



A master institution of world society? Digital communications networks and the changing dynamics of transnational contention

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Abstract

In English School theory, the putative change from an international society of states to a world society of individuals is usually associated with the diffusion of a benign form of cosmopolitanism and the normative agenda of solidarism. Consequently, the notion that world society might enable alternative expressions of transnational politics, independent from international society, remains underdeveloped. Drawing on the literature of contentious politics and social movements, this article challenges orthodox accounts and suggests that the global proliferation of digitally mediated linkages between individuals and nonstate actors constitutes a fundamental challenge to traditional dynamics of interstate communication in the form of the diplomatic system. This provides an opportunity to reconceptualize world society as an alternative site of politics distinct from mainstream international society and generative of its own logic of communication, mobilization, and action. The 2011 events in Egypt and the ongoing digital presence of the so-called Islamic State are used to demonstrate how massive increases in global interaction capacity are transforming the pathways for political contention and collective mobilization worldwide.

Keywords

contentious politics, diplomacy, Egypt, English School, ISIL, social media, technology, transnational communication

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Introduction

The concept of world society has experienced a groundswell of popularity across the discipline of International Relations (IR). The term implies the ultimate horizon of all social interaction is becoming increasingly global in reach, while the geographic boundness of national societies is in decline.¹ Despite the fanfare, however, scholars across the English School (ES) of international relations – the theoretical home of the concept – continue to lament that the exact meaning and content of the concept remains comparatively vague.² We concur and posit that this persistent ‘fuzziness’ in part stems from world society’s underdevelopment as a stand-alone analytical tool for the study of world politics.

This problem is exacerbated by the tendency of ES scholars to approach the subject from two distinct, albeit linked, perspectives. The first seeks to establish the sequential relationship between international and world society and tends to be dominated by those who view the latter as the product of a state-driven liberal solidarism.³ The other questions this version of universalism and argues in favor of a pluralist vision of world society grounded in an ethically desirable tolerance for human diversity.⁴ While both approaches have advanced our understanding of world society in important ways, we contend that neither fully embrace Barry Buzan’s challenge of developing a social-structural reading of world society establishing the concept as an analytically and theoretically independent category.⁵ Consequently, they fail to afford the concept status equal to that of international society. This is the challenge we set to meet in this article.

We begin by arguing that the rapid diffusion of social media platforms and messaging services such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp – what we identify as transnational digital communications networks (TDCNs) – has led to an exponential increase in global interaction capacity. These new media bring millions of users into constant – near instantaneous – contact with one another. The growing availability of these services, coupled with new opportunities to interact and communicate on a global scale, has facilitated the formation of an alternative system of transnational communication constituted by *ad hoc digital networks of interested others* in the form of individuals and various social groups. While the effects of the digital revolution are far-reaching, including the technologies of war-making,⁶ our focus is on the observable patterns of social interaction among individuals, nonstate organizations, and ultimately the global population as a whole – the purported actors of world society.⁷ This opens the door for a reconceptualization of world society as an independent category for the study of intergroup relations – subject to its own political dynamics, underlying practices, and social (i.e. primary) institutions.

Our claim rests on a deeply held assumption in ES theory that the institutionalization of international society was predicated on the development and accompanied by the evolution of its own communicative structure – the diplomatic system.⁸ Accordingly, the growing influence of digital communication technology fulfills a function similar to that of diplomacy in the Westphalian state system: it increases the interaction capacity among groups and facilitates complex social interaction. In the case of world society, however, the configuration of physical and social technologies constitutes a logic of communication fundamentally at odds with the traditional diplomatic mode of communication, which primarily rests on the ordered interaction of a small number of states and state-like actors. While diplomacy produces a formal, hierarchical, and exclusive atmosphere in

which intergroup relations occur, TDCNs are informal, egalitarian, highly inclusive, and open to multivocal representation. This directly reflects the opening of transnational communication to a multitude of new voices; the sudden prevalence of ‘following’, ‘sharing’, and ‘friending’ practices; and the concomitant availability of alternative forms of political expression.⁹

We argue that this digital communication revolution mediates a significant shift in the global opportunity structure for collective mobilization in support of a diverse set of political projects, including but not limited to demands for democratization as well as violent fundamentalism. The Internet, in other words, is appropriated as an alternative site for transnational contention providing a growing number of actors with effective means for the organization of collective action. More importantly, we encounter evidence that digitally mediated communicative practices often enable *transgressive* episodes of contention in which some of the parties are newly self-identified actors that employ innovative strategies of political claim-making. We compare this to contention in the diplomatic system, which is largely *contained* and follows preestablished procedures. This leads us to reject orthodox notions that world society is necessarily complicit in the normative development of international society and the diffusion of liberal-democratic principles.¹⁰

We proceed as follows: First, we provide an overview of the contested nature of the world society concept and its traditional link to notions of international society and normative theory. Next, we review the role of social institutions in ES theory and highlight the centrality of communication in the formation of second-order societies. This provides the foundation for our theoretical section in which interaction capacity is theorized as the primary constitutive element of intergroup communication. Specifically, we argue that changes in interaction capacity produce distinct types of communicative structures that can alter access to and the availability of particular contentious repertoires, in turn re-shaping the pathways of political contention.¹¹ We compare the historical development of communicative structures in international society and world society to draw out these differences and provide empirical evidence for our propositions by examining the role of social media networks in the revolutionary developments in Egypt and the recruitment and propaganda efforts of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). We contend that these episodes of transnational contention constitute a qualitatively *different kind* of political system which is distinct from traditional modes of international relations and directly challenges the notion world society is merely the reflection of a growing cosmopolitan impulse in global affairs. We conclude with a discussion of how this should alter how we study the relationship between international and world society.

World society and ES theory

The concept of world society remains a contested and underdeveloped facet of ES theory. To most, world society denotes an ontological shift away from the state centrism of the international system/society nexus to nonstate actors, including nongovernmental organization (NGOs), transnational advocacy networks (TANs), and individual human beings.¹² Beyond this, some see world society – in the sense of a common culture and civilization – as the prerequisite for the emergence of international society and, therefore, analytically prior.¹³ Others see it primarily as a normative commitment to cosmopolitan values which

contribute to the eventual transcendence of the traditional society of states – rooted in sovereignty and international law – by a world society in which concern for justice and the protection of individual human rights are paramount.¹⁴ More recently, a group of scholars have contended that from a normative perspective, the homogenization of the global political space in the image of Western liberal-democratic values is problematic and pushes for the reconceptualization of world society as a pluralist space predicated on the peaceful coexistence of diverse human cultures.¹⁵ Subsequently, the debate around world society has centered around its purported link to international society and is motivated primarily by normative arguments and contending ethical accounts, all the while deprioritizing the investigation of world society as an independent analytical category.

