

MA Seminar: Communication Technology, Protest, and Conflict

Spring Semester 2017
University of Zurich

When: Wednesday 14:00-15:45
Lecturer: Prof. Anita R. Gohdes
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Office hours: Tuesdays, 2-4pm

1 Summary

From Iran to the Ukraine to the Arab Spring, New Media seems to have provided protesters on the streets with new means to voice their grievances and mobilize against repressive rulers. At the same time, governments from China to Turkey are steadily increasing censorship of the Internet. This course will focus specifically on the ways in which information and communication technology, including mobile phones, social media and geographical location tools has changed the opportunities, choices and incentives of protest movements, armed organizations, and governments. It will cover recent studies in Political Science analyzing censorship, protest dynamics and conflict eruption in a comparative setting, and also touch upon important contributions from Communication Studies and Computer Science.

2 Office Hours

Office hours are held every week on Tuesday 14.00-16.00, in AFL-H-350. Students are expected to visit the office hours at least once over the course of the semester to discuss their ideas for the research paper.

3 Assessment

1. **Active Participation (10%):** Students are expected to have read and engaged with the mandatory readings and come to class prepared to discuss them. To facilitate discussion, students are expected to formulate three bullet points for each article, which should include:
 - a question
 - a point of agreement

– a point of disagreement

2. **Presentation (20%):** Students will form groups of two and prepare one presentation over the course of the semester. The presentations will build on the additional reading material and focus on providing an answer to a specific question. The questions are listed in the respective sessions below. The questions are deliberately vague and students are encouraged to refine the question independently, and focus on a specific aspect they identify as important. With 14 participants we will have a total of 7 presentations, and students will be able to register for a slot between March 1st and March 4th. The presentation will be 15 minutes long, plus an additional 5-10 minutes of discussion. The first presentation will be on March 29th.
3. **Research Paper (70%):** To complete the written assessment, students are expected to write a research paper (6000-8000 words, approx. 15 pages). Students are free to pick their own topic, but are expected to discuss their research ideas at least once during office hours. We have the session on the 3rd of May, as well as the final session blocked for specific discussions of research paper ideas.

The topic of the research paper needs to relate to the one or more topics covered in this course and substantially engage with theories and empirical studies discussed throughout the semester. Students may use either quantitative or qualitative methods to complete this task. The deadline for the final paper is **July 1st, 2017**.

The course will be conducted in English, and students are expected to submit all deliverables in English.

4 Readings

Mandatory readings are marked with a (*).

Part I: What's the Internet got to do with it?

1 March 2017: Introduction

- *Clay Shirky. The political power of social media: Technology, the public sphere, and political change. *Foreign Affairs*, 90:28, 2011. URL <http://sites.asiasociety.org/womenleaders/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/The-Political-Power-of-Social-Media-Foreign-Affairs2.pdf>
- *Zeynep Tufekci. New media and the people-powered uprisings. *MIT Technology Review*, 30 August, 2011. URL <http://www.technologyreview.com/view/425280/new-media-and-the-people-powered-uprisings/>
- *Nils B Weidmann. Communication, technology, and political conflict. *Journal of Peace Research*, 52(3):263–268, 2015. doi: 10.1177/0022343314559081. URL <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022343314559081>

- R. Kelly Garrett. Protest in an information society: a review of literature on social movements and new icts. *Information, Communication & Society*, 9(2):202–224, 2006. doi: 10.1080/13691180600630773. URL <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13691180600630773>
- Mark Landler and Brian Stelter. Washington taps into a potent new force in diplomacy. *The New York Times*, 16 June, 2009. URL <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/17/world/middleeast/17media.html>
- Sean Aday, Henry Farrell, and Marc Lynch. Blogs and bullets: New media in contentious politics. *United States Institute of Peace, Peaceworks*, 65, 2010
- Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen. The future of internet freedom. 11 March 2014, 2014. URL <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/12/opinion/the-future-of-internet-freedom.html>

8 March 2017: Early studies / Liberation Technology?

- *Tiffany Danitz and Warren P. Strobel. The internet’s impact on activism: The case of burma. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 22(3):257–269, 1999. doi: 10.1080/105761099265766. URL <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/105761099265766>
- *Larry Diamond. Liberation technology. *Journal of Democracy*, 21(3):69–83, 2010. URL <http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles-files/gratis/Diamond-21-3.pdf>
- Joshua Goldstein and Juliana Rotich. Digitally networked technology in kenya’s 2007–2008 post-election crisis. *Berkman Center Research Publication*, (2008-09), 2008. URL <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un-dpadm/unpan042523.pdf>
- Joshua Goldstein. The role of digital networked technologies in the ukrainian orange revolution. *Berkman Center Research Publication*, 14, 2007. URL https://cyber.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.harvard.edu/files/Goldstein_Ukraine_2007.pdf
- Blake Hounshell. The revolution will be tweeted. *Foreign Policy*, 20 June, 2011. URL http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/06/20/the_revolution_will_be_tweeted
- Mridul Chowdhury. The role of the internet in burma’s saffron revolution. *Berkman Center Research Publication*, (2008-8), 2008

Part II: Revolution Technology?

