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A Click Away from Democracy:

**The Internet's Effect on Civil Society
Development & Democratization**

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Undergraduate Honors Thesis

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Introduction

“It is only in a society which possesses the greatest freedom, and which consequently involves a thorough Antagonism of its members – with, however, the most exact determination and guarantee of the limits of this freedom in order that it may coexist with the freedoms of other – that the highest purpose of nature, which is the development of all her capacities, can be attained in the case of mankind” (Kant 2005, 93). It appears that, here, Immanuel Kant forewarned of a day when the world would be intertwined by some mechanism, that the most basic aspects of our societies would be able to spread to areas far beyond their physical reach. It is an idea that pervades his democratic peace theory, and a great deal of his other works. However, here he is playing the part of augur rather than scholar. Still, this quote reflects an even larger question that has been prolific in democratization studies over the past few decades: is democracy possible in regions unaffiliated with Western culture and customs? With the introduction of the Internet to democratization studies, this question has become even more significant to an increasingly globalizing world (Keane 2005, 289-291).

This is the broader story behind the possibility of the Internet having a positive correlation with the development of democracy. The intimate part of this story, however, as scholars have found over the years, is that the Internet’s impact on civil society is the specific catalyst toward democratization (Edwards 2009, 113-114; Hill 2003, 527-533). It therefore becomes vital to explain further the connection between the Internet and the development of civil society, as this indirectly has been correlated by scholars with the development of democracy (Diamond 2008, 99-101). Furthermore, the growing prominence of civil society’s discussion in scholarly works over the past 15 years is prodigious to say the least. With the fall of Communism and the continuing attempts by the Western world to promote democracy abroad, civil society

has risen in this sector of democratization studies to be seen as one of the most fundamental pieces of democracy (Edwards 2009, 2). However, this intrinsic pairing between civil society and democracy has as many detractors as it does supporters. Is civil society specific to the capitalist nation-states so prominent in the West? Or, alternatively, is civil society a “universal expression of the collective life of individuals” that has no bounds, be it culture or context (Edwards 2009, 3)? These questions on the validity of civil society in the democratization debate make my research troubling, to say the least. It is this reason why I intend to leave democracy out as much as possible from my final research design and to draw only oblique conclusions on democracy.

It may be obvious to you now that in the realm of democratization studies, there has been an increase in interest in regards to the effects of the Internet. This sub-sect of communication and media studies has been gaining prominence for obvious reasons—over the past decade global Internet usage has increased by almost 400%. For every 100 people, currently 86 people have access to the Web, an increase of about 50 people over the past ten years (“Internet Users” 2009). So, it has been a consistent theme in the literature to link democracy and the Internet, however indirectly (Freedman 2009; Friedman, Hochstetler, & Clark 2005; Guillén & Suárez 2005). This radical increase in the number of Internet users introduces another theme: mass mobilization. Where public outreach has failed, can more private, anonymous forms of outreach be more successful? Social movement theory indicates that movements are finite moments in history, and after a desired outcome is achieved, the necessity of groups formed by this movement is evanescent (Diamond 2008, 65-71). The groups that have more staying power, then, will reflect a civil society, and perhaps the beginnings of democratization.

Still, the over looming complication comes in the form of different cultural influences. The lack of data surrounding the Internet and civil society in historically religious states,

specifically those that have declared themselves to be Islamic states (meaning their state religion is Islam), is of particular interest to my study. A state's declaration of a national religion is of great importance in terms of cultural influence, then. The question to my work therefore becomes, what effect does the Internet have on civil society development within Islamic states? I will analyze two fundamentally Islamic states of somewhat similar characteristics, the main similarity of course being the level of proliferation of the Internet in that state. I will also evaluate Israel due to its religious state status, and its unique democratic characteristic. I will provide further detail on my research design following a comprehensive analysis of the literature and a more formalized presentation of my hypothesis.

Literature Review

When looking at the literature, one can notice a significant divide in the theories, ideas, and approaches as written by different scholars. Collectively, I can place the extant literature in this field into three divisions by content: (1) regional based analysis, particularly with a strong emphasis on East Asia and a minor amount of research on Eastern Europe, (2) research focusing on access to media in general and its effects on democratization, and (3) research evaluating the relationship between Islamic states and democracy. However, none of these topics address directly the question I am looking to answer, which indicates the gap in the literature in religious and democratic studies that I acknowledged previously. Ultimately, little research exists in the analysis of the Internet's affect on "religious" states, even if the region those scholars are examining has strong religious roots in its government, society, or economy. Most scholars, when looking at the characteristics of states in its relationship to any form of media look only to the regime type (i.e.: democratic, authoritarian, communist, etc.). Still, all of this research is incredibly pertinent to my study, as it will inform the context of my studies. The works may not

be dealing with the minutiae of religious politics that I intend to examine, but the methodologies and findings will certainly inform the variables I examine. Moreover, some of the work done in specific regions is very similar to the research I will be doing on the Middle East.

Theory

I will first address the larger theoretical arguments that have been presented by scholars. Specifically, in order to discern the more complicated research that has informed my hypothesis, the larger theoretical background is incredibly pertinent. Little evidence is presented that sees the Internet *directly* influencing democracy, and there are few studies that have even analyzed this relationship in a direct manner. Thusly, the two major theoretical arguments that will be evaluated in my research fundamentally pertain to the Internet's affect on civil society, and the implications of civil society development on the development of democracy. What I found in both of these theoretical questions were conflicting results.

There are several camps projecting different kinds of results on the effect of the Internet on government and society. Some have projected that there is little evidence that the Internet has had any immediate effect on democratization, while others find the Internet to be the next logical step toward democratization in a globalizing world context (Lonkila 2008, 1131-1138; Lord 2006, 5-18). Kristin M. Lord, perhaps the strongest proponent of the former view, expresses that “unfortunately, greater transparency [by way of the Internet] will not always foster understanding or peace and sometimes will make conflicts worse” (Lord 2006, 50). She asserts that the proliferation of Internet use through greater access will actually result in an increase in civil society which will have a *negative* effect on the development of democracy. This specifically contradicts the works of Kant in his democratic peace theory and complicates the works of other scholars, most predominantly Charles Tilly, Larry Diamond, and Ernest Gellner.