We argue that this dynamic perpetuates the perception that world society is the theoretical ‘dumping ground’ and ‘residual category’ within ES analysis.¹⁶ The sentiment is echoed by those who see world society as the ‘most problematic feature’ of ES theory, despite frequent attempts to augment it with ‘historical and theoretical flesh’.¹⁷ In all, there appears to be ‘a clearer sense of what world society is not, rather than what it is’.¹⁸

The issue is particularly apparent in world society’s alleged role in the normative transformation of international society and the triumph of the liberal-democratic world order. As such, the meaning of world society is closely tied to the pluralist–solidarist debate in ES theory, which focuses on discerning which kind of international society within which we live.¹⁹ In its original usage, solidarism meant the degree to which states were committed to the collective enforcement of international law.²⁰ More recently, this view has shifted, and solidarism is predominately associated with the global spread of moral cosmopolitanism.²¹ In addition, moves toward the emergence of world society are generally seen as furthering a solidarist normative agenda; to the point that solidarism has become ‘hard-wired’ into the dominant narrative of world society.²²

Empirically, the rising significance of human rights declarations and the expansion of humanitarian law in the 1990s and 2000s are interpreted as evidence for the maturation of a cosmopolitan world society as well as a paradigm shift in the conduct of interstate relations. In the age of humanitarian intervention and the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P), world society became a functional alternative to the traditional society of territorial-sovereign states.²³ This view became synonymous with a vision of how global politics *ought* to look. Many see world society as the embodiment of an ‘ethically superior model’, prioritizing a concern for human-focused structures and processes championing individual human rights and global notions of justice.²⁴ Despite persistent disagreement over the extent to which these changes are occurring, cosmopolitan and solidarist accounts stress both the growing significance of world society as an analytical concept and its role in the normative transformation of international politics along a liberal-cosmopolitan trajectory.²⁵

The assertion that world society denotes either the catalyst for normative change in international society, some idealized endpoint for its developments or both, is the driving force behind this approach. Intellectually, it is grounded in Martin Wight’s *Revolutionist* tradition of international theory.²⁶ Proponents of international revolutionism work toward the assimilation of international relations to the condition of domestic politics.²⁷ In contemporary terms, this generally entails the fulfillment of the Western tradition of constitutionalism through the proclamation of a cosmopolitan world society of individuals.

Along these lines, Ian Clark argues that political claims made by nonstate actors historically shaped the constitutive principles of international society by means of a process of normative transference.²⁸ He provides the abolition of the international slave trade, notions of racial equality, human rights, and democracy as examples of the normative transformation of international society toward a liberal-cosmopolitan standard. Here, world society functions both as a source of political action and normative initiative.²⁹ The contemporary prevalence of liberal-democratic norms is said to be evidence for the emergence of a cosmopolitanism grounded in the solidarist agenda of international society – with lasting effects on the conduct of international relations.

The aforementioned solidarist teleology has recently been challenged by a growing chorus of ES scholars who argue that a normative–pluralist reading of world society is ethically desirable and can be grounded in contemporary world political developments. For example, Williams argues that it is possible to place the cosmopolitan normative dimension of world society commonly associated with solidarism within the school’s pluralist tradition. He does this by reframing world society as constituted by multiple overlapping communities at various levels of analysis that frequently interact but retain their cultural autonomy.³⁰ While the historical move toward world society increases the interaction capacity among these communities, it does not necessitate their participation in a cultural-universalist homogenization. This overlaps with Buzan’s argument that pluralist – in the sense of coexistence-focused and institutionally thin – interhuman and transnational sectors of world societies are, given the greatly increased number of actors involved, empirically more likely to develop than are solidarist ones. In parallel with Williams, Weinert reconfigures world society as ‘a spatialized concept (i.e. a horizon of intelligibility) that produces and is produced by specific social practices’.³¹ Building on Bull’s definition of world society as ‘a worldwide network of interaction’,³² Weinert argues that world society is located in the persistent efforts to cognize and construct a world. He illustrates this point with the project to preserve cultural heritage as an ensemble of tangible objects and immaterial practices and knowledge developed by communities of people and identified as integral to their distinct identities, histories, and understandings of the world.³³

Decoupling world society from international society and normative theory

Much of the literature discusses world society in reference to its relationship with international society. The possibility that it possesses independent social structures producing traceable patterns of complex interaction comparable to the primary institutions of international society is met with skepticism.³⁴ Instead, world society is often depicted as a secondary, amorphous, and insubstantial political space which – given the right circumstances – can impact the development of international society. Clark’s work on international legitimacy reflects this view:

World Society is imperfect, or incomplete, in that it does not possess its own autonomous political system, within which a discrete set of legitimacy principles might operate. It is, however, sufficient of a society to make selective representations into the legitimacy practices of international society, and does so through attempts to instill therein its own – albeit still contested – normative preferences.³⁵

In his discussion of the anti-slavery movement, Clark notes how British abolitionists pressured their diplomatic representatives to the Congress of Vienna to put the demand for the international abolition of slavery on the agenda.³⁶ It is unclear, however, to what extent these grievances were a transnational phenomenon, that is, a representation of world society. Instead, the normative initiative to abolish the slave trade appears firmly anchored in domestic British politics. Moreover, the putative success of the movement rested on its co-optation by the diplomatic system – a primary institution of international society. The logical conclusion is to see world society reduced to a normative category for the realization of an ethically desirable vision of the good life as solely dependent on the actors of international society.

