchanges from both sides in all fields in the future.

The channel of understanding goes beyond the passive acceptance of the general public. A majority of the countries offer public access to the websites of their government bodies for those who might be interested. Internet users are able to observe the self-orientation of these countries and, of course, the different comments by other countries on certain cultures. They could even find out how their own country is commented on by people of other countries by directly visiting foreign websites.

2.2.3 Sub-national Actors

Apart from the output channels, what is the impact of the Internet on the output content? Whose opinion is the real representative of the national interests; that of the state leaders, bureaucratic agencies, the parliament, the opposition party, groups of interests, or the people?¹³ There is no sub-national actor that could monopolize the interpretation on national interests, as the information spreads via the Internet rather than traditional media and is free of hierarchy. The impact of the Internet on sub-national actors is elaborated from two perspectives: liberalism and constructivism.

While the state itself is the natural origin of state power, sub-national actors provide the intangible sources of power,¹⁴ which generally include national image, public support and leadership.¹⁵ This intangible power is further reinforced by the liberals.

13 John T. Rourke, *International Politics on the World Stage*, p. 113 ([美] 约翰·罗尔克编著:《世界舞台上的国际政治》, 第 113 页)。

14 Karen A. Mingst, *Essentials of International Relations* (Third Edition), translated by Pan Zhongqi, Shanghai: Shanghai Century Publishing Group, 2007, pp. 109-113 ([美] 卡伦·明斯特:《国际关系精要》(第三版), 潘忠岐译, 上海: 上海世纪出版集团 2007 年版, 第 109-113 页)。

15 Karen A. Mingst, *Essentials of International Relations*, p. 112 ([美] 卡伦·明斯特:《国际关系精要》, 第 112 页)。

Undoubtedly, the Internet could also grow into a factor that impacts the intangible power of sub-national actors. Leaders could utilize the Internet to increase interactions with the general public and appear more amiable, while political mobilization and fundraising are also feasible via the Internet. This is best illustrated by Barack Obama, the “Internet President,” who successfully enhanced public support with the help of the Internet during his presidential campaign in the United States. His campaign was mostly funded by online donations, which added up into sufficient financial support for his final victory. In some countries, the Internet is utilized by the opposition parties in the government to enhance their impact. Some anti-government organizations even have websites of their own.

Apart from what is discussed above, constructivists believe that power also includes the power of opinions and speech, which is exactly the support for weaker sub-national actors to acquire advantages against stronger peers. Such power could also assist a country in making up for its weakness in tangible power, so as to outcompete countries of far greater strength. The main forms of Internet output are opinions, language and writing. There is an emerging form of political publicity expanded onto the Internet, which is to transform gradually the existing opinions of a nation via the Internet, creating potential impacts for politics in future. The language used on the Internet serves as a real illustration of national mentality and contemporary trends. It is much easier to break the stalemate between countries by creating common topics, and it is also possible to trigger political unrest or cultural collisions in another country by spreading new vocabulary.

2.2.4 Synthesis

The pyramid pattern in Figure 1 demonstrates the flow of information within a hierarchical state structure. There exists inequality of information between the state and sub-actors, as well as within the sub-actors. The petal pattern in Figure 2 illustrates the flow of information in a horizontal state structure. There is a similar equality in

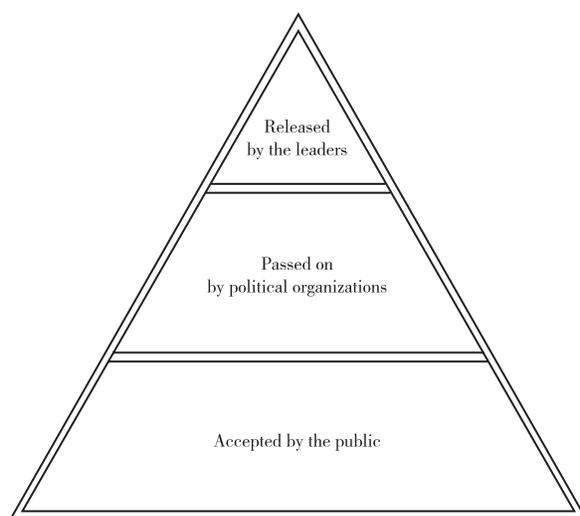


Figure 1 Flow of Information: the Pyramid Pattern

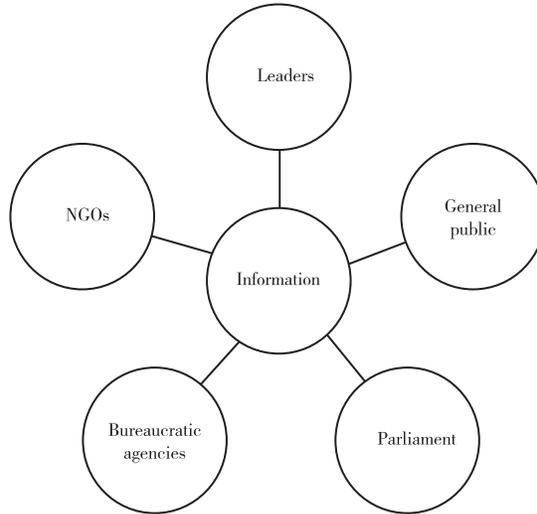


Figure 2 Flow of Information: the Petal Pattern

information access between the state and the sub-actors. The Internet leads to changes in the pattern in which information flows inside from other countries, i.e. replacing the pyramid with the petal.

2.3 The International System Level

At the international system level, all types of order for individual and national actions are illustrated by five factors: global structure of authority, pattern of national strength, economic patterns, behavior norms and communities of interactive communication. The evolvement of these five factors showcases the impact of the Internet on international politics at the system level.

2.3.1 Global Structure of Authority¹⁶

Is the Internet able to present an emerging and centralized force to render the international system more vertical? Such is the potential responsibility for every technical innovation regarding the reform of the international system. The impact of the Internet on the international system can be traced through theories such as realism, liberalism and constructivism, as well as in the practice of international politics.