They find that civil society, no matter how contentious, will ultimately improve democratic institutions in inchoate democracies or help to create democratic institutions in those states that have none (Friedman, Hochstetler, and Clark 2005, 159-161; Gellner 1991). This is also implicit to the theory that democratization is always occurring, and therefore is a process, meaning that democratic institutions can be improved upon in extant democracies (Tilly 2007). However, it is quite remarkable that in spite of the effect that Lord finds civil society to have on democracy, her ultimate conclusion finds that the Internet does indeed correlate positively with civil society. In this respect, her results compliment, quite well, proponents of the Internet's correlation with civil society, even if they do not completely agree on the implications civil society has for democracy.

Clearly then, most of the extant research places a strong emphasis on the relationship between democratization and civil society. Moreover, as I have acknowledged, studies have shown that the Internet has the capability to increase levels of civil society (Freedman 2009; Muskhelishvili and Jorjoliani 2009). Still, scholars have found that some external factors need to be considered when examining the effect of civil society on democracy. In the case of Muskhelishvili and Jorjoliani's work, that external factor were foreign interventionist actors. Due to the increased funding by foreign NGOs and civil society groups, Georgia was able to democratize successfully in the early millennium. However, as soon as that support began to wane, Georgia's democratization process halted and eventually began to reverse itself. It is therefore key to understand from this case that civil society from *within* the country is necessary (Muskhelishvili and Jorjoliani 2009). Other works support this caveat, specifically that of Lam, which, instead of focusing on an Eastern European state, focuses on East Asia and Macau. He, like Muskhelishvili and Jorjoliani determines that civil society support from international actors can actually hinder development of domestic civil society in the long run (Lam 2008).

In regards to the effect of civil society on democracy, most, save for the few detractors mentioned previously, typically assert that civil society is indeed a vital part in the democratization process (Diamond 2008, 102-105). The few arguments that elucidate on the detrimental aspects of civil society in relation to democratization are largely unqualified for a variety of features. Inglehart and Welzel, while not refuting the importance of civil society in the development of democracy, find that there is a missing step between civil society and democratization: economic development. They argue that without the “elite-centered” push for economic prosperity in democratic transitions, civil society is ineffectual in democratization (Inglehart and Welzel 2005, 15-18). However, problematic in their argument is the assumption that civil society can only develop following the breakup of an authoritarian regime. While the existing literature generally speculates that regime type is an important determinant to the affect of civil society there, Inglehart and Welzel’s work ignores that authoritarian regimes have in the past adopted democratic features in order to perpetuate a façade of unity between government and people. Therefore, modernization theory is not necessarily applicable in the case of civil society due to these outlier factors (Diamond 2008, 103-105, 157-160; Alexander 2004, 607-609). Arguments similar to Inglehart and Welzel that discuss the liberalization of the economy’s effect on democracy also appear to imply the opposite of what they are saying; instead of liberal economic development being a precursor to democracy, it actually follows civil society. Other theorists argue that this liberalization has caused harm to democratic development (Sandel 2005, 196-199). It is therefore difficult to take their argument seriously then, with stronger arguments favoring the opposite, and a wealth of other works asserting a different causal mechanism.

Moreover, the few arguments that did not favor civil society having an impact on the development of democracy made the mistake of looking at the media or the Internet as directly

having an impact on democratic development (Lord 2006). However, as Muskhelishvili and Jorjoliani assert, media does *not* directly affect democratization processes (2009). In fact, Ivor Garber proposes that the “paradox of political communications” in fact deters from democracy. This mostly pertains to its ability to make politicians that much more aware of the message they are portraying rather than the actual policy. Garber takes the case study of the Department of Health in the United Kingdom by examining the amount of positive press releases they issued in 2006 versus how positive those releases actually were in a rather unique study to provide evidence for his thesis (Garber 2007).

The strengths of those arguments behind the positive impact of civil society on democratic development is further questioned as I also previously touched upon Lord’s work on the relationship between the Internet and democracy. Lord’s stance is similar in regards to civil society’s affect on democracy. However, as is typical of her work, she finds that in spite of her findings on a weak relationship between civil society and democracy, she finds that there is some decentralizing effect of transparency through the Internet and media that bodes well for liberal, democratic features to develop (Lord 2006, 93-96). Backtracking in this kind of theoretical literature is common, while the research indicating no relationship between democracy and civil society, or the Internet and civil society are few.

Region Based Analysis

I will now discuss at greater length the regional studies that are most prevalent in this realm of democratization and communications studies. Typically, in terms of Internet research, most studies focused on East Asia, albeit most strongly on China, and a few used Russia and other post-Soviet states in their analysis. In general, there is a discrepancy as to whether or not the Internet actually hurts or helps democracy, and, as I have already elaborated on, some works

focus specifically on that question (Lord 2006; Finel and Lord 1999; Best and Wade 2009). The research in the realm of East Asia and the increased levels of Internet technologies and its accessibility's effect on democracy there address this dichotomy. Most scholars agree that whether a state de-democratizes or democratizes due to the Internet is dependent on two things: (1) regime type of the controlling government and (2) the freedom of the Internet there (Chung 2007; Alexander 2004, 1135-1136). In Chung's paper "Diffusing Power on Concentrating Control," he evaluates the degree to which civil society and democracy develop in China and Korea due to the Internet. He finds, as I previously stated, that due to the restrictions over the Internet in China, little comes about from online to offline protest. Conversely, Korea has no restrictions on the Internet, and most protests generate from online to offline. Thus, when the Internet has greater levels of freedom, civil society has less restrictions on development, and can even maintain a level of secrecy that allows them to express their opinions in an anonymous forum (Chung 2007).

Further elaborating on the factor of regime type, studies also show that it is possible that the Internet could have a purpose beyond the extension of social networks and civil society. In the case of Singapore, the Internet was a device used in order to prevent future economic catastrophe. The authoritarian regime, not unlike that of China, was unaffected by placing these cyber infrastructures in place and granting greater access to the population in order for them to trade economic information. However, while civil society internally was not affected significantly, a variety of external actors have tried to exploit Singapore's information flow in order to provoke change in government (Rodan 2000, 219-220).

This study of Singapore is also revelatory of another consistent theme in the studies of Internet and democratization relations—technological progress. It goes without saying that

technology develops, gets better, and becomes integrated into larger segments of the population over time. So, while many of the studies focused in East Asia and Eastern Europe see few results happening now, they postulate that the current trends indicate that the future will see progress in civic action and eventual democratization (Lonkila 2008, 1145-1146; McGlinchey and Johnson 2007, 284-286; Best and Wade 2009). It is therefore important to understand the impact of time in regards to the subject of Internet proliferation and democratization. Furthermore, the literature suggests that democracy has only recently begun to have an effect on democratization because of these technological advances, which is evident based on the correlations that were barely existent between 1992 and 2002, but were very apparent when only looking at a dataset taken in a *one-year-period* between 2001 and 2002 (Best and Wade 2009).