The conflation of world society with a specific – in this case, liberal – ideological trajectory of international society is common in the literature and typical of the ahistorical liberal or ‘Whig’ account of history as a movement of progress.³⁷ Oftentimes, world society is seen as championing ‘the good state’ predicated on an understanding of its ‘moral nature and purpose’ in world politics.³⁸ Thus, world society is read into the development of international society *ex post facto* (i.e. an increase in the willingness of liberal-democratic states to protect and enforce human rights is interpreted as the product of an emerging world society). This has led to some concern – even among ardent solidarists – that humanitarian intervention in the post-Cold War world constitutes a ‘relegitimation of Western dominance’ in global affairs.³⁹

But the conceptual marriage of world and international society has another – potentially more significant – effect on theorizing the two. While many accounts stress the increasingly significant role of nonstate actors to understand and address contemporary global problems, their accounts rely on analyzing these roles as deferential to those of international society. For example, in her discussion on the relationship between global civil society (GSC) and international society, Mitrani cautions us from depicting the former as an autonomous force that operates on its own right free from constraints of governmental and economic actors and instead to view it as a subsidiary organ of the society of states.⁴⁰ Similarly, what Brenninkmeijer calls multinational communication accommodates business and civil society partnerships, but it ultimately remains the subject of international society directives (i.e. the United Nations and great power management) and is said to reinforce diplomatic practice and international law.⁴¹

Even pluralist accounts of world society often fall prey to an implicit conceptual dependence on international society and its institutions. In his analysis of the practice of cultural heritage preservation, Weinert highlights the crucial role of the International Criminal Court (a secondary institution of international society) in the persecution of the iconoclast Ahmad al-Faqi al-Mahdi for his complicity in the destruction of historic and sacred sites in Mali.⁴² This poses an analytical problem similar to that of Clark’s account since the stuff of world society ultimately relies on the society of states for certification and implementation. But if we rely on the recognition of world society practices by international society actors to empirically validate their existence, it begs the question if world society is a useful analytical concept in its own right. Moreover, even Weinert’s ‘pluralist’ account treads close to embracing a normative universalism when he states the practice of protecting cultural diversity constitutes a ‘broader international and transnational consciousness of the value and importance of cultural heritage’.⁴³ Williams himself draws attention to this tendency of ES scholars to be overly focused on normative

issues, questions of the good life, and the pursuit of universals, regardless of their pluralist or solidarist inclinations.⁴⁴

Ultimately, while this recent wave of contributions to the world society discussion has improved our understanding of the changing nature of world politics in significant ways, it is hamstrung by a continued conflation of the modes of analytical, historical, and normative analysis. To remedy this, we propose the recovery of an institutional account of the concept. After all, it is the historical emergence of the primary institutions and their effects on state behavior which separates international society from the system and world society concepts. Among these, diplomacy – as the dominant form of communication – has played a significant role in the theorization of the society of states, particularly in light of its purported function as master institution. It follows that if world society is indeed distinct from international society, we should find evidence for particular patterns of transnational communication underpinning world society as a distinct transnational political space. In the following sections, we highlight the significance of communication – as a primary institution – in the formation of second-order societies and explain how changes in interaction capacity affect the dynamics of political contention.

Primary institutions and communication in intergroup relations

In the ES canon, (primary) institutions are understood as durable recognized patterns of shared practices rooted in values held commonly by members of interstate societies and embodying a mix of norms, rules, and principles.⁴⁵ They are regarded as the primary evidence for the existence of an international society and buttress the tradition's central idea that international relations are inherently *societal* relations. This differentiates the approach from American political science conceptions of institutions which are usually thought of as concrete international organizations (e.g. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)). Instead, the concern with institutions in ES theory expresses an interest in analyzing the 'cluster of social rules, conventions, and practices' that provide members with a framework for the management of their relations.⁴⁶ These 'elementary rules of practice' are the fabric which underpins and enables international coordination and collaboration in an anarchic environment.⁴⁷

Over the years, a number of these have been identified, including the balance of power, international law, diplomacy, war, and the great powers.⁴⁸ Subsequent work has focused on their number, function, transformation, and relative importance and distinguishes, among other things, between primary and derivative institutions and their constitutive and procedural roles.⁴⁹ Despite a diversity of opinion on the matter of social institutions and their specific functions, perhaps none has captured the attention of ES scholars as much as diplomacy, the purported master institution of international society. Indeed, the diplomatic system is considered by many as the *prima inter pares* among the social institutions of international society – a practice which 'essentially generates or shapes all the others'.⁵⁰

Diplomacy: a master institution?

For Wight, the primary function of diplomacy is to facilitate mutual communication, negotiation, and the collection of information.⁵¹ He argues that the gradual diffusion of

diplomatic practices, such as the reciprocal exchange of permanent embassies, brought about a relatively stable system of communication and intercourse.⁵² The development of resident embassies was of particular interest to Wight who saw in it the diplomatic system '*par excellence*', while conferences and summit meetings embodied moments of 'maximum communication' in interstate relations.⁵³ The categorization of foreign policy, the balance of power, and diplomacy under the heading of 'theory of diplomacy' further underscores his reasoning that diplomacy is representative of 'all international intercourse, its purposes and objects, in time of peace'.⁵⁴ Overall, Wight saw relations among states as predicated on the existence of a system of communication by which further interaction could take place.⁵⁵

The view finds further expression in Herbert Butterfield's claim that 'international order is not a thing bestowed upon by nature, but is a matter of refined thought, careful contrivance and elaborate artifice'.⁵⁶ Even an institution as crucial as the balance of power, he asserts, ultimately depends on human insight into its workings and its proper application in diplomatic practice. Similarly, Bull argues, throughout history, states have used '*dialogue* and consent' to create common rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations.⁵⁷ More pointedly, he posits that without communication, there could be no international society.

The notion that communication is a necessary foundation for all types of social organization is prevalent throughout the discipline. Rationalist theories stress the centrality of communication during bargaining to reach both mutually beneficial and effective outcomes.⁵⁸ Social constructionist approaches focus on the development of linguistics convention, symbolic interaction, and communicative practices that (re)produce intersubjective life-worlds in which social action becomes meaningful.⁵⁹ Language, as Wittgenstein posits, is a communicative practice through which actors perform reality into existence.⁶⁰ Despite ontological and epistemological differences, these approaches converge on the importance attributed to the physical and symbolic aspects of communication for the conduct of intergroup relations. Without the institutionalization of communication, the complex social dynamics which underpin second-order societies are unlikely to develop.⁶¹

Interaction capacity and intergroup relations

If complex social interaction rests on the emergence of specific communicative practices, the question remains: how do patterns of communication evolve and how can we account for differences in their configuration? To answer this question, we combine insights from Buzan and Little's discussion of the historical development of international systems⁶² and the literature on contentious politics and social movements. This synthesis allows us to illustrate to what extent today's rapidly changing communication and media ecology affects the contours of intergroup relations.