15 March: Guest Lecture on ‘The Internet and Mass Protest in Autocracies’

This week we will have Dr. Espen Geelmuyden Rød visiting. He will be talking about his new book project (joint work with Nils Weidmann). Dr. Rød is a post-doc at the Communication, Networks and Contention Research Group at the Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Konstanz. His research interests include autocratic regimes and democratization, protest, the bureaucracy, political institutions, and Information and Communication Technology.

- *Espen Geelmuyden Rød & Nils B Weidmann (2017) *The Internet and Mass Protest in Autocracies*, book manuscript, chapters 2-4.

22 March: Uprisings

- *Sandra González-Bailón, Javier Borge-Holthoefer, Alejandro Rivero, and Yamir Moreno. The dynamics of protest recruitment through an online network. *Nature*, 1:1–7, 12 2011. URL <http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/srep00197>
- *Zeynep Tufekci and Christopher Wilson. Social media and the decision to participate in political protest: Observations from tahrir square. *Journal of Communication*, 62(2):363–379, 2012
- Anita Breuer, Todd Landman, and Dorothea Farquhar. Social media and protest mobilization: Evidence from the tunisian revolution. *Democratization*, 22(4):764–792, 2015
- Ora John Reuter and David Szakonyi. Online social media and political awareness in authoritarian regimes. *British Journal of Political Science*, 45(1):29–51, 9 2015. ISSN 1469-2112. doi: 10.1017/S0007123413000203
- Ethan Zuckerman. Cute cats to the rescue? participatory media and political expression. In Danielle Allen and Jennifer Light, editors, *Youth, New Media and Political Participation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014. URL <http://ethanzuckerman.com/papers/cutecats2013.pdf>
- Zachary C. Steinert-Threlkeld. Spontaneous collective action: Peripheral mobilization during the arab spring. *American Political Science Review*, forthcoming

29 March: Dynamics and Tools

- *William L Youmans and Jillian C York. Social media and the activist toolkit: User agreements, corporate interests, and the information infrastructure of modern social movements. *Journal of Communication*, 62(2):315–329, 2012
- *Michael D. Conover, Emilio Ferrara, Filippo Menczer, and Alessandro Flammini. The digital evolution of occupy wall street. *PLoS ONE*, 8(5):e64679, 05 2013. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0064679
- Gilad Lotan, Erhardt Graeff, Mike Ananny, Devin Gaffney, Ian Pearce, and Danah Boyd. The arab spring| the revolutions were tweeted: Information flows during the 2011 tunisian and egyptian revolutions. *International Journal of Communication*, 5(0):1375–1405, 2011. ISSN 1932-8036. URL <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/1246>
- Sean Aday, Henry Farrell, Deen Freelon, Marc Lynch, John Sides, and Michael Dewar. Watching from afar. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(7):899–919, 2013. doi: 10.1177/0002764213479373. URL <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0002764213479373>
- Sean Aday, Henry Farrell, Marc Lynch, John Sides, and Deen Freelon. Blogs and bullets ii: New media and conflict after the arab spring. *United States Institute of Peace, Peaceworks*, 80, 2012
- Sebastián Valenzuela. Unpacking the use of social media for protest behavior. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(7):920–942, 2013. doi: 10.1177/0002764213479375. URL <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0002764213479375>

- Golnaz Esfandiari. The twitter devolution. *Foreign Policy*, June 2010. URL http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/07/the_twitter_revolution_that_wasnt
- Noam Cohen. Twitter on the barricades: Six lessons learned. *The New York Times*, 20 June, June 2009. URL <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/21/weekinreview/21cohenweb.html>
- Malcom Gladwell. Small change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted. *The New Yorker*, 4 October, 2010. URL <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/10/04/small-change-3>
- Zeynep Tufekci. After the protests. *The New York Times Op-Ed*, March 19, 2014a. URL <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/20/opinion/after-the-protests.html>