Media/Internet Access

Few argue that the correlations between democracy and the Internet that have occurred over the past decade are spurious; there is some significant connection between the two, albeit indirect. Some do argue that the correlation may be in reverse, however (Guillén and Suárez 2005; Ott and Rosser 2000). These arguments assert that democracies incur the Internet because, typically, democracies are the wealthiest, most developed countries. Then, in reality, democracy, indirectly, causes growth in Internet usage, and not the other way around. This research, however, is refuted quite effectively in a variety of other studies that cite poorer, more destitute states supporting the growth of the Internet and seeing positive civic, democratic results (Chung 2007; Lonkila 2008). Moreover, as I found in the theoretical literature, modernization theory through the liberalization and opening of the economy has seemed to be an ineffective model for explaining the associations evidenced between civil societies and democracies (Diamond 2008, 103-105). This explanation's strident evaluation of civil society based on the government in

power *can* be a valid one, as I have also previously acknowledged in the literature, specifically with Alexander's work on Russia and Eastern Europe Internet development. However, in only analyzing the economic features, the scholars have missed some of the exceptional cases.

(Diamond 2008, 157-160)

In spite of all of this evidence in the contrary, access to the Internet has proven to be a viable way to study the civil society phenomenon. Halfway through this decade, less than 10% of the world had access to the Internet, and while that number has grown it stands to be reasoned that the "freeness" of the Internet has posed a challenge (Guillén and Suárez 2005, 681-682). Some of the literature that I came across, specifically those detailing Internet proliferation in China, spend quite a bit of time discussing the level of freedom Internet users have in access to their Internet. So, while Internet *access* has increased, the literature at present acknowledges the limitations in their research in regards to how censored that Internet is, and, therefore, how reliable that Internet is for a growing civic community (Chung 2007; Rodan 2000).

Generally, in spite of these differences in region of study or in conclusions, most of these works take a stance on the theory that civil society is a critical feature in moving the democratization process along. However, as I have noted previously, where some of them differ is in how the Internet and increased access to information affect civil society, and, by consequence, democracy. Most research shows that the Internet, when made as available and free as possible, will be a positive and constructive influence on civil society. This of course introduces the question as to what a free and accessible Internet actually is. While one can only make indirect abstractions as to what a free Internet looks like, it can be assumed that a free Internet is one that allows for its users to access certain sites unencumbered by governmental intervention and clandestine surveillance. While the latter is definitely common of the Internet in

all states of sophisticated Internet technologies, the former is something that can be readily measured in a meaningful way in the context of this research. More authoritarian governments are prone to using the Internet to find dissident members of society and prevent their ideas from reaching broader populations. This limits access and certainly prevents a freedom of speech that is supposedly pivotal to the Internet's "anonymous" appeal.

Islam and Democracy

In relation to the possibility of democracy in an Islamist state, the literature reflects two different points of view. Some work looks toward the example of liberalizing countries, like Turkey. Here they establish that the desire to modernize and join the EU has provoked deeply democratic sentiments in a state that is socially ingrained in religion. While Turkey is still in progress with syncretizing and reconciling the seemingly disparate aspects of Islam and secularism, it appears there has been some positive enforcement there (Grigoriadis 2009). Other works point to the Iranian example, which looks like a democracy but in actuality is far from one due to the Islamic leadership. Ultimately though, little work has been done on the growing prominence of the Internet in Islamic states which may be able to explain certain phenomena (Jahanbegloo 2009).

This disparity in the presentation of Islamic states as either "liberal" or "despotic" is consistent in the literature I found in regards to Islam and the prospects for democracy in states of a fundamentally Islamic background. However, it is vital in my research to be able to discern between different levels of Islamic fundamentalism in these states. Therefore, while consistently reevaluating the example of Turkey, the research I looked further into detailed those states that had *declared* Islam as her official religion. The work, when referencing exclusively Islam, sees that there is no inherent problem in the compatibility of Islam and democracy. Ultimately, what

Islam *can be* seen to be incompatible with is the *Western* conception of democracy, and its reliance on the sovereignty of the people (Abootalebi 1999). This, of course, was a common theme in the literature, which ultimately establishes that Western conceptions of civil society, democracy, and modernization are different from those in other regions of the world, specifically the Middle East and Asia.

Additionally, where the work has shortcomings in regards to Internet theory, it is abundant in media studies within the region. Marc Raboy's work describes the media within a possibly democratizing Islamic world, and distinguishes the effect of Internet policy there as somewhat trite considering the level of access there. However, like East Asian communication researchers, he determines that Internet proliferation will continue and ultimately have a positive effect (Raboy 2003).

Furthermore, few studies actually discuss at length the development of civil society in these Islamic states. Only one study in particular stood out, and it was an intensive case study and reliant on field research in the states that the scholar was examining. This qualitative study looked at the role of new media in "internet cafes" in Jordan and Egypt. The author interviewed more than 200 subjects there, which she then compiled in order to emphasize the use of information technology in grassroots campaigns. Furthermore, she finds that information technology diffusion via internet cafes has increased the civic culture and engagement within the Arab world (Wheeler 2006). However, aside from this one study, few studies addressed the broader democratic emphasis and its implications on civil society and vice versa. This serious lack of information on Islamic states and the development of civil society via the Internet is, ultimately, what I used as a catalyst for my project.

Hypothesis

Research in the realm of democratization studies indicates a great disparity in findings about the impact of Internet freedom and growth on developing democracies. Some scholars theorize that growing levels of Internet have had, and will continue to have, an adverse affect on the process of democratization (Best & Wade 2009; Fine & Lord 1999; Guillén & Suárez 2005; Lord 2006). These scholars assert that the Internet creates a way for the government to monitor its people better, and therefore prevent free speech, instead of promote it. Other scholars argue the opposite, that increases in this form of media and consequently in access governmental information lead to higher levels of democracy and increases in democratization processes (Lord 2006, 1-6). While it is still debatable as to which side of the issue is actually correct, I find that the arguments surrounding the latter to be more informed and generally accurate in their research. While Internet proliferation has seen cases of negativity in democracies, those cases are few and rather circumstantial, as I have discussed in my review of the existing literature.