Historically, the development of intergroup communication is contingent on changes in the interaction capacity among various actors (e.g. tribes, states, and individuals). Interaction capacity refers to the amount of transportation, communication, and organizational capability within a system of units. It is, first and foremost, a product of the raw carrying capacity of a social system – its physical potential for enabling and sustaining

contact among its members.⁶³ Three factors mediate interaction capacity: (1) the *geography of a region* and the extent to which it inhibits or enables free movement and contact between groups, (2) the *development of physical technologies* available for transportation and communication, and (3) *social technologies* which structure the interaction among units through the creation of conventions, practices, and institutions regulating communication.⁶⁴ The role of geography tends to diminish over time, once innovation in physical technologies spread throughout the system (e.g. steamships and computer networks). The availability of these technologies can quickly uproot conditions of interaction and, therefore, transform the system as well.⁶⁵ Social technologies, including language, shared ideas, and more concrete systems of rule, often sediment and embed within the system to the point where they become part of the foundational conditions that determine how the system operates. Some, like *lingua francas*, may develop unintentionally, while others may be specifically designed to fulfill certain social functions, such as diplomatic norms and rules designed to make intergroup contact easier, quicker, and more frequent.⁶⁶

Capacities for communication and interaction contract and expand over time, so that the nature of the international system itself can undergo fundamental change following episodes of social and technological innovation.⁶⁷ We argue that historically, the interplay of these three factors produces specific *communicative structures* – complexes of routinized and patterned practices of interaction – which underpin the relations between actors. These determine the quality, quantity, and parameters of social interaction within the system and can help us determine what is possible in terms of political action and resistance to established forms of rule and authority.

Once sustained interaction is achieved, particular configurations of these factors produce communicative structures with varying properties, such as the density and distribution of social interactions, the location and direction of super and subordinate relationships, and the availability of particular forms of sociopolitical expression.⁶⁸ Here, social conventions can play an important role in regulating access to specific technologies of communication initially. The ability to interact with others can be circumscribed by the status of legitimate membership in a given communicative structure (e.g. great powers, sovereign states, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), NGOs, and individuals).⁶⁹

For example, diplomatic convention limits official participation to individuals with the formal authority to represent their sovereigns or states. Etiquette, rules, and procedures also restrict the contentious repertoires available to diplomats during negotiation episodes, namely, persuasion, rhetoric, and bargaining. As a result, diplomacy – in most cases – is considered an exercise in ‘contained contention’, in which all the actors are previously established and employ formal means of claim-making.⁷⁰ While the political objectives of diplomats may be revolutionary or radical, the means to pursue these goals are not. As we will see below, the communicative structure of international society has purposefully evolved to contain political contention and to keep it from spilling over into violent conflict.

The configuration of physical and social technologies is also generative of specific types of collective action by making available previously unused or unknown scripts and strategies for political claim-making. For example, the introduction of new technologies

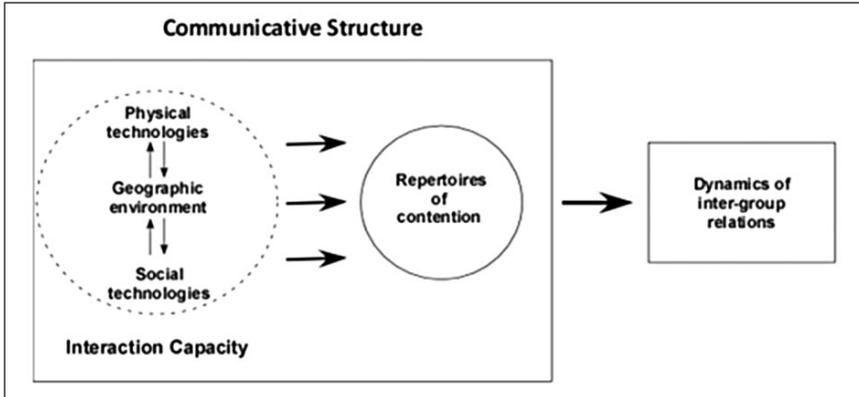


Figure 1. The role of communication in the formation of second-order societies.

produces sites for collective mobilization and brings together previously unconnected groups. This can lead to the creation of new collective identities as actors take advantage of changes in the interaction capacity to link separated group identities into new aggregates. Accordingly, ‘space bridging technologies’ can increase collective effervescence by bringing more people into the fold of a political project.⁷¹ Below we will show how mechanisms of identity ‘yoking’ create new political boundaries and transform the connections among political actors in ways challenging the established communicative structure.⁷² Sequences of environmental change can also lead to opportunity spirals as unprecedented numbers of new actors gain access to communications technology. Suddenly, actors can interact in ways previously impossible, enabling the mobilization of support for sociopolitical, economic, and cultural projects hitherto excluded from the dominant political discourse.⁷³

In this sense, it can matter greatly whether 30 million people are using the Internet or 3 billion. The multiplicity of users increases the possibility for the development of new connections and the resulting formation of new identities exponentially. This opens the door for processes of ‘category formation’ by which the innovative redrawing of identity boundaries and the prescription of relations across these boundaries leads to the creation of altogether new identities.⁷⁴ It also increases the likelihood that political contention will become transgressive, that is, at least some of the actors involved in the collective political struggle are new and deploy innovative forms of collective action.⁷⁵ Thus, communicative structures are not static and unyielding but open to processes of social change. The availability of particular technologies and the form of political expressions possible can greatly inform us about the political dynamics of intergroup relations and their historical development, see Figure 1.

Analyses of second-order societies should be sensitive to changes within and differences among communicative structures. These can affect the opportunity structure for communication and collective mobilization and lead to transgressive forms of contention, while the pressure to adjust to and accommodate the political claims of new actors can have destabilizing effects on the social system overall. In contrast, contained

contention unfolds within the confines of previously established modes of interaction – without posing a significant challenge to the social structure of the system.

Contained versus transgressive contention

In the remainder of this article, we demonstrate that while the diplomatic system operates on the logic of contained contention, the TDCNs of world society enable the proliferation of transgressive episodes of contention. As such, the political dynamics of each are caught in tension between an impulse to mitigate conflict through procedural action and the proclivity to engender it by introducing an untold number of nonstate actors into the political process.