Presentation Question 1: *Has Twitter made protesting harder or easier?*

Part III: Communication Technology and Conflict

5 April: Cell phones and conflict violence

- *Jan H. Pierskalla and Florian M. Hollenbach. Technology and collective action: The effect of cell phone coverage on political violence in africa. *American Political Science Review*, 107(2):207–224, May 2013. ISSN 1537-5943
- *Jacob N. Shapiro and Nils B. Weidmann. Is the phone mightier than the sword? cell phones and insurgent violence in iraq. *International Organization*, 69(02), 247-274, 2015
- Catie Snow Bailard. Ethnic conflict goes mobile. *Journal of Peace Research*, 52(3):323–337, 2015. doi: 10.1177/0022343314556334. URL <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022343314556334>
- T Camber Warren. Explosive connections? mass media, social media, and the geography of collective violence in african states. *Journal of Peace Research*, 52(3)(3):297–311, 2015. URL <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022343314558102>

Presentation Question 2: *Are cell phones more useful for governments or for rebels?*

12 April: The Internet during wartime

- *Marc Lynch, Deen Freelon, and Sean Aday. Blogs and bullets iii: Syria’s social mediated war. *United States Institute of Peace, Peaceworks*, 91, 2014
- *Anita R. Gohdes. Pulling the plug: Network disruptions and violence in civil conflict. *Journal of Peace Research*, 52(3):352–67, 2015
- Thomas Zeitzoff. Using social media to measure conflict dynamics: An application to the 2008-2009 gaza conflict. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 55(6):938–969, 2011. doi: 10.1177/0022002711408014. URL <http://jcr.sagepub.com/content/55/6/938.abstract>

Presentation Question 3: *What are DDoS attacks and how can they be used in civil war?*

26 April: Social media and conflict

- *Thomas Zeitzoff. Does social media influence conflict? evidence from the 2012 gaza conflict. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 0(0):0022002716650925, forthcoming. doi: 10.1177/0022002716650925
- *Benjamin T. Jones and Eleonora Mattiacci. A manifesto, in 140 characters or fewer: Social media as a tool of rebel diplomacy. *British Journal of Political Science*, forthcoming
- Pablo Barberá and Thomas Zeitzoff. The new public address system: Why do world leaders adopt social media? 2016. URL http://pablobarbera.com/static/world_leaders_paper.pdf

Presentation Question 4: *Is Social Media making negotiations during conflict harder or easier?*

3 May: Lab / Discussion of Research Proposal Ideas

We will use this session to discuss your ideas for your final research paper. We will discuss the format of this class 2-3 weeks in advance. Should a majority of students have an interest in using a particular methodological approach for their research paper we can also address that in this session.

Part IV: Repression Technology?

10 May: The Internet in autocracies

- *Seva Gunitsky. Corrupting the cyber-commons: Social media as a tool of autocratic stability. *Perspectives on Politics*, 13:42–54, 3 2015. doi: 10.1017/S1537592714003120. URL http://journals.cambridge.org/article_S1537592714003120
- *Ronald Deibert, John Palfrey, Rafal Rohozinski, Jonathan Zittrain, and Janice Gross Stein. *Access denied: The practice and policy of global internet filtering*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008, chapters 1
- Shanthi Kalathil and Taylor C. Boas. *Open networks, closed regimes: The impact of the Internet on authoritarian rule*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003, chapter 4
- Ronald Deibert, John Palfrey, Rafal Rohozinski, Jonathan Zittrain, and Janice Gross Stein. *Access denied: The practice and policy of global internet filtering*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008, chapters 2, and 6
- Espen Geelmuyden Rød and Nils B Weidmann. Empowering activists or autocrats? the internet in authoritarian regimes. *Journal of Peace Research*, 52(3):338–351, 2015
- Katy E. Pearce and Sarah Kendzior. Networked authoritarianism and social media in azerbaijan. *Journal of Communication*, 62(2):283–298, 2012. ISSN 1460-2466. doi:

10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01633.x. URL

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01633.x>

- Heather Murphy. Ominous text message sent to protesters in kiev sends chills around the internet. *The New York Times*, 22 January, 2014. URL <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/01/22/ominous-text-message-sent-to-protesters-in-kiev-sends-chills-around-the-internet/>
- Philip N. Howard. *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Information Technology and Political Islam: Information Technology and Political Islam*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2010
- Chris Edmond. Information manipulation, coordination, and regime change. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 80(4):1422, 2013. doi: 10.1093/restud/rdt020. URL <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/restud/rdt020>