The basic feature of the international system defined by realism is already transformed somehow in the theories and practices of liberalism and collective security. If regarded as another global society that is virtual, then the world of the Internet is the most thorough in the state of anarchism. On the Internet, the police and government officials do not enjoy corresponding social status and function as they do in the real life. We could observe decreasing power of government rules and regulations, as well

16 John T. Rourke, *International Politics on the World Stage*, p. 64 ([美] 约翰·罗尔克编著:《世界舞台上的国际政治》,第64页).

as growing power beyond the government. The instant communication via the Internet could render a domestic issue international, and vice versa. This function of the Internet is demonstrated by the transformation in West Asia and North Africa in 2011, in which domestic issues gained momentum with the help of international opinions. In Egypt and Syria, Twitter and Facebook passed on information for foreign forces and played a converging role for domestic anti-government forces. They eventually succeeded in realizing the political transformation in these two countries. Till now, the unrest in Syria is still non-stop and in ferment.

Is it possible to achieve global governance through the Internet? It depends on the ultimate goal of the Internet's transformation of the international system in real life. However, regarding the current international system, the state of anarchism in cyber space proves exactly the impossibility of global governance. The role that the Internet plays is a mere means or tool of communication.

2.3.2 Pattern of National Strength¹⁷

Will information technology rewrite the pattern of strength in the international arena, in the same way as the industrial revolution did for the rise of the West and the fall of the East, or what nuclear weapons did to the confrontation between the East and West? This is a probable obligation of technical innovation for relations among countries and the answer will be from the perspective of realism and liberalism.

The shift of the topic is in line with the realist observation of the world. Realists believe that systematical transformation takes place inside the overall power structure among countries, while the Internet makes the possibility of transforming systematical structures highly realistic and peaceful. There will consequently be a challenge to the existing theory of the poles, as it does not consider the checks, balances and subversion formed via the Internet. Such a topic transition also fits the liberalist expectation of the world, which believes that a transforming international system needs the power of new actors and national actors could be replaced by multinational corporations and non-government organizations as they could break the limit of traditional resources and technologies. The Internet is the arena for such non-national actors to have political mobilization and train comrades.

2.3.3 Economic Pattern¹⁸

In times of peace, the major significance of the Internet is to develop the pattern of the Internet economy. Yet liberalists and radicals disagree on the economic significance of the Internet. The Internet deepens economic interdependency among countries and this trend could be theoretically supported by the theory of interdependency. Liberalists believe that technological development increases the interdependency among countries within the system which will ultimately lead to the transformation of the international

17 John T. Rourke, *International Politics on the World Stage*, p. 76 ([美] 约翰·罗尔克编著:《世界舞台上的国际政治》,第76页).

18 John T. Rourke, *International Politics on the World Stage*, p. 92 ([美] 约翰·罗尔克编著:《世界舞台上的国际政治》,第92页).

system. The radicals are concerned with the stratification of the international system, the theory of center and margin, as well as the theory of dependency. The developing world attaches importance to the North-South gap. These problems appear to be easier to solve in the current era of the Internet. It is true that goods in the Internet economy are subject to the real-life economy as they are from the real world. However, if a global market is completed on the Internet, then individuals would have more freedom to choose products on their own, rather than from agents, contributing to the diverse development of international economic layout. Of course there will be some operational difficulties regarding the specific rules, such as quality evaluation of the goods, compliance with the customs, as well as returns and refunds. Apparently, the Internet is going to impose challenges on large-scale manufacturing in some fields.

2.3.4 Behavior Norms¹⁹

Apart from behaviors of peaceful interactions, there have also been traces of Internet warfare. The emergence of online attacks, a new type of attack, indicates the birth of new global norms. Although there are as yet no global Internet norms, countries have been exchanging thoughts on the Internet issue. For example, it was a topic at the G8 Summit in 2011. Needs in real life could contribute to the introduction of Internet norms. Even Internet morality and Internet ethics have the potential to play corresponding roles in the future. As it is difficult to integrate the features of interests of all parties, it is very likely that new international norms might be consensus on technology and public security, two issues of public welfare.

New technologies have been the premise of new international rules. For instance, the introduction of nuclear weapons fundamentally transformed the international rules. However, rules forbidding their application have been made by the international society due to their destructive features. The Internet is bound to bring about new international rules of great significance, as it provides to various fields systematical support of extreme importance and its technological innovation generally advances other fields. Internet technology not only involves the technology of computer science, but also that of encryption, spatial orientation and communication, etc. Content about information security must be designed within the new rules, as information is the network attribute of the Internet. Once the information is blocked, the network will break off; once the information goes wrong, the network will transmit wrong information.

Information security is also a vital component of non-traditional security. Information crimes present a feature that is destructive yet difficult to trace, posing a severe challenge to national interests. The Internet is equipped with pragmatic functions such as military command, analysis and calculation. Once the network system of a country is sabotaged, that would lead to malfunction or even paralysis of important national functions. Internet wars achieve their purpose of destruction by destroying the enemy's function of work, rather than tangible instruments or buildings.

19 John T.R ourke, *International Politics on the World Stage*, p. 94 ([美] 约翰·罗尔克编著:《世界舞台上的国际政治》,第94页).

2.3.5 Communities of All-Inclusive Interactive Communication

The impact of the Internet on the international system goes beyond the system itself. Constructivism has not explained how to achieve its ideal of a global country. It remains unclear whether a global country could turn into reality, yet new space is offered by the Internet. There is more likely to be a parallel existence of the international system and society in reality, as well as a global society formed by the all-inclusive interactive communication established through the Internet.