In addition to finding this relationship between democracy and Internet, a great deal of literature discusses the role of the Internet in conjunction with a state's freedom. However, what was quite disconcerting was that few took into consideration the dominant religion of that state, and the effect it had on democracy. Furthermore, those few that did discuss regime orientation in their work left out tribal governments/systems and states with strong religious backgrounds in favor of the more easily definable "authoritarian" or "democratic." (Alexander 2004, 624) I would like to take this area of democratization studies and elaborate on it further in its relationship with the Internet and democratization.

However, what I will ultimately be looking into is not simply one hypothesis, as I am not examining only one theory and one question. The questions of research are twofold: (1) does civil society increase democracy in states of a dominant religion, and (2) does the Internet

increase civil society in those religious states? These questions present themselves largely due to the theoretical arguments that I presented in my literature review. Ultimately, what I found was that when civil society increases in a state, typically in spite of government, religion, or other factors, that state also saw an improvement in its democratic practice. Furthermore, the link between the Internet and the development of civil society has proven to be an incredibly valid and growingly important theory in democratization studies, due to the implications for the initial democratization steps. (Tilly 2007; Diamond 2005; Lonkila 2008) Therefore, I hypothesize based on what I have found in my research that if access to the Internet increases in Islamic states, civil society will also increase. It will be of pertinence in future research to examine whether or not when civil society increases in an Islamic state, if democratization processes also increase.

Due to the United States involvement in the Middle East, and attempts at building democracy there, this topic is hugely pertinent to political scientists and policymakers in the Western world. Moreover, the string of protests along the Maghreb and the Arabian Peninsula that have persisted since the end of 2010 have remarkable implications in regard to social media and the Internet's effect on popular civic protest. Additionally, in terms of academia, I find that this will be a topic through which I will be able to make a statement about the relationship between democracy and the Internet without being terminal or incredibly general. Through exploring other outlier features that were discussed in the literature, I will also be able to avoid spurious correlations and conclusions, making my work both falsifiable and valid in a larger context.

Concepts and Methodology

When considering the research of any social science, it is, of course, important to lay a groundwork from which to base one's analysis. Therefore, in the context of my research into the Web development of states, there must be a solid foundation of what I mean by certain terms. Moreover, as I begin my analysis, it will be paramount to my study to elaborate on the paradigms and areas through which I make my qualitative observations.

Civil Society

Of course, perhaps most important in my evaluation is what I mean by the term "civil society." The various definitions of civil society that have been formulated are somewhat recent phenomena in political science, and because of this ingenuity these definitions have become a source of contention amongst various scholars. I look to the works of Charles Tilly for a definitive account of what is meant by civil society in the context of democracy and democracy-building. Referring to the conference of society as "the voice," Tilly argues that when people get together in any way, whether it is through an organizational structure or through an informal commune, this can be deemed civil society. The development of this voice will ultimately help bring about democratization through actions that go "toward a broader range of popular voices; toward greater equality among these voices; toward the increased binding of rulers' actions by popular voice; and toward greater protection of popular voice from arbitrary action by rulers and their agents" (Tilly 2007, 18).

Religious State

Another interesting aspect of civil society development is of course mobilization, which is at the center of Internet studies in democratization. Specifically, in terms of religious mobilization, Lerner discusses "Islamic activism," which she describes as the "mobilization of

contention to support Muslim causes” (Lerner 2010, 556). Many theorists question whether or not this kind of activism is in fact comparable to more traditional, Western ideas of activism. Lerner, in her discussion of Muslim activism in the context of social movement theory, ultimately concludes that this idea of Islamic exceptionalism is flawed. These theorists argue that the propagation of Muslim themes and ideologies through these mobilization tactics in fact corroborate this exceptionalism. However, as Lerner is quick to note, while the cultural themes being disseminated through mobilization may be different, at their core, the “dynamics, process, and organization” of Islamic activism are very similar (Lerner 2010, 556-557).

This important commonality actually helps me define what I mean by “religious state” in my hypothesis agenda. Lerner’s inclusion of Islamic state actors to the practitioners of traditional social movements through her discussion of Islamic activism is poignant. Primarily it adds a neutrality to the subject area in relation to state actors that will be important to my study, but it also provides justification to what I call a “religious state.” Simply put, in terms of my study, a religious state will be one that has a significant level of religious activism, like that of “Islamic activism.” Additionally, there must be action on the government’s end in promotion of that religion, in spite of varying amounts of authoritarianism. Of course, this definition will immediately call to attention Islamic states, specifically Iran, Egypt, and other states along the Maghreb of Africa and within the Arabian Peninsula.

However, I would also include in this list of “religious states” Israel, a fundamentally Judaic state with a democratic structure laced in religious principles and stringent support for Jewish customs. Moreover, the predominant Judaic bent of Israel by way of the “differential level of governmental, municipal and public services available to [different] population groups (meaning Jewish vs. Arab, Bedouin, etc.)” is similar, admittedly to a far lesser extent than in

most Muslim states, to the kinds of Islamic activism prevalent in Lerner's study of Iran and Egypt (Lerner 2010; Yablon & Katz 2010, 176-177).

Democracy/Democratization

This inclusion of Israel would appear to muddle the system design of my research, as Israel is fundamentally different from the Islamic states through which my analysis finds its origin. While this is true, and it is something that I will address later in discussing my methodology, my inclusion of Israel, and my discussion at large of democracy, points to a vital avenue of discussion. What is democracy? What is democratization? Like civil society, defining democracy has resulted in factious debate amongst scholars and pundits, and has resulted in no authoritative or conclusively universal definition.

For the purposes of this research I find the works of Larry Diamond to be elucidatory in this realm. The breadth of democracy studies and definitions is often difficult to dig through, as it is entrenched in various different cases with varying levels of specificity, which can ultimately frame the way scholars construe their lexicon. As a precursor, there are two variants of definitions by scholars: those that are "thin," and those that are "thick." By thin, I refer to those definitions that find democracy to be any government that has regular, free and fair elections. "Thick" definitions, by contrast, have a laundry list of attributes that must be fulfilled in order to be considered a democracy, including freedom of religion/belief/association, checks on power, and due process in addition to regular, free and fair elections (Diamond 2008, 21-22). For simplicity, I will be looking at democracy as those governments that have free and fair elections on a regular basis. I find this to be acceptable as democracy will be implicit to my discussion, but not an overt aspect of it.

