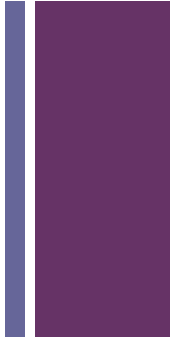


# PSIR 101– INTORODUCTION TO GLOBAL POLITICS

INFORMATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

# + INFORMATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA



## READING

- “The Rise of Big Data How It's Changing the Way We Think About the World” by Cukier, K. and Mayer-Schoenberger, V.



# THE BIG DATA REVOLUTION?



- What is big data?
  - Huge quantities of information available for decision making and new forms of research.
  - The ‘rise of big data’ is linked to digitizing of information and the ease at which it is stored.
    - Today less than 2% of all stored info is non-digital
  - How big is ‘big data’?
    - 1,200 exabytes or 5 separate towers of CDs reaching the moon!
    - 1 exabyte = 1 000 000 000 000 000 000 Bytes

# + Big Info to Big Data

- Information that may seem random and insignificant to us is used as data by researchers.
- e.g. Google is able to predict flu outbreaks before any government or international agency thanks to algorithms they developed and the correlation analysis they conduct on 'search terms' used by Google users . A government would have to collect data from different hospitals and pharmacists regarding flu specific instances.
  - Google searches for 'runny nose' and headache'

# + What lead to 'datafication'?

- Cheap storage
- Fast processor technology
- Algorithms and software

For more info on how algorithms are used see:

Kevin Slavin's TED Lecture : How algorithms shape our world.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENWVRcMGDoU>

# + Some consequences



- Availability of huge quantities of data means that scientists at times do not even need to write specific software but rather use big data and inferential statistics
- e.g. Google translate works this way when it needs to determine which alternative word to use as a translation of a word.

# + Some consequences

- Use of big data instead of drawing a sample (from a population)
  - e.g. To do a marketing survey, researchers might look at the facebook 'likes' rather than collecting questionnaires
- Increase in use of 'correlation analysis' instead of 'causal analysis' (x causes y). It is very difficult to control for all the causes (independent variables)  
Correlation analysis with big data is more efficient.
  - See the Google flu outbreak example



## + Big Data and Politics

Big data will change the nature of politics and how governments work. New York City (mayor Michael Bloomberg) is using big data to improve public services and lower costs. E.g fire prevention strategy.







# Big Data and Politics



A need to protect citizens against unhealthy market dominance. Companies such as Google, Amazon, and Facebook are amassing vast amounts of information on everyone and everything.

How should governments apply antitrust rules to big data, a market that is hard to define and that is constantly changing form?

# + Big Data and Politics

- Big data or big brother? In particular in non-democratic countries, big data exacerbates the existing asymmetry of power between the state and the people.





# Diplomacy and International Politics in the era of Social Media



- Uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa or the so called 'Arab Spring' has lead to debates about the role of Social Media.
- To refer to the importance of this Philip Seib (2012) states that ' the dynamics of the Middle East affect the rest of the global community, and in this instance we will see lasting change in the ways that international relations are conducted' (p. 1).



# Diplomacy and International Politics in the era of Social Media

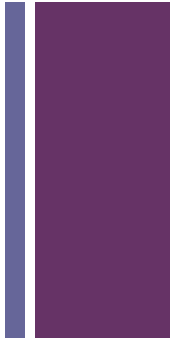


- Seib (2002) further highlights that the way diplomacy is conducted will have to be altered in the 'social media' era.
- Nonetheless, he iterates that the changes taking place in North Africa and Middle East should not be reduced to the label of 'Twitter revolutions' as this would be disrespectful to those who took to the streets at great risk to demand change.
- So in a sense the Social Media is the 'amplifier' of the existing accumulated grievances of the people.

# + The Era of Social Media

- This is also similar to what Darnton says:

'Radio did not destroy the newspaper; television did not kill radio; and the Internet did not make TV extinct. In each case the information environment became richer and more complex. That is what we are experiencing in this crucial phase of transition to a dominantly digital ecology' [Darnton (2011) cited in Seib (2012)]





# Social Media and the Public Sphere



- Spread of the use of social media brought also the debate about its democratizing effects.
- Could we be moving to a ‘direct democracy’ with voice of the citizen being heard at all times? ‘Do digital tools enhance democracy?’ as Clay Shirkey asks.
- As Shirkey (2011) says digital tools like Social Media do bring positive results to those societies that are already under constraints of governments.



# Governments and Social Media



- Shirkey (2011) also claims that adopting a policy of supporting 'internet freedom' does not bring the result of a 'strong public sphere' in target societies.
- Mass media and Social Media alone would not provide a change if the foundation of a civil society is missing.

# + Questions for discussion



- What are the positive and negative outcomes of big data?
- What principles if any should guide governments in their new media policy?
- How should governments use 'Social Media' in their diplomatic relations?
- What was the effect of social media on the uprisings in the Middle East?





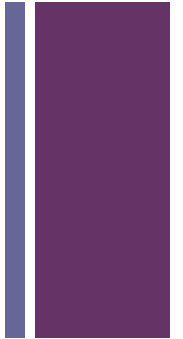
# Sources and Links

- Darnton, R. (2011) “Five Myths of the ‘Information Age’”  
*Chronicle of higher education*, April 2011

available at

<http://chronicle.com/article/5-Myths-About-the-Information/127105/>

- Habermas, J. (1962[1994]) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. London: Polity Press.
- Habermas, J. (1996) *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Diplomacy*. London: Polity Press.





# Sources and Links

- Seib, P. (2012) *Real Time Diplomacy: Politics and Power in the Social Media Era*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Seib, P. (2012) "Social Media and the Foreign Policy Landscape: The Arab Awakening of 2011 and Beyond" *Crossroads*, 3(2):37-47.
- Shirkey, C. (2011) "The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere and Political Change" *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 90, Issue 1, 28-39
- Kevin Slavin's TED Lecture : How algorithms shape our world.

available at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENWVRcMGDoU>