Each Internet community is fighting for members. The ecology of the virtual global society is advancing towards a diverse community and differentiated service. Therefore it is necessary to observe the inherent attributes of a diverse structure, rather than a unitary one, in the new space. To a certain extent, the logic of countries taking shape is reoccurring in the Internet space, only in a potentially reversed order. For instance, Iran is about to test the “domestic Internet,” one step closer to the shutdown of the international Internet. The “domestic Internet” is also called the “clean Internet,” aimed at replacing the international Internet. According to the Iranian government, the “domestic Internet” could not only save costs for the consumers, but also help safeguard the morality and ethical standards of Islam.²⁰ Also, Barack Obama, President of the United States, proposed to establish a “shadow network.” The U.S. intelligence department has already developed a device named suitcase Internet, allowing users to pass on information without any service of Internet access of any country.²¹ These messages serve as a reminder that there might be some symbiosis among the logic of nationalism and anarchism. There is no possibility for a country to be completely neutral, or completely global.

2.3.6 Synthesis

In the international system of the non-Internet era, actors belonged to different fields, therefore acting in them respectively (Figure 3). However, in a pure Internet world, all the actors voice their opinions and take actions regarding the same topic on the same platform, shortening the distance among previous levels of international actors and expanding the multi-dimensional international system (Figure 4).

The evolution of the international system has its roots in the observation of a border-free, nationality-free feature of the interactive communication on the Internet. While it is true that the traditional diplomatic principles could not regulate accordingly, there is no consensus among countries about whether to open up a global community of interactive communication. However, as a virtual world in parallel existence with the real world, it makes the goal of construction on Internet platform goes beyond power and reaching for communication among individuals as well as presentation of personal talents. Answers as to how the global community takes shape could be offered in the

20 “Iran to Test ‘Clean Internet’ in Two Weeks to Replace International Internet,” China National Radio, June 24, 2011 (《伊朗两周内开测可取代国际互联网的“清洁互联网”》，中国广播网，2011年6月24日），http://www.cnr.cn/junshi/gjjs/201106/t20110624_508136153.html.

21 James Glanz and John Markoff, “U.S. Underwrites Internet Detour Around Censors,” *The New York Times*, June 12, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/12/world/12Internet.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Shadow%20Network&st=cse.

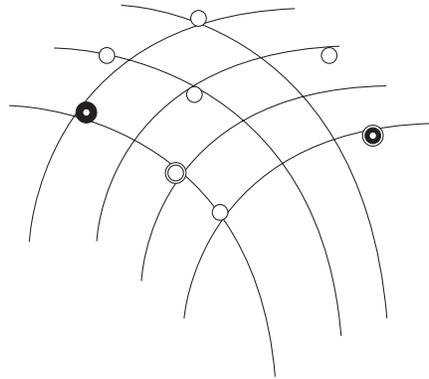
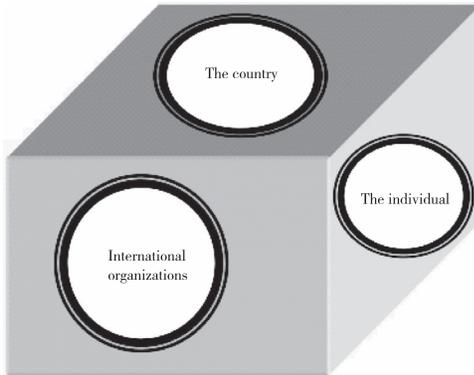


Figure 3 The Multi-dimensional International System Figure 4 The Net-shaped International System

form of a global society presented by interpersonal society, even if a virtual one, i.e. the cross-border community of interactive communication in a space incorporating time and space. Of course, the natural state and the logic of countries taking shape could not be eliminated from the birth of a global society in the Internet world.

3. The Internet's Impact on the Core of International Politics: National Interests, Power and Security

It is clearly shown from the analysis above of Internet's impact on the path of international politics that, the Internet has a more significant impact on the state level among the three levels of analysis, namely individual, state and international system. That is because the virtual property of the Internet is the most vulnerable and its actuality is the strongest at this level. Furthermore, the state is the node that connects individuals and the international system. The Internet's impacts on the individual and international system may be directly reflected at the state level, rather than their own respective levels. It is therefore necessary to prioritize the exclusive analysis of the Internet's impacts at the state level.

Analyzing the Internet's impacts on the state should start from the core pivots subordinate to the state and linked to other levels, rather than the aspects or factors subordinate exclusively to the state level. There are at least three concepts that meet this criterion, namely national interests, national power and national security. The section below examines how the Internet impacts the core sovereignty countries in international politics from the following three aspects.

3.1 National Interests

The Internet is a new arena where national interests converge. As a product of the revolution of science and technology, the Internet, being a technical tool in itself, is the

same as any other technical invention: being a tool with neutral property. It is accessible to all and exerts the same influences on all. However, once employed by a state actor, it is more than a technical tool. It then becomes a tool of international politics, one that is used to pursue national power and interests. It is therefore not neutral any more. Its property of being non-neutral, in turn, will impact the behaviors of its important user, namely the state.²² Consequently, if a state could make the best use of the Internet as a tool of information communication and bring its advantages into full play, then its national interests could certainly be expanded and strengthened. Meanwhile, if a state sabotages the Internet of other countries, denying them this tool for furthering national interests, or spreads information harmful to other countries, then such behaviors will undermine the national interests of other countries and increase the national interests of this actor country correspondingly. There is, therefore, a correlation between the Internet and national interests. It is fair to say that all countries develop their Internet strategic targets for reasons such as national security, economic expansion and ideology. This also applies to the US, which is “harnessing the power of connection technologies to advance the United States’ foreign policy agenda.”²³ Cyber security has become an important component of national interests.

The schools of international political theories distinguish themselves from each other through their reflections on national interests. Realism states that power decides interests. Liberalism holds an opposite principle to realism, believing that interests determine power. Constructivism attempts to prove that interests are built upon identity and conception, though it fails to achieve that aim. Similar to these various intellectual schools, whose principles are all applicable in the international political reality, the Internet follows several different beliefs – equal attention should be given to interests and power, and identity and conception engender the pursuit of national interests. An example will be given in the following paragraph to illustrate the connection between national interests and national power and identity.