When looking at religious states, especially those that are Islamic, it may be difficult to use this definition of democracy as most countries of an Islamic activist bent have yet to have free or fair elections, if they have ever had them. Predominantly autocratic states exist in the Middle East, and with a great degree of perdurability. Therefore, the concept of democratization becomes of the utmost importance to this study. Moreover, because of empirical evidence provided in two significant case studies in the region, it appears that the Internet may have the capacity to reinforce authoritative regimes, instead of to illegitimate them (Wheeler 2006; Kalathil & Boas 2003). However, the Internet in these studies did have the capacity to call into question the regime and create networks amongst citizens connected to the Web, something that I have already argued to be a development in civil society. So, in this scenario, what is evidenced is not a democracy, but a step in the long process of democratization. Tilly (2007b) proposes that when looking at democracy, considering it as a process is far more prudent than simply considering it as a noun. Decreeing this as “static,” Tilly argues that democracy is a living, breathing process, and because of this, it can also experience a series of trends in the reverse (18). Larry Diamond (2008), aligning himself with Tilly, asserts that democratization has key features, of which civil society development is paramount in my research. It would be foolish, however, to say that these cases examined by Wheeler, Kalathil, and Boas are evidentiary of democratization in the Middle East. Rather, these cases exhibit a developing civil society, which is often seen as a precursor to democracy. It is not exhaustive in this ability.

Case Selection

After establishing the key features through which I will be exploring the Internet in fundamentally religious states, I begin elucidating on the reasoning behind the states I have chosen to explore. In terms of this paper, it is important to understand the Islamic religious

component in the face of the Internet, as this has been a fundamentally predominant aspect of religious and democratization studies. However, for a basis of comparison, I felt as though I would need another case which one could define as a religious state, but was *not* Islamic. Ultimately, in order to atomize the effect of the Internet on religious states, the research needs not to make direct statements about Islam, but a statement on religion as a whole. With this in mind, Israel looked to be a viable option.

Israel is an interesting case to evaluate because it is the only democracy in the Middle East. While it may seem counterintuitive to include a detailed qualitative study of Israel in a research set based on the development of civil society as a precursor of democracy, it provides a useful neutralizing feature in the overall scheme of Internet studies. Moreover, it is representative of an intensely religious state, but not an intensely *Islamic* state. Israel's position as a Zionist and democratic state is interesting. With a parliamentary system, Israeli citizens elect representatives to a 120-seat Knesset, members of which elect a President for a seven-year term. However, certain stipulations exist to bar parties from entering into the parliamentary races. Specifically, Freedom House's (2011) annual *Freedom in the World* report on Israel asserts that "parties or candidates that deny the existence of Israel as a Jewish state, oppose the democratic system, or incite racism are prohibited." Even still, Israel explicitly asserts her tolerance and respect for other religions. While there are controversial cases wherein this would seem to be less than true, those incidents are few and far between.

Compare the religious status of Israel to that of Iran, and one can see the remarkable differences between these two religious states. Iran, like Israel, has a parliamentary system of elections, although the freedom of those elections has been widely contested and deemed inappropriately conducted. Additionally, an unelected body called the Council of Guardians has

final say on which candidates are permitted to go through the final stages of the election process. In this way, the Council of Guardians has had a history of eliminating candidates from reformist or more liberally minded groups, therefore creating an intensely anti-democratic selection process for parliamentary positions. Iran has been intolerant of other religious practices as well, and the Special Court for the Clergy has frequently arrested those clerics and followers who have deviated the farthest from the fundamental Shiite majority of Iran.

Iran has also consistently jailed media and journalists during elections, in contrast to Israel, which has a celebrated liberally minded media. The elected officials, however, do not have much power beyond the supreme leader, the Ayatollah, who is elected by an Assembly of Experts. In fact, the Assembly of Experts has the power to overturn legislation produced by the parliament. One similarity between Israel and Iran, however, is the level of scandal associated with their government practices. Transparency International's 2009 Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Israel number 38 and Iran number 168. While this ranking does not infer that Israel is more "corrupt" than Iran, it does have a perception of corruption that is deemed greater.

Finally, I chose to discuss Egypt as another case due to the implications of former President Hosni Mubarak's recent ouster following intense rioting and social media mobilization during the first quarter of 2011. What is evident about Egypt is its lack of an electoral democracy, in spite of the appearance of one. Mubarak, prior to February of 2011, had occupied the office of President since 1981. Around 2004, Mubarak had attempted to reinvigorate the government through a modernization process that introduced a new cabinet of technocrats, whom Mubarak thought would create a visage of reform. Interestingly enough, Egypt excludes religiously founded parties from election procedures. However, this was more of a politically infused strategy used by the Mubarak regime to prevent the Muslim Brotherhood from entering

into the race. Egypt was also ranked on the Transparency Index, but at 111, it stands between Israel and Iran.

Iran and Egypt share similarities in that Islam is the dominant religion of the state. In spite of Egypt's charges to exclude religiously founded parties, in addition to parties founded on race, gender, or ethnicity, Egypt is a state deeply ingrained in Islamic practices. Additionally, similar to Iran, Egypt has maintained a strong control over the media, and has taken a variety of preventative measures to ensure that recalcitrant journalists remain out of the public eye and are silenced. However, in contrast to Iran, due to the governmental and political structure I have described, Egypt is typically understood to be secular.

Furthermore, where these countries do greatly differ is in the freedom of their Internet access. Israel has a very liberal Internet policy, whereas Iran and Egypt have an unequal level of freedom of access, and freedom of information when it comes to the Internet. As will become evident in my discussion of three events in each of these countries, the access to the Internet and the freedom through which information travels through that Internet will become of great importance in my ultimate findings. With disparate levels of either of these qualities, there will be significant differences in civil society and democratic processes. Due to this, my analysis of the *Marvi Marmara* cargo ship in Israel, the "Twitter Revolution" in Iran, and the very recent Mubarak coup in Egypt, will be able to present a breadth of evidence in the realm of civil society literature.