The diplomatic system: the communicative structure of international society

The diplomatic system was the primary communicative structure of European international society and continues in this role in the contemporary global international society. Rooted in the relations among fifteenth-century Italian city-states, the development of the modern diplomatic system was a response to the complex world of shifting alliances that made permanent communication indispensable.⁷⁶ The combination of relative geographic proximity and the introduction of permanent embassies – coupled with the convention that ambassadors enjoyed diplomatic immunity – had a profound effect on the political dynamics of Renaissance Italy. The resulting increase in interaction capacity enabled neighboring city-states to consult with one another regularly and the creation of a trans-Appennine association of peoples (*feudus*) helped stabilize relations among the polities.⁷⁷ Overall, these institutional developments contributed to the normalization of communication and intercourse, shifting diplomacy from largely ad hoc arrangements to a more permanent and settled configuration.

This innovation was largely a response to profound changes in the social structure of Renaissance Italy. The retreat of papal and imperial sources of authority and the erosion of guild-based corporate structures necessitated the development of new forms of intergroup communication to ensure both domestic and interstate stability. At the same time, the concentration of political power in the hands of fewer people (i.e. single rulers or *signores*) provided the opening to ground relations among the many Italian states on a new diplomatic foundation.⁷⁸ The abilities to constantly monitor and interpret the communication of other states and to cultivate relationships of friendship and enmity reduced conflict and allowed for a judicious maintenance of the balance of power.⁷⁹ In a sense, political conflict was relocated into the rhetorical realm and served to engineer an equilibrium that reduced both outside interference in the domestic affairs of others and the probability of war.

This particular communicative structure – based on the exchange of carefully crafted images and ritual practices – gradually diffused throughout Europe in the following two centuries and marked the transition from proto-diplomacy to diplomacy.⁸⁰ Over time, it became increasingly institutionalized and subject to convention. By the seventeenth century, it was common that only sovereigns could appoint and send ambassadors – further

concentrating power and authority in the hands of a few.⁸¹ Diplomats also began to receive more training and were given more resources to conduct diplomatic affairs. By the eighteenth century, diplomacy became increasingly bureaucratized as foreign ministries wrested political authority from dynasts and the idea of the *corps diplomatique* as a merit-based profession fully developed.⁸² In the second half of the nineteenth century, diplomacy developed even further adding principles of reciprocal accord and multilateralism to the repertoire of diplomatic negotiation.

The gradual evolution of diplomacy went hand in hand with the idea that relations among states can be ameliorated by continuous and intelligent diplomacy.⁸³ It is the belief that diplomacy can pit 'relations among separate groups on a more stable and peaceful footing than they would otherwise be' that distinguishes the communicative structure of international society and produces a limited set of contentious repertoires available during negotiation.⁸⁴ Thus, diplomacy accommodates conflicting interests by 'negotiation and compromise'.⁸⁵ Attempts to pervert this function through subversion, propaganda, and espionage – in the case of the French Directory or Soviet ambassadors – produced little lasting effects. Certainly, the direct participation of ordinary citizens (public diplomacy), the involvement of trans-border organization, and city-to-city links have led to quantitative changes in the conduct of diplomacy but did little to transform the communicative structure of international society qualitatively.⁸⁶

The principle of diplomacy remains the same: the 'minimisation of the effects of friction' and 'the mediation of estrangement by symbolic power and social constraints'.⁸⁷ Watson provides a detailed explanation of this when he argues diplomacy's function is 'either the search for a compromise, or else is designed to transcend the dispute and to bring in a new element that makes a wider agreement palatable to both sides'.⁸⁸ Diplomacy institutionalizes and contains conflict and prevents recourse to more power-political methods (e.g. war). Even in the case where formal relations are broken-off, diplomacy often serves to maintain communication to restore dialogue and negotiations expeditiously.

The communicative structure of international society reflects this function. It privileges interaction among a limited number of interlocutors – usually international elites and the chosen representatives of powerful political entities. This creates an atmosphere conducive to the peaceful resolution of interstate conflict by reducing the number of significant voices and political claims during negotiation. Over time, this form of communication has become the 'authoritative mode of communication', not only limiting the use of force but also present in the production and reproduction of the fundamental rules which underpin the communicative structure of international society.⁸⁹

TDCNs: the communicative structure of world society

According to existing literature on nonstate actors, TANs provide an alternative channel for communication vis-a-vis diplomacy, although they generally work closely with and within the diplomatic system.⁹⁰ Thus, their ability to transform the dominant communicative structure is limited and hardly accounts for the transgressive action we observe over the past decade (e.g. trans-border terrorism). We argue that TAN and GSC proponents ought to think through the implications of instances where a wider range of actors,

including *interested others*, experience a constant connectedness to information and find themselves within instantaneous reach of each other.

The historical development of TDCNs explains the exponential growth in interaction capacity among nonstate actors. The current era is in many ways a continuation of the ‘information revolution’ begun some two decades ago. At the time, people became familiar with communicating more frequently with more widely dispersed others. ‘Web 2.0’ marked the arrival of widely available means to publish content online. People posted their opinions and experiences and commented on and appropriated the work of their peers.

The opportunity costs of political action were reduced as networks were less tied to geographic locale. Those unfamiliar with technical aspects of the Internet were able to participate in an emerging and revitalized digital public sphere featuring overlapping social networks.⁹¹ Observers recognized that social media effectively democratized political action, allowing ‘transformational politics and democratic values’ to ‘evolve unhindered,⁹² impacting the identities and interests of actors’.⁹³ Today, the high adoption rate of connected devices, apps, and web platforms cements the social reality and awareness of constant connectedness to information and others, that is, an *immanent connectedness*. As such, social media and connected devices weave world society actors together and increase their awareness of each other. In terms of intergroup relations, this means a higher frequency with which competing ideas and actors come into contact.