The death of Osama bin Laden caused an Internet tsunami, only to prove that the Internet has become a new arena where national interests converge and that the politics of major countries is shaping the online competition among countries. According to Keynote Systems, a monitor of Internet traffic,²⁴ the news of Osama bin Laden’s death brought down the website of CNN.²⁵ According to Google, the quantity of search requests for “bin Laden” increased by 1 million times within an hour on the evening of May 1, 2011.²⁶ Twitter claimed that there were up to 4,000 tweets posted per second

22 Zheng Zhilong and Yu Li, “Non-neutral Impact of the Internet on International Politics,” *Political Studies*, No. 4 (2012), pp. 61-70 (郑志龙、余丽:《互联网在国际政治中的“非中性”作用》,载《政治学研究》,2012年第4期,第61-70页)。

23 U.S. State Department, “Internet Freedom in the 21st Century: Integrating New Technologies into Diplomacy and Development,” <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/scp/fs/2010/136702.htm>.

24 A world leader in Internet and mobile clouding monitoring, which provides updated online experience solutions to enterprises.

25 Dean Takahashi, “Osama bin Laden News Brings Down CNN’s Mobile Site,” May 1, 2011, <http://venturebeat.com/2011/05/01/first-traffic-casualty-osama-bin-laden-news-brings-down-cnns-mobile-site>.

26 The Biz Television, “‘Bin Laden’ Google Searches up 1 Million Percent Sunday Evening,” May 4, 2011, <http://www.biztelevision.com/2011/05/04/%E2%80%98bin-laden%E2%80%99-google-searches-up-1-million-percent-sunday-evening/>.

after the release of bin Laden's death.²⁷ The only country that did not cover this news was Uzbekistan.²⁸ The picture of the US President Barack Obama and his staff watching the raid on bin Laden's compound live attracted the fastest growing views on Flickr, according to Sina.com Technology. The picture was released by the official account of the White House on Flickr, after President Obama had announced the death of bin Laden on May 2, 2011.

Flickr tracked the views of the picture and found that the picture attracted 390,000 views within 5.5 hours after the release, or 71,000 views every hour. The number of views reached 600,000 in 7 hours and 1,400,000 in 25 hours. The official Flickr account of the White House had a usual visit of 100,000 per day but this figure surged to 2,500,000 on May 3.²⁹

3.2 National Power

Power and interests complement each other. Safeguarding national interests is more about developing national power and elevating the international status of a country. The Internet has become a new growth point and battlefield of national power.

At the end of May 2011, "the Pentagon has concluded that the sabotage of computers coming from another country can constitute an act of war. For the first time, doors are open for the U.S. to respond to cyber-attacks with traditional military force."³⁰ In the following days, there was hacking of some websites related to the FBI.

"The Internet has exhibited an unprecedented power."³¹ Information is a kind of power and the root servers of the Internet are the infrastructure of such power. Out of the 13 root servers worldwide, the U.S. has 10 under control, some of them being main root servers. To consolidate its existing information power, the U.S. is already ahead of anyone else in developing and implementing related strategies. Since 2003, the U.S. government has issued a series of documents on cyberspace polices, such as *Cyberspace Policy Review*,³² *National Cyber Security Strategy*,³³ *International Strategy for Cyberspace*,³⁴ and the *DoD Strategy for Operating in Cyber*

27 "Bin Laden's Death News Generates an Explosive Growth of Internet Traffic," China National Radio, May 3, 2011 (《本·拉登死讯使互联网流量出现爆炸性增长》, 中国广播网, 2011年5月3日), http://www.cnr.cn/china/xw/gf/201105/t20110503_507956909.html.

28 "Uzbekistan Fails to Report the Story of the Decade," The Telegraph, May 5, 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/al-qaeda/8492345/Uzbekistan-fails-to-report-the-story-of-the-decade.html>.

29 The Picture of Obama Watching the Raid on bin Laden's Compound Sets Flickr View Records, Sina.com, May, 4, 2011 (《奥巴马看袭击拉登照片浏览量增速创Flickr记录》, 新浪网, 2011年5月4日), <http://tech.sina.com.cn/i/2011-05-04/15315480311.shtml>.

30 "Cyber Combat: Act of War," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 31, 2011, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304563104576355623135782718.html?mod=WSJ_WSJ_US_News_3.

31 Jose Vericat, "Is the Google World a Better Place," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 24, No. 1(Fall-Winter 2010), p. 186.

32 The White House, *Cyberspace Policy Review*, June 19, 2009, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Cyberspace_Policy_Review_final.pdf.

33 United States Government Accountability Office, *National Cyber Security Strategy*, March 10, 2009, Available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09432t.pdf>.

34 The White House, *International Strategy for Cyberspace*, May 2011, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/international_strategy_for_cyberspace.pdf.

Space.³⁵ President Obama claimed that “this was the first comprehensive plan ever for the cyberspace.”³⁶ In October 2011, the U.S. Cyber Command was put into full operation, indicating the formation of a US Internet strategy.³⁷

Power in cyberspace is a combination of soft power and hard power, which further complicates the analysis of national power in the cyberspace. This hidden power is easy to obtain and has destructive effects, but it is dependent on national strength and actual conflicts between countries. Due to its involvement with international disputes, it is closely linked to national security issues. Suppose a global company is attacked by a hacker based in country A. The hacker attacks the company because it is a company of country B, which is in a conflict, or even a war with country A. When country B is under such attacks of country A, the latter actually also suffers some adverse impacts or even losses, as the hacked company, which has branches in all regions across the globe and enjoys a good reputation, also provides services to users in country A. This case illustrates that conflicts in the cyberspace is more likely to be restricted by the fact that countries have become more interconnected with each other, and it is increasingly difficult to identify enemies based on their geographic locations.