Presentation Question 5: *Under what conditions is the Internet dangerous for autocrats?*

17 May: State control of the Internet, vol I

- *Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E Roberts. How censorship in china allows government criticism but silences collective expression. *American Political Science Review*, 107:1–18, 2013
- *Rebecca MacKinnon. China's "networked authoritarianism". *Journal of Democracy*, 22(2): 32–46, 2011
- Nils B. Weidmann, Suso Benitez-Baleato, Philipp Hunziker, Eduard Glatz, and Xenofontas Dimitropoulos. Digital discrimination: Political bias in internet service provision across ethnic groups. *Science*, 353(6304):1151–1155, 2016. ISSN 0036-8075. doi: 10.1126/science.aaf5062. URL <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/353/6304/1151>
- Anita R. Gohdes. Internet shutdowns during political unrest are becoming normal – and it should worry us, 2016. URL <https://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2016/09/16/internet-shutdowns-during-political-unrest-are-becoming-normal-and-it-should-worry-us/>
- Philip N. Howard, Sheetal D. Agarwal, and Muzammil M. Hussain. When do states disconnect their digital networks? regime responses to the political uses of social media. *The Communication Review*, 14(3):216–232, 2011
- Rebecca MacKinnon. *Consent Of The Networked: The Worldwide Struggle For Internet Freedom*. New York: Basic Books, 2012
- Ethan Zuckerman, Hal Roberts, Ryan McGrady, Jillian York, and John Palfrey. Distributed denial of service attacks against independent media and human rights sites. Technical report, The Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University, 2010. URL http://cyber.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.harvard.edu/files/2010_DDoS_Attacks_Human_Rights_and_Media.pdf

- Oiwan Lam. The invisible violence of cyber war in hong kong's umbrella revolution. *Global Voices Online*, 6 October, 2014. URL <http://advocacy.globalvoicesonline.org/2014/10/06/the-invisible-violence-of-cyber-war-in-hong-kongs-umbrella-revolution/>

Presentation Question 6: *When does Internet censorship work?*

24 May: State control of the Internet, vol II

- *Bei Qin, David Strömberg, and Yanhui Wu. Why does china allow freer social media? protests versus surveillance and propaganda. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(1): 117–140, 2017
- *Ronald Deibert, John Palfrey, Rafal Rohozinski, Jonathan Zittrain, and Miklos Haraszti. *Access controlled: The shaping of power, rights, and rule in cyberspace*. The MIT Press, 2010, chapter 2
- Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts. How the chinese government fabricates social media posts for strategic distraction, not engaged argument. *American Political Science Review*, 2017 Forthcoming
- Zeynep Tufekci. Engineering the public: Big data, surveillance and computational politics. *First Monday*, 19(7), 2014b. ISSN 13960466. URL <http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/4901>
- Ronald Deibert, John Palfrey, Rafal Rohozinski, Jonathan Zittrain, and Miklos Haraszti. *Access controlled: The shaping of power, rights, and rule in cyberspace*. The MIT Press, 2010, chapters 1
- Ronald Deibert, John Palfrey, Rafal Rohozinski, and Jonathan Zittrain. *Access contested: security, identity, and resistance in Asian cyberspace*. MIT Press, 2011, chapters 1 and 2
- Citizen Lab. Information controls during thailand's 2014 coup, 2014. URL <https://citizenlab.org/2014/07/information-controls-thailand-2014-coup/>
- Morgan Marquis-Boire, Jakub Dalek, and Sarah McKune. *Planet blue coat: Mapping global censorship and surveillance tools*. Citizen Lab, 2013a. URL <https://citizenlab.org/2013/01/planet-blue-coat-mapping-global-censorship-and-surveillance-tools/>
- Morgan Marquis-Boire, Bill Marczak, Claudio Guarnieri, and John Scott-Railton. You only click twice: Finfisher's global proliferation. *Research Brief (March 2013)*, 2013b. URL <https://citizenlab.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/15-2013-youonlyclicktwice.pdf>
- John Kelly, Vladimir Barash, Karina Alexanyan, Bruce Etling, Robert Faris, Urs Gasser, and John G Palfrey. Mapping russian twitter. 2012-3, 2012. URL https://cyber.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/Mapping_Russian_Twitter_2012.pdf

Presentation Question 7: *When does Internet surveillance work?*

31 May: Conclusion/ Presentation of Research Ideas

We will conclude the seminar with a final session where we reflect on the literature covered in this class. We will also use this session to discuss students' ideas for their research papers.