These developments affect opportunity structures for collective action in ways altering the dynamics of transnational contention. While diplomacy channels political contention, TDCNs multiply opportunities for collective political struggle by empowering new actors. The social ties that constitute these networks are established by digital communication practices, such as friending, following, and sharing often cosmopolitan, popular, or subversive content. Mundane activities are the very stuff that establish and perpetuate social ties serving as the foundation for transformational social and political movements. The multiplicity of these connections enables the bundling of various grievances into novel identity categories.⁹⁴

Historically, changes in opportunity structures produced by TDCNs were said to inspire progressive action.⁹⁵ But it is largely happenstance new networks of weak ties alter opportunity structures in favor of progressive change; this was because access to the technologies was restricted to relatively rich actors from the West who mobilized resources for local activists. As such, the initial diffusion of digital technologies was closely bound to the prevailing political–economic–social order and the hegemonic projects of powerful states.⁹⁶ Today, digital technologies are further diffused, and many more people and agendas are vocal in world society. Digital communications technologies such as smartphones aid in the creation of weak ties between actors without state-sponsored mediation. Moreover, the ‘self-radicalized lone wolf’ phenomenon reveals that principled counter-progressive actors also reside in the West.⁹⁷

The development of specific social technologies has expanded the space for contention and exemplifies the human capacity for creativity. Innovations such as #hashtags in social media posts – subscribing to newsletters, sharing video and photos on platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, following or friending political advocacy groups on Twitter and Facebook, and participating in political blogging communities – may all be

broadly characterized as variations on the fundamental practices of ‘following, friending, and sharing’.⁹⁸ These involve the ubiquitous, frequent, and lightweight practices of receiving and sending information, images, and videos.⁹⁹ They also produce a distinct political dynamic, usually referred to as the ‘politics of outrage’.¹⁰⁰ Actors promote normative agendas such as liberal human rights and the rule of law or disseminate ideological content and recruit interested others in order to attack Western institutions.¹⁰¹ Instead of depending on diplomatic efforts at the state level, today, individuals and groups communicate across borders, autonomously.

These arguments are well established in the field of political communication, but there is a need for IR scholars – the ES in particular – to decouple the transnational communications technologies from Western cultural frames. The notion that ‘the West’ developed this technology and, therefore, that it will be *only* used to promote liberal agendas is unrealistic. To free it from the cosmopolitan straight jacket, we emphasize that the transnational communicative structure is prone to contention via the production of new identity categories because of increased transnational interaction capacity. We present evidence from the Egyptian uprising of 2011 and the recruitment efforts of ISIL to illustrate how increases in interaction capacity have made available repertoires of transgressive contention to new and different actors.

Observing transgressive contention in Egypt and ISIL

Many hailed the Egyptian uprising as a seminal event in a cascade of so-called Facebook revolutions that include various ‘Occupy’ protests around the world. Activists used digital communication to enact an uprising leading to the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak and the election of Mohamed Morsi. Observers concluded that it was a normatively desirable use of social media. In contrast, progressives, liberals, and conservative commentators alike often decry ISIL’s use of social media, as it spreads violent images normalizing violence, denigrates Islamic concepts, and inspires terrorist attacks beyond its territories.

These cases seem, on the surface, quite different. What we wish to highlight is how both sets of actors tapped into the contentious repertoires of the transnational digital communications structure, making these clear cases for the political dynamics of world society. The vastly divergent normative outcomes provide further support for the argument that world society should be decoupled from Western cultural frames. Instead, it contains its own dynamics of intergroup relations existing autonomously and alongside the dynamics of international society. ISIL employs a twofold media strategy of publicity and outreach. It aims to exaggerate the group’s political and military power and recruit new members. Activists at the center of the 2011 Egyptian revolution used social media to create a discursive space permitting uprising, recruit new members, and organize protest actions. In both cases, the use of yoking to create new identity categories was prevalent.

Friending and following: yoking through weak ties

Friending principally expands the space for contention by growing networks. Communication is oriented toward building interpersonal trust and to the production of

weak ties. Friending may generate enclaves but also gives rise to contestation as more voices are included.

ISIL is adept at befriending people online, hoping to turn them into interested others or join the group directly. There are estimates that during its peak of online activity, ISIL controlled over 200,000 Twitter accounts.¹⁰² Information technology (IT) experts estimate that 1000 ISIL sympathizers used other, more direct, forms of communication such as Skype and Facebook Messenger, to reach out to people on a full-time basis. They are known to recruit young isolated individuals.¹⁰³ Westerners, once they become interested in the group's activities, can easily connect with ISIL online. ISIL media experts try to further isolate those potentially interested others by discouraging them from attending local mosques or talking to local Muslims.¹⁰⁴ These scripts are meant to contain interested others in a digital enclave of ideology oriented toward convincing them to travel to Syria and meet their new 'friends'. ISIL's social media outreach emphasizes that joining the cause gives individuals a sense of purpose.¹⁰⁵ A study of 49 ISIL fighters revealed diverse motivations. While defending Sunnis (from Shiite forces) was their top priority, 'rejecting Western culture' was their least popular motivation.¹⁰⁶

Echo chambers are common.¹⁰⁷ ISIL members self-select into interconnected bubbles, isolating them from external persuasion.¹⁰⁸ This has become especially true with the increase in Twitter's account deletion, decreasing the chances of interactions via weak ties.¹⁰⁹ However, these deletions have not fundamentally altered ISIL's yoking efforts. A recent study revealed the average ISIL-supporting Twitter account was much more active and had many more followers than the average Twitter account. ISIL's Twitter activity conforms to the 'power law' relation, with a small number - 500–2000 - of highly active users making up the bulk of the day-to-day social media posts - 50 tweets each.¹¹⁰

Another approach is to encourage individuals to carry out 'lone wolf' attacks against civilian populations.¹¹¹ ISIL uses social media to persuade people to give up their national identity and pursue their calling as a religious warrior. Thus, enclaves are an effective site for the formation of new identity categories. For example, law enforcement agencies have not been able to find any direct link between those responsible for several recent mass shootings in the United States, nor the truck rampage in Nice, and ISIL.¹¹² The lack of direct communication between ISIL and lone wolves pledging allegiance to the group and the inability of states to comprehend the connection is emblematic of the way in which digital communicative structures have fundamentally altered the pathways for transnational contention.¹¹³

Egyptian activists, in comparison, were quite experienced in using the Internet for entertainment and political purposes prior to the uprising – the state actively promoted broadband access with the hope of establishing a strong telecommunications industry.¹¹⁴ Increased numbers of people engaged in online communities critical of the government.¹¹⁵ Youth activists came from an information and entertainment culture; they valued sharing, felt it was normal to speak truth to power, interact across lines of difference, and cultivate fictitious public personas.¹¹⁶

The yoking efforts to produce an oppositional identity began to cascade as the 2010 elections unfolded amid government crackdown on media and official opposition parties.¹¹⁷ Social media became a space to articulate the demands of the protesters prior to 25 January. A network of Facebook pages was populated by supporters of the military,

the Muslim Brotherhood, and pro-democracy moderates. The pages were initially created to raise awareness about police corruption, but those interested in that cause were also sympathetic to arguments regarding regime change and democracy, whatever its potential form.¹¹⁸ Participant demands spiraled: an invitation to a Facebook event titled, ‘The Revolution of the Egyptian People’, reached over 500,000 users within 12 hours.¹¹⁹

Publishing in English is another common tactic that helps forge weak ties among potentially interested others. A 2015 study revealed that around 20 percent of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)-supporting Twitter accounts tweeted primarily in English (75% used Arabic).¹²⁰ In Egypt, activists posted in English to reach out to the more educated publics in the region and around the world, as well as to attract Western media attention. During the occupation of Tahrir Square, half of the Twitter messages containing associated popular hashtags were sent from outside the country.¹²¹ The iconic ‘We Are All Khaled Said’ page was administered in English. Egyptian activists were supported by efforts abroad,¹²² helping them to influence global public opinion.