3.3 National Security

“Cyber security threats are one of the most serious challenges to the national security, public security and economic growth of the US.”³⁸ To ensure national security, economic prosperity and critical services are provided for the US public, the US will use every instrument of national power to safeguard cyberspace.³⁹ Therefore due to the development of the Internet, every sovereign state finds itself in a virtual world of information where fixed borders do not exist. In such a world, countries not only have to guard the borders in the traditional sense, but also the borders of their Internet sovereignty. It marks a shift of the national security paradigm from military-orientation to information-orientation.

However, the boundaries of Internet sovereignty are difficult to define in virtual cyberspace. Therefore we must move beyond the traditional interpretation of state borders. In virtual cyberspace, borders are no longer physical presences which remain fixed, but keep changing. Countries have to build their cyber capability, so that they may be able to preserve their cyber territory. A stable cyber territory is a testimony to balanced capability. The cyber territory of a country does not necessarily match its geographic territory, as the former keeps changing while the latter remains stable in the

35 U.S. Department of Defense, *DoD Strategy for Operating in Cyberspace*, July 2011, available at http://www.d-efense.gov/home/features/2011/0411_cyberstrategy/docs/DoD_Strategy_for_Operating_in_Cyberspace_July_2011.pdf.

36 The White House, *International Strategy for Cyberspace*, May 2011, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/international_strategy_for_cyberspace.pdf.

37 For U.S. Internet strategies, please see YU Li, “Impacts of U.S. Internet strategies on China’s Political and Cultural Securities,” *International Forum*, No. 2 (2012), p. 7-9 (余丽:《美国互联网战略及其对中国政治文化安全的影响》,载《国际论坛》,2012年第2期,第7-9页)。

38 The White House, *National Security Strategy*, Washington, D.C., 2010, p. 27.

39 James A. Lewis, *Securing Cyberspace for the 44th Presidency*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., December 2008, p. 5.

long term. The capability of a country in guarding its geographic borders is attributed to its overall national strength, and its cyber territory size correlates with its overall national strength in a positive way, that is to say a country of a vast cyber territory boasts greater overall national strength, and vice versa.⁴⁰

Based on the above analysis, it can be seen that the Internet has enriched the meaning of national security, or cyber security, which together with political security, economic security and military security, is an important component of national security, and concerns the survival, independence and development of a country. Though cyber security interests fall into the category of information-based national security interests, they are by no means less important than political, economic or military security interests. Therefore, to protect cyber security is to protect national security interests, which requires us to fundamentally acquire the mastery of the Internet. The mastery of the Internet is a form of national power in cyber space, a basic guarantee for a sovereignty to survive in the cyber space, and a new component of national power in the world political arena. As the Internet is exerting an increasingly bigger influence on the real world, a country's position in the international system can be decided by its cyber strength. It should be noted that from the inner structure of the Internet to the presence of the cyber space, the U.S. not only has the mastery of the Internet and holds the key position in the cyber space, but assumes an absolutely dominant position that is difficult to challenge in the short term. It proves that information is power.⁴¹

The Internet is a product of high technology,⁴² which has the double features of penetrative and political natures, and can function in a political environment. Langdon Winner says, "Many technical devices and systems important in everyday life contain possibilities for many different ways of guiding human activity. Consciously or unconsciously, deliberately or inadvertently, societies choose structures for technologies that influence how people are going to work, communicate... In the processes by which structuring decisions are made, different people are situated differently and possess unequal degrees of power as well as unequal levels of awareness."⁴³ The Internet has in fact become a means and field of international political gaming. "Cyber security threats have become the most serious challenge to economic growth and national security in the 21st century."⁴⁴ The contest between countries in the virtual cyberspace is no less intense than that in actual international political practice. An example will be given in the following paragraph to demonstrate the Internet's impact on national security and

40 Yu Li, "How to Understand and Guard Internet Sovereignty," *People's Daily*, Feb 2, 2012 (余丽:《如何认识与维护互联网主权》,载《人民日报》,2012年2月2日)。

41 Yu Li, "On Mastery of Internet: The Impacts of Internet on New National Power in the International Politics," *Zhengzhou University Journal*, No. 4 (2012), pp. 5-8 (余丽:《论制网权:互联网作用于国际政治的新型国家权力》,载《郑州大学学报》,2012年第4期,第5-8页)。

42 Though different insurance countries and scholars have different definitions on high-tech, but they all include the following six technologies: IT, new materials technology, new energy technology, biotech, space technology and marine technology, all of which are investment-intensive, productive, intellectual, difficult, competitive, risky and of high potential.

43 Langdon Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" in Michael E. Kraft and Norman J.Vig, eds., *Technology and Politics*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1988, p. 43.

44 The White House, *Cyberspace Policy Review*, June 19, 2009, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Cyberspace_Policy_Review_final.pdf.

political stability.

From January 25 to February 11, 2011, in the 18-day Egyptian revolution, the Internet acted as a catalyst. Before the revolution, the country's economy expanded as a whole, and the people were not satisfied with their government. However, the large-scale demonstration broke out right at this time, mainly because of the pushing power of the Internet, especially the undoubted functions of such social networking sites as Facebook and Twitter. Due to the communicative power of the Internet, discontent about the government and its rulers quickly spread among North African countries with highly similar governance structures, especially among the young people in those countries, thus triggering demonstrations. The Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia that shocked the Arab World certainly served as another important trigger.

The Internet was undoubtedly an important tool for bringing opposition forces together during the Egyptian revolution. The role it played was not sending out original voices, but generating the amplified public appeals after having been echoed many times, and magnifying the strength and voice of the opposition parties. It helped the demonstrations grow greatly, sweeping the whole country, and finally challenging the ruling foundation of Hosni Mubarak's government. The president reacted by taking extreme measures. He first shielded websites, and then cut the country's access to the Internet and mobile communications. This reflects how capable the Internet is in assembling people within a short period of time. It shortens the physical distance between people, enabling us to reach the same destination at the same time, thus removing the obstacles that prevent people from participating political activities.