Event Analysis

The Flotilla Incident

On May 31, 2010, an international flotilla, which included the cruise ship *Mavi Marmara*, a cargo ship, and four smaller crafts, attempted to sail to Gaza with humanitarian aid

for the Palestinians residing there. Traveling on international waters, the flotilla was attacked by an Israeli naval force, killing nine passengers and injuring dozens more. Of those that were injured, many were treated in Israeli hospitals. The injured claimed poor treatment and humiliation at the hands of their Israeli doctors, with some exalting that they were abused. The documentation of the event itself, and the events thereafter, however, are ultimately sparse. All technology possessed by people on the flotilla, including cameras, recording equipment, computers, phones, and other personal effects, were detained by Israeli personnel shortly after the flotilla was attacked (Lightbown 2010, 1-2).

The media response following the incident has also been tepid in that there was no definitive answer as to what had happened. The United Nations Human Rights Council sought to uncover the hidden events through a fact finding mission, decrying the Israel response and their purported attempts to cover-up the occurrence. The events have also attracted legal attention from plaintiffs on the flotilla and with the *Free Gaza* movement through which the humanitarian aid was being supplied. However, these cases have faced trouble in gaining any traction because of the propaganda machine in Israel and their proliferation of, possibly, false information of the events, and those who were killed and injured during the attack, in the media and through the Internet. The incident itself therefore points to an authoritative, rational, and legitimate government power subverting information through the freedom that has been proliferated on the Internet throughout its country. Additionally, the questioning implied with the flotilla event is more pointedly aimed at government transparency.

However, in spite of government attempts to obfuscate information surrounding the event, the Internet helped give voice to those who would normally not be able to speak out. The Internet, coupled with an active foreign media helped uncover facts about the incident previously

unknown from official Israeli reports. They also helped to reinterpret certain Israeli reports, which, while not inaccurate, shed a new light on the occurrences of May 31, 2010 through new information and anecdotal evidence.

The anecdotes enumerated on the Internet and in newspaper and magazine reports are perhaps the most significant development. The Israeli government, in an attempt to avoid negative press, spun the story to elucidate various other features of what happened in late May of 2010. Specifically, Israeli forces were quick in official reports to assert that the flotilla made a stop in Istanbul, picking up 40 more passengers, none of whom, it is believed, went through the necessary procedures to check for safety. As per an official of *Free Gaza*, a private security agency was hired to verify that the boats were devoid of weapons and that all passengers were not radical extremists. There were also reports of extremist behavior within the flotilla by individuals (Lightbown 2010, 3-6).

Still, in spite of any spin that may or may not have occurred at the hands of the Israeli government, the flotilla incident in 2010 is rather unique in Internet and national commentary literature. Where it is unique should be obvious in the context of this paper. In this case we have a democratic religious government reacting to exogenous forces that support another cause that is unpopular in their domestic politics. Israel, with a government that is far more transparent than the ones I will be discussing in Egypt and Iran, finds itself in a contradictory predicament. Against democratic ideals, information is apparently opaque to the press and the citizens of Israel in an effort to ensure international supremacy and good faith from other international actors. Israel has occupying powers over the Gaza strip, which hosts millions of Palestinians, and therefore control over the area. Israeli citizens overwhelmingly do not support a Palestinian-

controlled Gaza, and therefore have less of an investment in decrying the actions of the government against a nonprofit, humanitarian group supporting Gaza refugees.

Thus, the anecdotes and the observations by those directly involved had very little effect on the development of civil society within the religiously homogenous Israel. Due to their overall liberal ideology in domestic politics, an adherence to an open media, and a very accessible Internet (over 70%), commenters and bloggers on the Internet sharing their experiences and opinions had little effect on the general democratic landscape of Israel. Moreover, many of those using the Internet to proliferate a conspiracy theory were admittedly anti-Zionist and not Israeli (“Israel Internet Usage and Marketing Report” 2009). The response to the flotilla event, in the media and on the Internet, would appear to have done very little to increase, or for that matter, decrease the amount of civil society in Israel. This could be for a variety of factors, as enumerated previously. Thus, one may be able to determine that in an already developed democratic society with highly sophisticated citizens and an extensive technological infrastructure, the Internet does little to affect civil society development within a country.

The Twitter Revolution of Iran

In the realm of social media, Twitter is of indelible concern to democratization and social mobilization theorists for two reasons: it is public and it is virtually unstoppable. Twitter updates, or “tweets,” go out on two networks—the Internet *and* SMS, which is used for text messaging systems. Additionally, Twitter is a broadcast service, unlike Facebook or MySpace, and can therefore allow for messages to be accessed by virtually anyone. These two characteristics make Twitter interesting for theorists because it is a soapbox for all citizens with Internet or phone

access and that message can be similarly accessed by anyone with similar connectivity (Grossman 2009).

This of course points to the larger argument residing in the civil society literature. As more people join together, through whatever means, the more power they have in a system, and the stronger the case for democracy becomes. A social mobilization tool over the Internet would of course indicate that civil society would be at the zenith of its development in any society or state. This is the argument for what occurred in the summer of 2009 during the elections in Iran. With the advent of social media upon them, discontent Iranians took to the information highways following corrupt electoral procedures. Disputing the victory of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Iranian people used the Internet to mobilize protests across the country. What made this election unusual was the high voter turnout, and, of course, the technological innovations of the time. Moreover, there appeared to be discrepancies at the provincial level, wherein a previously unrecorded conservative subset was apparently voting for Ahmadinejad. The results also implied that previously Reformist party voters had voted significantly in favor of Ahmadinejad, in spite of continued conflict. Still, it was not the first time that Iranian elections had produced suspicious results. However, now, where there had previously been roadblocks, there were roads, and it became difficult for the government to shut down the networks through which “tweets” could travel.

Twitter’s resilience to censorship, an important distinction from other social media Web sites, is not the only reason for such widespread use of the technology. The site’s ability to consolidate certain messages in the same server makes it easier for revolutionaries and dissidents to follow the activity in the country. Similar protests occurred in Moldova prior to the summer of 2009 with similar reasons. In these scenarios, Twitter became a way to organize and mobilize a

group of people who would have otherwise never met. Common “hashtags,” aka the term used to signify a “trending” or popular topic on Twitter, in June of 2009 in Iran included “IranElection.” “IranElection” was used by Twitter users in order to brief all readers of what was going on in the country. As one Iranian recounts, “We have no national press coverage in Iran, everyone should help spread Moussavi’s message. One person equals one broadcaster” (Stone & Cohen 2009).