Sharing

The practice of sharing is chiefly responsible for the spread of political content oriented toward transgressive contention. Sharing mostly consists of passing things along or contributing to a widely known cultural trope or meme. It may result in viral diffusion of ideas and/or information. The mechanism of yoking is observed in the common language and practices of sharing popular cultural items, often subsuming political content in benign cultural clothing.

The digital activities of ISIL and Egyptian activists and sympathizers suggest that they understand the utility of developing these networks – including through adversaries – for the mobilization of collective action. ISIL’s principal publicity tactic is to encourage sympathizers to share content using a so-called manual retweet to thwart automated censorship. ISIL encourages this practice especially for messages from influential leaders. ISIL streamlined this process by developing an app that allowed it to tweet on behalf of Twitter users.¹²³ Another tactic was to appropriate ‘trending hashtags’ and post them alongside pro-ISIL content, which was in turn shared through incidental exposure. Similarly, the ‘We Are All Khaled Said’ Facebook page rode the coattails of the viral sharing of the before-and-after death photos of Khaled Said. His life was effectively transformed into a meme – a common Internet practice – that was a blank slate to tell stories. A common goal is to dehumanize the victims of violence, turning them into memes in a narrative drama.¹²⁴ This includes the co-optation of ‘Hollywood’-style imagery.¹²⁵ For example, both groups leaned heavily on the blockbuster Marxist-libertarian revolutionary film, *V for Vendetta*.

While Egyptian revolutionaries use modern images, mashing up clips from films, video games, and music videos, to promote modern norms regarding governance, ISIL uses them to promote anti-modern values.¹²⁶ For example, ‘ISILCats’ was a popular twitter account featuring pictures of kittens in the arms of militants, purportedly saying ‘cute’ things about them – standard Internet fare. This account was part of an *Al-Hayat* Media Center venture, an office meant to attract Westerners to join ISIL, in Syria and abroad.¹²⁷ A thin shared connection – an agreement that cats are cute and that the character, *V*, is

inspiring, for example – brought people into networks, and, in turn, yoked seemingly disconnected identity boundaries and dispositions into a novel identity configuration – imbued with ideological content. The culture of sharing, paired with increasing levels of interaction capacity, means the rapid appropriation of whatever content is readily and resonantly available. Local activists are not concerned that sharing Western pop-culture will fragment their networks. The immanence of digital connectedness means that political mobilization by means of yoking preexisting frames together is easier than crafting a new indigenous political identity. The prevalence of the yoking mechanism in part explains the seeming propensity for these world society actors to disrupt rather than reform, to engage in transgressive rather than contained contention.

Discussion

The tactics of finding interested others online, then angering them to the point of action, is the prevailing form of collective mobilization today – the politics of outrage. Digital communications networks promote yoking by fragmenting existing identities and forging new configurations and, therefore, making transgressive contention more likely. The new alliances and collective identities formed become salient depending on the social networks that individuals and groups find themselves in; the ISIL and Egyptian networks appropriated a particular configuration of physical and social technologies that enrolled interested others in their collective mobilization activities.

Digital communication practices of friending, following, and sharing link segmented groups into new ad hoc aggregates. The practices enable world society actors to use repertoires of contention, such as protests, occupation of public space, and propaganda, to engage in transgressive political activity. Historically speaking, these are common tactics. But digital communication networks alter opportunity structures in ways that make political contention available to a growing and diverse set of actors. This means more frequent, if less momentous, disruptions in the political system.

While we attempt to emphasize the analytical and functional distinctiveness of communication via digital mediation in world society *vis-a-vis* the diplomatic system in international society, we recognize that in practice, the separation becomes less meaningful in the everyday turmoil of world political events. The tension and overlap between the formal hierarchical and the horizontal and multivocal modes of communication in international and world society, respectively, are illustrated by ongoing state action to curtail the use of digital communications networks. The Turkish government shuttered online news outlets and eliminated access to social media during and after the failed coup attempt on 15 July.¹²⁸ China's Great Firewall means to prevent potentially interested others from realizing their common causes and forming ad hoc collectivities. These examples share a 'shut it down' reflex which is at odds with the 'open it up' disposition of world society and run parallel to efforts of many Western states and their private corporate partners to limit ISIL's online activities through deletion and censorship.

The relationship between international and world society is further complicated by the historical fact that states were principally responsible for the creation and diffusion of digital communication networks, doing so to increase their chances of surviving nuclear war. These networks are wrapped up in the institutions of war-making but also in

the expansion and increasing efficiency of commodity and financial markets. All of this accrues benefits to core states and the society of states at large.

We suggest that future research should be sensitive to the ways in which the communicative modes of world and international society – once they encounter one another – create the space for potentially destabilizing effects on international relations. This includes investigating how TDCNs interacts with the various primary institution of international society beyond diplomacy. For example, world society practices, such as those identified above, may problematize notions of territoriality and sovereignty as seen in the way in which the Russian Federation uses digitally mediated linkages to sustain disinformation campaigns – or fake news – to disrupt the domestic politics of other states. This type of intervention is directly linked to the proliferation of TDCNs. Similarly, President Donald Trump's attempts at tweeting diplomacy is another instance of the hybridization of communication modes in world politics. Williams has already hinted at the promise of analyzing attempts by international society actors to come to terms with the integration of rapid technological changes into international politics.¹²⁹ Therefore, future research should consider how the development of transnational communications networks can be a source of confusion, friction, and conflict. Our discussion provides the basis for conducting research along those lines.

Conclusion

We set out to accomplish two objectives in this article. First, we demonstrated that world society can and should be theorized as a transnational political space distinct from the institutions and dynamics of international society. We point to the growing impact of TDCNs as evidence for the development of an alternative communicative structure, distinct from the traditional diplomatic system. Second, we highlighted that the communicative practices of these networks enable transnational political contention at an unprecedented scale – incontrovertibly transforming the dynamics of global intergroups relations in the early twenty-first century.