It can therefore be seen that the Internet renders actors' political participation faster, and social reforms swifter, which however comes at a price of national security and social stability. The international political reality, though under the impact of the Internet, still features realism, namely "security is the primary motive and target of a country."⁴⁵ There is no such thing as absolute cyber freedom. The Internet has become "an effective tool to promote values of freedom, equality and human rights across the world."⁴⁶ This shows that ideology and values do not vanish from the virtual cyberspace; instead, they still exist.

4. The Internet's Role in Boosting Changes of International Structure: Catalyzing, Synchronizing and Constructing

The above analyses reveal that the Internet has separate impacts on all the three levels, and highlighted impacts on the level of state. Besides this, changes that happen to the three levels, namely individual, state and international system, interact with each other, which builds on the Internet's impacts on international politics and engenders a

45 David Baldwin, "The Concepts of Security," *Review of International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (January 1997), pp. 5-26.

46 Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen, "The Digital Disruption," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 6 (November/December 2010), p. 84.

systematic effect. Changes that arise out of the interaction between the three levels are represented by the three major functions of the Internet: catalyzing, synchronizing and constructing. Subordinate to these major functions are the specific sub-functions of the Internet, which, with their various structures and features, react to the major functions.

Catalyzing means the Internet as a catalyst of reform eliminates temporal lag and geographic distance, so as to avoid systematic effects offsetting the reasons for change, and thus reducing linear result, or the outbreak of international political reform. Synchronizing means the Internet as a clock reminds actors in the international system of developments, makes them operate with exact coincidence in time, and subjects them to the trends of time. Constructing means the Internet as a smooth whole in space and time provides a necessary condition for the establishment of a world society, translating some features of the world society into a virtual space of practical significance. The following elaboration starts from the influence of the three major functions on international political practice, exhibits how various sub-functions of the Internet serve their respective major functions, thus causing international politics to produce corresponding changes, and finally analyzes the theoretical influences of these changes.

4.1 Catalyzing: Creating Opportunities for Factors of International Political Changes to Operate

A chemical catalyst only accelerates the chemical reaction, and does not change the properties of the reaction itself. However, in reality, when one factor fails to initiate its reaction fast enough to generate a corresponding effect, other factors will probably step in and isolate the failing factor from interacting with society. Once the timing is missed, the intended reaction will not only be delayed, but be far less likely to happen, as the society is a whole that changes with the developments of other factors.

For the social system, a catalyst, by accelerating change, actually causes changes to happen. The Internet impacts on the international politics of the social system through four sub-functions, organizing, noticing, evaluating and associating. It not only expedites the occurrences of some events, but causes things that would otherwise not happen immediately to take place.

4.1.1 Organizing

The Internet performs the organizing function by bringing people who share similar interests together, connecting people and organizing group behaviors. This feature of the Internet not only demonstrates the interaction between individual and state, but the gaming between countries through the individual level – the interaction between state and international system.

The membership of collective action can be either voluntary and one-off, or organized and long-term. The scale and destructive forces of collective action are not only attributed to the causes of incidents, but affected by the organizer's capability of organizing. The Internet may not be able to determine the occurrence of incidents,

but it does influence the emotional interaction between members and the coordinating capability of the organizer, so as to impact the outcome of a collective action, a success or failure.

Due to its capability to connect people in a short time, the Internet can summon an unprecedented number of people. Therefore camps and forces brought together through the Internet usually play an important role in the real political interaction. Such an impact is constructive. Though it is a term in constructivism, “constructive,” when used in the context of collective forces, is not of a conceptual term, but a material one nature. It means that a material constructive force, though not in the structure of cause and effect, can boost the success of a political behavior, and in reality the original reasons for the behavior may not be adequate enough to defeat the mainstream political forces. It should be noted that as this forceful factor is able to cover the truth of the incident, it on the one hand can help the right opinion attain the rightful position, and on the other hand may allow the wrong opinion to gain the upper hand. For instance, an act of sabotage manipulated by some hostile foreign forces can take place with huge public support.

4.1.2 Noticing

The Internet fulfils the noticing function by releasing information, revealing identities and providing feedback. It is therefore a medium that communicates information. By conveying information relevant to national interests, international cooperation, international disputes and national security, the Internet exchanges information on the different levels of individual, state and international system.

Through the Internet, the public can know what is going on around the world in no time, and individuals, organizations and states can release information through the Internet, to quickly inform as many people as possible. The Internet is a fast and effective tool for the state to promote its strategy and image. The image of a country is built on a variety of information from different sources. For example, the news of bin Laden’s death was first exposed by a personal micro-blog account on the Internet, hours before the traditional media. U.S. television obtained the news from the White House, and thereby lost its advantage in reporting on the incident first.

In the age of traditional media, news-reporting on television was more timely than that of newspapers, and television provided the fastest way to obtain news. However, with the emergence of the new media, such as the Internet, event witnesses can post what they have seen and heard on the Internet, instead of keeping it to themselves for the lack of sharing channels, or making themselves heard only through the television. They sometimes reveal their real identity, but sometimes conceal it. The news delivered by them may or may not be authoritative, but much important or authoritative news has not been released through authoritative sources. The more attention a piece of news attracts, the wider it will spread, and not the other way around. To a great extent, the attention news attracts has stood out and become an independent variable. A large amount of news, which could not be revealed by the media, or was not allowed to be revealed, is being exposed.

4.1.3 Evaluating

The Internet carries out the evaluating function by conducting assessments on various fields such as politics, economics and military, and on different topics such as people's livelihood, power, government decisions and the international situation. This function is not only about public opinion guiding popular will, but the other way around.

This feature of the Internet is shown through the impact of the individual level on the state level, or the fact that the Internet has the capability of integrating people's opinions on one country's events and policies. A sovereign state will seek opinions from all sides through the Internet, and national leaders will communicate with the public on the Internet. Wrongdoings of civil servants can be exposed online and criticized by netizens constantly, and sentencing of a criminal can provoke a heated debate online.