The literature in the realm of civil society revealed that exogenous forms of civil society development can actually have an adverse effect on democratization processes (McGlinchey and Johnson 2007; Best and Wade 2009). New reports indicate that non-Iranians or refugee Iranian citizens were actually composing many tweets being sent out onto the Twitter networks outside of the country. Ultimately, it is difficult to detect empirically from where these messages were coming. As the Iranian government began to shut down servers and diminish connectivity across the country, many proxy servers opened up from neighboring countries. One server abroad can provide connections for about 750 people at any one moment. There were reported proxy services coming from as far away from Iran as San Francisco (Stone & Cohen 2009). Theorists argue that foreign aid in this manner can be harmful to proper development within the country for culturally significant forms of civil society (Muskhelishvili and Jorjoliani 2009).

Many have even argued that the explanation of social media and the Internet as a proliferation of such civic engagement and acts of mobilization are merely ways for “Western” theorists and diplomats to make sense of what occurred in Iran. Alex Burns and Eltham (2009) elaborate, “Iran’s domestic politics lies outside the Lockean political universe which has shaped US foreign policy thinking... this incommensurability lies at the heart of why a social media solution may have appealed to US State Department policymakers” (299-300). Looking at the

extant literature on Western conceptions of mobilization and civil society, there is some validity in this assessment.

Moreover, the religious component of this state does not come into play in this scenario. So, arguably, assessing the proliferation of the Internet in a fundamentalist religious state may be moot. Contextually, the differences between sophisticated Western uses of modern technology and states with a heavy religious bent will be severe. However, particularly in the case of electoral procedures, the issue is already so predominantly not-religious at the surface, that it is difficult to see whether or not a religious background has *anything* to do with mobilization and civil society development.

Regardless of these qualms and questions, the main question, as always, is, did the Internet component actually increase civil society in the country? Ultimately, it appears that it did not, in this limited instance. In fact, forms of protest similar to this has not been uncommon in the country, albeit with different pieces forming a familiar puzzle. Iran has no real parliamentary system, despite its declarations. This is also in spite of a reformist legislature. The obstacles that exist in the Iranian Constitution and within the legal framework are too significant to allow for democratization. The stringent qualities that are inhibited to the governmental framework of Iran has burned the people before and led to upsets in Tehran. Only 6 years prior to the 2009 elections, university-student demonstrations erupted when the courts voted to execute a professor and strong advocate of democracy and freedom of speech for the “crime of blasphemy” (Jahanbegloo 2003, 159-161). While the students received victory in the Courts decision to release their professor, it also perpetuated an illegitimate legislature and the supremacy of the judiciary.

In this scenario, much like the “Twitter Revolution,” it appears that the civil society that appeared to be developing through group-augmented activity may actually be more reflective of a social movement, which has a more stated beginning, middle, and end. While I have used the two terms loosely in conjunction with one another, a social movement is ultimately different from civil society. The two share many similar characteristics. They are both group oriented, with the capacity to include thousands and more members depending on various factors. They are organized around similar goals and activities which bind them together. Finally, they have the capacity to be political, with social movements obviously being almost exclusively political in nature.

When looking at the 2009 Iranian election, it is hard to definitively assert that what occurred because of the Internet was actually civil society development. Again, there is little empirical evidence suggesting that these kinds of relationships continue beyond the initial incident. There are even more questions surrounding whether or not there were actually very many Iranians involved at all. This lack of data makes the case far more difficult to evaluate. In this way, the Twitter Revolution proves to be lacking as a proper means of evidence for the Internet having a positive function in the civil societies of religious states.

The Fall of Mubarak

Finally, it becomes of great pertinence to the civil society and Internet literature theorists to discuss the recent events that have continued to transpire in Egypt since the fall of the Hosni Mubarak regime. The immediacy of the event and its freshness in the news cycle makes it an interesting case. Like the Twitter Revolution in Iran, the revolts that occurred in Egypt in early 2011 reflect a growing trend of social media virtually mobilizing masses of publicly censored citizens. In addition, similarly, to the events of 2009 in Iran, the ensuing revolts were resultant of

election procedures. However, where Iran and Egypt differ in this respect is in the persistence of the Egyptian revolts and the apparent success of them.

During the latter half of this past January, ignited by a series of protests in other Middle Eastern and Islamic countries, Egyptian citizens rallied and called for the end of the nearly 30 year reign of President Hosni Mubarak. After nearly twenty days of protest, Mubarak stepped down from the presidency and many unpopular provisions of the Egyptian Constitution were amended or redacted. The military stepped in at the behest of the Egyptian people and other intervening countries' diplomats, and it continues to lead the country. Questions regarding the military's support of Mubarak's confidantes at the top of the government and a new law passed in March paving way for new elections have been raised in Egypt.

How did this occur? In a country of roughly 80 million, about 20 million of those people have access to the Internet. Egypt is also in a unique position in that many connections between Asia and Europe are routed through their systems, as they are one of the more advanced "technocrats" in the region. So, when all four Egyptian ISPs were seemingly dropped, including various cell phone providers, questions arose. Partly reactionary to the social media infused uprisings in Tunisia and partly preemptive of its own people, the Egyptian government attempt to choke the Internet at exchange points was somewhat ineffective. Like in Iran, the way the Internet and several innovations on the Internet have evolved over time, simply turning the "off switch" is no longer a viable option to silence a discontented public. Satellite communication, landlines, and the ever-durable Twitter were still available means of interaction outside the country (Chen 2011, 1-2). The government shutdown of the Internet points to the possibly revolutionary characteristic of social media. While the successes of this kind of mobilization and

development is still being questioned, the mere fact that Egyptian leadership took such action reveals the inherent power in the Internet as a unifying force against oppression.

Regardless, as was the concern of scholars in regards to the Twitter Revolution, it is questionable as to how much the Internet really did to affect the outcome of Mubarak finally stepping down in mid February of 2011. As previously asserted, while roughly 20 million of its people have access to the Internet, that is only about a quarter of the population. More precarious is that over 30% of Egyptians are illiterate. This of course introduces some legitimacy questions in regards to the Internet usage in the country. Specifically, if that many people are not literate, then how can a meaningful and sophisticated civil society develop from the Internet? The presence of educated leaders may indicate that a civil society can develop, but how can these leaders reach a significant portion of the population via the Internet when they are illiterate? It should also be noted that on January 27, the first day of the major protests in Tahrir Square, that Internet usage was reportedly close to zero following a government shutdown of all endogenous networks. In spite of this, thousands upon thousands of Egyptian citizens marched onto Tahrir Square in protest of the Mubarak regime (Al Sharekh 2011, 54-57). Some organizers sent messages from exogenous networks while the rest was spread by word. It can be safely assumed that while the Internet played a huge role at the start, it may have been less significant as the revolts proceeded. Additionally, the added factor that Mubarak stepped down due to foreign insistence along with citizen uprising complicates a measurement of how the Internet shaped the debate, at the moment.