In terms of the impact of the Internet on international politics, people share their opinions, quarrel and debate with each other on issues, such as war and peace, conflict and cooperation, security and development, trends of foreign economic policies, comparisons between countries, a country's political system, even advantages and disadvantages of a culture, and racial discrimination. All sorts of voices mix with each other, and are divided into different camps. Although these camps exist in the virtual world, form no direct connections with real actions, and have differences from associations made in the real world, they directly influence people's conceptions, ideology, emotions and mentality, and through these conceptual factors, strengthen the identity of some people, guide the achievement of consensus on interests and the formation of emotional resonance, and very likely the judgment of some opinions on the existing systems. Public opinions attributed to the Internet may be right, or misled, but undoubtedly, once they take shape, they will impact upon real society. The legitimacy or legality of government in modern times derives from the recognition of the public.

4.1.4 Associating

The Internet serves as a community, as with the birth of the podcast, blog, social networking sites and microblogging, the Internet has ushered in an era of people-people interaction. This feature of the Internet manifests the interaction between the system and individual levels.

An interactive world coincides with the judgments constructivism and the British academia have made on the model of what the future world may be like. Such a model or the features of the future international system traces back to Kant's thought of perpetual peace. This idea has been realized due to the emergence of real-name social networks and microblogging interfaces. The president of Sohu.com, a Chinese Internet company, has said on many occasions that the company is in a critical position as its microblogging business lags behind that of Sina.com and Netease.com, and is wasting the advantages it has built up in other businesses.⁴⁷ The vice-president of Google also

47 Speech by Zhang Chaoyang on the 2011 World Mobile Internet Conference, "Four Stages of Internet Development," Sohu IT, April 28, 2011 ("互联网发展四阶段", 搜狐 IT, 2011年4月28日), <http://it.sohu.com/20110428/n280441573.shtml>.

expresses his regret that if he had figured out the direction of Internet development, Google would not have fallen behind Facebook in real name services.⁴⁸

No doubt that those who work in the Internet sector have agreed that people-people interaction is a brand new thing, and where the potential of the Internet lies. It cannot be achieved by any other existing technologies or association methods, but the Internet. As long as you have friended a person or someone he/she is related to, you can obtain his/her news without visiting his/her page. In the online community, the rest of the world can contact you directly and get to know you from all sides, so is your information.

4.2 Synchronizing: Updating the International Political Reality

The Internet can also initiate a mechanism of synchronization, constantly delivering the latest information to systems of all levels within international politics. After receiving information, all systems will work to keep up with the times, thus updating the international politics and synchronizing it with the latest trends. This function is initiated and completed through the reaction of systems of all levels to developments of other systems, whether at the same, inferior or superior level. In the following paragraphs, the differences between realism, liberalism, constructivism and neutralism in terms of the logic behind system behavior will be analyzed. The differences coincide with how the self-serving motivations of all systems change along with the times. Neutralism manifests the characteristics of the contemporary international politics, and the Internet has functions relevant to these characteristics.

According to realism, the logic behind the world ecology is that, humanity, as the initial independent variable, causes the anarchy of the international system, which implies a security dilemma, and therefore the acts of a state can only be power-seeking and self-help acts, thus generating a balanced international system out of the contests between countries for power.

According to liberalism, the logic behind the world ecology is that, there are a variety of actors. Whether they are states or some other actors, they depend on each other, and game with each other. Due to the complexity and multiplicity of this gaming, states or actors display various behaviors, as does the international system, which is built upon the interaction between states.

According to constructivism, the logic behind the world ecology is that, the domestic level and the international level have impacts on each other: on the domestic level, personal conceptions and national identity influence each other; and on the international level, systematic structures and unit characteristics impact on each other, thus producing a systematic and historical correlation mechanism.

The contemporary theories on international relations favor neutralism. As the elements of the global society interact in a complex manner, various theoretical models have been incorporated to interpret the logic behind the world ecology. Individuals as a dependent variable conduct more foreign exchanges, but cannot replace the state

48 "Facebook's Huge Data Advantages May Put Google in a Precarious Position," June 4, 2011 《Facebook拥有巨大数据优势, 或将谷歌逼上绝路》, 新浪科技, 2011年6月4日), <http://tech.sina.com.cn/i/2011-06-04/10265611859.shtml>.

to dominate foreign affairs. Humanity as an independent variable is becoming more obscure. States as a dependent variable have become both more equal to each other, and more different from each other. States as an independent variable have become more similar to each other in capability, but more different in features. Systems as a dependent variable are shifting their order from survival-orientation to communication-orientation. Systems as a dependent variable feature a globalized grid.

This proves that all levels of the international politics are, on the one hand, under the impacts of traditional factors such as the balance of power of major countries, and on the other hand are trying to escape its influences. States are still in charge of security and power, but communicative problems that do not threaten one's survival are left to individuals to resolve. It implies that realism and constructivism probably can co-exist in harmony. The trend of integration is not formed in the isolation of international politics from the Internet, but in the interaction between the two.

4.3 Constructing: Creating Space for the Evolution of International Politics

The Internet has indeed provided a necessary condition for the creation of a world state and the resolution of international boundaries, and contributed to the actual progress of the two trends. As a catalyst for the evolution of the international community, the Internet fulfills its constructing role through the following four sub-functions.

4.3.1 Making the World Flat

On the individual level, the integration of humanities unfolds from the side aspect. Whether from a direct or indirect perspective, humanity is the foundation of level analysis and conception analysis. Three dimensional and differentiated humanities are the primary change effected by the Internet on the international politics. This change will continue until it is reinforced by itself.

On the state level, actors of different fields are involved in common fields. The most important thing about the concept of state is that it is the main actor in the international system. No other actors can substitute for state, as they only play a part in the fields that state has withdrawn itself. We are not living in the era when liberalism opposed realism. As a matter of fact, it is not non-governmental organizations replacing governments, but states are being heavily relied on in all international fields. On the one hand, states do not limit their actions to the political arena, but act in all fields. On the other hand, individuals through their own behaviors are blurring the boundaries between countries, probably posing a real threat to the position of states. The reality is that both states and individuals are developing fast, not states are regressing while NGOs progressing.

On the system level, compared to the capability of individuals, the world is becoming smaller. The nature of the Internet lies in the virtual space it has created. The whole world is occupied by this space, where direct interaction happens between people and between information, and where the opposition between space width and space intensity has been resolved. On the surface, it provides us with convenient, fast and powerful functions; but more importantly, it resolves a conflict we are accustomed to (See Figure 5).

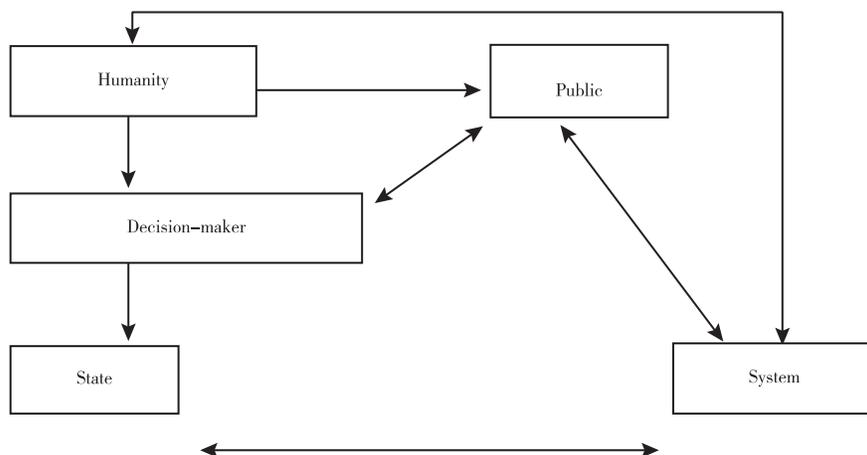


Figure 5 Complex Interactions between Elements of International Community in the Internet Age

4.3.2 Synchronizing the World

On the individual level, the time for interpersonal communication is shortened. This change is notable and simple, but of great significance. People no longer need a medium to communicate with each other. Correspondence and transport modes used to require spatial contacts to function, but it has now all been changed by the Internet, as instant messages of all formats can be sent online. Such network of personal communication also constitutes a flat state and a flat world.

On the state level, states have become more open, and multiple and unitary propositions have become more prominent. The precondition of synchronization is openness of countries. The Internet has such power. However, to have the access to the synchronization services provided by the Internet, the state has to first be part of the virtual world.

On the international system level, states have become more equal. Countries can have access to the latest developments on the Internet. Even when the U.S. will not export its state-of-the-art products to some countries, some information about the products can still be obtained online. It is therefore difficult for states to hide their progress. Decision-makers, technicians, businessmen, and others can have access to the latest progress of humanity from the Internet.

4.3.3 Materializing the Interpersonal Society

On the individual level, due to the identification and materialization of personal characteristics, individuals have become actors in the international system, instead of only being sources of information. This is similar to the changes that happen to humanity, and the only difference is that what is impacted on is a human being in a full sense.

On the national level, actors of all levels have the same distance from information and the same capability of conveying information under normal circumstances.

Countries that hold the mastery of the Internet (e.g. the U.S.) play a dominant role in the process. However, their edges are diminishing as well. As a basic unit of the international community, the state assumes a special position. On the Internet, states are superior, but similar to other organizations, states have to make their own decisions and subject themselves to the judgment of other organizations. They are not the only one who has the right to make judgments. Domestic actors with the help of the Internet have quietly taken part in the international system.

On the international system level, the Internet community covers the whole world, but such a global network is based on individuals as the basic unit. Creating such a large community can only be realized on the Internet. Although the Internet is a virtual community, information exchanges do happen, and the contents of the information are from the real world.

4.3.4 Consolidating Domestic and International Arenas

The Internet's impacts on the levels of individuals, state and international system, on the one hand, demonstrates the integration of the different levels; and on the other hand, reveals that various boundaries still exist between them. In cyberspace, national borders still function, and to some extent act as shields.

Consolidating the domestic and international arenas is a difficult topic in the study of international relations. Whether it is to underline the impact of international issues on domestic issues, or solve domestic issues in the international context, or introduce a neutral concept of "intermestic," the preconditions for consolidating domestic and international arenas have not been identified, and theories only focus on the interaction between different areas. Even when the resolution of international issues is increasingly restricted by the domestic development, and the international arena is witnessing its independence diminishing, there is no sign that the independence of the domestic arena is undermined. In the Internet age, the characteristics of international politics reveal the absent trend in the integration between domestic and international arenas, namely the gradual disappearance of the domestic arena. As cyberspace mainly runs on the behaviors of individuals, individuals undermine the dominant position of state compared to other actors. As NGOs adopts a dissymmetric governance pattern, while people-people interaction is a symmetric governance pattern, this also forcefully sabotages national borders. It echoes Marxism's and constructivism's ideas on the future world, namely classless anarchy operating on the acts of individuals.

5. Conclusion

The above are the impacts of the Internet on international politics, including people becoming isolated, communication speeding up, collective action becoming more difficult to fulfill, national policies becoming more influenced by public opinion, national gaming becoming achievable through certain tools, and other international

political realities. It influences individuals, states and the international system, in the same way as other inventions of the Internet age or other ages, such as the telephone and other communication methods. From this perspective, the Internet only provides a new medium or a platform to enable the interaction between the virtual space and the real world, and make itself an indispensable presence in humans' lives. The Internet cannot substitute for the existing international community, or accomplish the evolution task of the international community. It only creates an opportunity to build a world state. National interests, national power and national security are the real presence of the international community and pursuits of the sovereign states. For example, the U.S. regards cyber-attacks as an act of war, and the U.K. and Germany follow the suit of the U.S. and have adopted their own Internet strategies. It certainly should be noted that the actual impacts of the Internet on the society exhibit that a positive correlation exists between the historical development of the international community and the temporal and spatial capability of humanity.

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