Taking this into consideration, what effect did the Internet have at all? How did the Internet come to be involved in the media's interpretations of the Egyptian protests? It would not be fair to say that the Internet was *not* involved in the mass protests. However, at the same token,

it would be disingenuous to grant it complete credit. In fact, the reason the Internet appears so frequently in reports from Egypt has something to do with Western journalism. Specifically, American norms and values played a role in this miscommunication. In America, the Internet is seen as an “equalizing” force in the world because of its information spreading capabilities. As one scholar observes of the world, “People realized that the most powerful aspect of the Internet is its ability to bring together people of similar interests (academic or otherwise) and enable them to become patterns in a virtual community, where they could interact freely in real time or at least in a very fast manner” (Abdulla 2010, 30-31). However, despite the Internet’s ability to join together communities, it cannot be safely assumed that it has the ability to change the infrastructures of civil societies in oppressive government regimes like Egypt and Iran.

Additionally, the vital role that the decidedly religious Muslim Brotherhood played in the mobilization of protesters that led to the resignation of Mubarak is a troubling aspect to my hypothesis’s validity. While one may argue that the Internet’s role in this uprising did foster some form of development on the civil society front, in that many people are now more likely to align themselves with the Muslim Brotherhood due to their visibility in the region, that civil society development will not likely result in democratization. The Muslim Brotherhood has had a complex history with cases of intolerance and questionable equity practices. The history of similar uprisings giving way to democratically elected religious majorities has shown that regimes have remained oppressive or become even more so, which was the case in Palestine, Algeria, and Sudan (Al Sharkeh 2011, 58-60). Finally, the evidence and data collected on this event are very new, and it is likely that more will be understood in the coming months about the Egyptian revolts.

Conclusion

It can safely be assumed that the Internet does not actually have a great effect on the development of civil society in religious states. Still, it is obvious that the Internet can play a positive role in development. The reactions by governments when met with revolutionary fervor on the Internet seems to indicate that the Internet, when unencumbered by serious government intervention, can and will have a mobilizing and civil society developing bent. The example of Egypt is profound in that the initial government shut down of the Internet, while successful, could not silence its people. The perdurable quality of the Internet, in that once something is written it can never be unwritten, is somewhat unique to civil society development. Therefore, when government controls of the Internet were lifted in response to foreign pressure, the revolts intensified as more information became streamed. When one looks at the Iran example, this quality can also be examined. The main difference between the two cases is the level of censorship and the sensitivity to foreign actors.

While I would have expected to have found differing results in more autocratic and authoritative regimes like those in Iran and Egypt compared to a democratic government like Israel, what I found was that all of their governments do censor the Internet, albeit in varying degrees. While in Israel most of the censorship was in the kinds of information being released over the Web by journalists, in Egypt and Iran, where journalism and open media is not prevalent, it was more common for the regimes there to simply “shut off” and stop the Internet. Keeping these networks from functioning in a meaningful way was a governmental attempt to prevent massive protest and organization. Government action against the Internet reveals the threat that authoritative regimes feel from the possibility of net-based mobilization. If the

Internet is left uncensored, it has the potential to mobilize people and actually facilitate movements.

This also points to another issue in the theoretical sense: what is mass mobilization and what is civil society? In looking at the literature, while they have many similarities, the differences between the two seem to indicate that these events described previously are more akin to a social movement than to civil society development. In Iran, for example, the revolutions were finite. The “Twitter Revolution” had a definitive beginning and end. Once the opposition was silenced by the government authority, the movement ceased to be a presence in the public’s eye. The same can be said of Mubarak’s resignation and the Egyptian “revolution” from earlier this year. While those events are still unfolding, it does seem that it was more so a social movement since no significant groups have risen from the ashes of Mubarak’s fall. Moreover, this was a case wherein there was a singular goal to oust the Mubarak regime. Arguably, once that goal was achieved, the level of involvement decreased dramatically.

One could argue that the Muslim Brotherhood stands to gain a lot of power from this event. I argue that this is still not strong enough evidence for civil society development. The Muslim Brotherhood existed prior to 2011, and the addendum to the Constitution allowing for greater access for all groups in electoral procedures does not indicate that civil society will develop. This is a far more political in nature development than cultural, which is usually more indicative of civil society. The decidedly undemocratic nature of the Muslim Brotherhood is also a troubling aspect in this regard, too.

In terms of democratization, as was indicated in the literature review, many theorists actually find the Internet and civil society to sometimes be adversarial to democracy development. Civil society is usually less contentious in the social sciences, in that many agree

on its basic terms and its implications. However, there is some evidence that the Internet can affect democracy detrimentally. In Egypt and Iran, Internet users proliferating negative sentiment for the government were found using the very medium through which they attempted to attack their governments. The Internet can actually be a tool to “track down troublemakers” in repressive regimes. It also allows for governments to monitor more closely its most recalcitrant members of society. This is not isolated to authoritative governments. The United States of America uses similar procedures using the USA PATRIOT Act. There have been several initiatives in Congress to grant more powers to the executive in the realm of Internet technologies in order to protect critical infrastructures. To a learned member of society, this could be interpreted as but another way for the government to co-opt free speech in order to prevent terrorism and other atrocities. Regardless, this “double-edged sword” aspect of the Internet, in that it has the ability to promote greater freedom but also smother it, is something that can be observed in the Iranian and Egyptian cases. Remarkably, what I find interesting, is that governments should be concerned about the power of the Internet, and their reactions to disobedience on the Web is not unfounded for authoritative regimes. The Internet has the ability to foster negative sentiment for a government, and, as has been observed in the cases, it can have the power to unseat powerful regimes.

So, where can the research go in the future? Obviously, more empirical evidence needs to be collected in regards to Internet activities abroad. While certain journals and databases do exist that elaborate on Internet usage in various countries, the level of accuracy is debatable. Additionally, more work needs to be done in order to measure the level of civil society in the world. There have been substantive efforts to do this, specifically by the World Bank and the United Nations, with a major effort currently being undertaken by CIVICUS in their Civil

Society Index (CSI). What this research will imply and assert on the state of civil society development is yet unknown, but it is likely to invigorate the field substantially.

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