Our observations allow us to make several preliminary comments that touch on the distinction between world and international society and the pluralist–solidarist debate in ES theory. First, it is becoming increasingly difficult to dismiss world society as a utopian vision of the human condition with little practical import on contemporary global political events. Those who downplay its importance are hard-pressed to account for the increasing complexity of human interaction and the apparent difficulty of states to effectively address a host of global problems, including global economic downturns, transnational terrorism, large-scale migration, and demands for democratic accountability and regime change. Instead, our discussion underscores the effects of digital technology on global interaction capacity and the enhanced ability of individuals and social groups to connect with one another, exchange information, voice political claims, and in some instances, commence successful projects of resistance against centers of political power and authority.

Second, our analysis provides a middle ground between solidarists who endorse world society as the vehicle of global democratization and pluralists who are skeptical of transnational movements for empirical and ethical reasons. We caution against the *a priori* conflation

of world society with liberal cosmopolitanism. World society may have once been the pipe dream of cosmopolitans and supporters of a just international economic order, but recent developments bring into focus the Internet's enormous potential for the mobilization of diverse political projects – some of them anathema to Western frames of progress. Rather, the incipient transnational communicative structure is ideologically ambivalent and open to appropriation by a multitude of identities. At the same time, arguments that produce an initial defense of an ethically desirable pluralist world society are problematic as well. The propensity for social networks to produce multivocal, fragmented, and highly contentious forms of interactions should dampen expectations that a meaningful normative consensus will soon emerge – even one predicated on tolerance and the protection of human diversity.

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 100. Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2015).
 101. Linda Herrera, *Revolution in the Age of Social Media: The Egyptian Popular Insurrection and the Internet* (London: Verso, 2014); Clay Shirky, 'The Political Power of Social Media', *Foreign Affairs*, 90(1), 2011, pp. 28–41; Paulo Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism* (London: Pluto Press: 2012); Castells, *Networks*, 2015.
 102. Twitter altered its account deletion policy so it could target more ISIL-associated users. In February 2016, the company claimed to have deactivated more than 125,000 accounts related to ISIL. Available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/02/twitter-isis/460269/>
 103. Barack Obama, Office of the Press Secretary (The White House, 18 February 2015). President Obama has issued official remarks suggesting that ISIL's social media outreach is designed to specifically target 'young people in cyberspace'. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/02/18/remarks-president-closing-summit-countering-violent-extremism>
 104. Rukimi Callimachi, 'ISIS and the Lonely Young American', *The New York Times*, 27 June 2016. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/28/world/americas/isis-online-recruiting-american.html?_r=0
 105. Uri Friedman, 'An American in ISIS's Retweet Army', *The Atlantic*, 29 August 2014. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/08/an-american-in-isis-retweet-army/379208/>
 106. Patrick Tucker, 'Why Join ISIS? How Fighters Respond When You Ask Them', *The Atlantic*,

- 9 December 2015. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/12/why-people-join-isis/419685/>
107. Eric Lawrence, John Sides and Henry Farrell, 'Self-Segregation or Deliberation? Blog Readership, Participation, and Polarization in American Politics', *Perspectives on Politics*, 8(1), 2010, pp. 141–57.
 108. Richard Barrett, 'Foreign Fighters in Syria', June 2014, *The Sufan Group*, available at: <http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/TSG-Foreign-Fighters-in-Syria.pdf>
 109. J.M. Berger and Heather Perez, 'The Islamic State's Diminishing Returns on Twitter: How Suspensions Are Limiting the Social Networks of English-Speaking ISIS Supporters', The George Washington University Program on Extremism, February 2016. Suspensions have had a higher than expected detrimental effect on ISIL's Twitter outreach because re-created accounts gather a small fraction of previous followers.
 110. Lauren Walker, 'Inside the ISIS Social Media Campaign', *Newsweek*, 6 March 2015, available at: <http://www.newsweek.com/inside-isis-social-media-campaign-312062>; only 4 per cent of supporters had more than 5000 followers.
 111. One can further see the distinction between world society and international society in the actions of the 2016 mass murderer, Omar Mateen. His example challenges what we traditionally consider a 'connection' to others, especially in the international society sense. When Mateen turned to social media during his crime in *Pulse*, according to reports, he was in search of a way to digitally mediate his actions and connect to ISIL, even if they had no knowledge of him (also according to reports). International society actors have difficulty in establishing a connection if it is not registered in formal ways.
 112. Kathy Gilsnan, 'ISIS and the 'Internet Radicalization' Trope', *The Atlantic*, 8 December 2015, available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/12/isis-internet-radicalization/419148/>; the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) cannot find a link between the San Bernardino shooters and ISIL. It was the same in the case of the 2009 Fort Hood incident and Al Qaeda. Gilsnan goes on to mention that for radicals in the West, it makes no difference to pledge allegiance to Al Qaeda or ISIL, although the two have very different ideologies.
 113. Javier Lesaca, 'Fight against ISIS Reveals Power of Social Media', *Tech Tank (Brookings Institution)*, 19 November 2015, available at: <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/techtank/posts/2015/11/19-isis-social-media-power-lesaca>; there is an emerging pattern in which ISIL releases videos encouraging action, and shortly thereafter, an attack is carried out, and 14 days before the Paris attacks, ISIL released a video. A month before an attack in Lyon, ISIL released a similar video. And 1 month before the attack on the offices of Charlie Hedbo, ISIL promoted a video depicting young French citizens to join ISIL.
 114. David Faris, 'Revolutions without Revolutionaries? Network Theory, Facebook, and the Egyptian Blogosphere', *Arab Media and Society*, 6, 2008, pp. 1–11.
 115. Marc Lynch, *The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East*, (PublicAffairs: 2011).
 116. Herrera, *Revolution*.
 117. Human Rights Watch, 'Egypt: Systematic Crackdown Days before Elections', 24 November 2011, available at: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/11/24/egypt-systematic-crackdown-days-elections>
 118. A 2010 Pew Poll found that a majority of Egyptians felt that democracy was a better form of government than any alternative, available at: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/01/31/egypt-democracy-and-islam/>
 119. State actors entered the social media space as well, attempting to use social media content to persuade Egyptian activists Mubarak was on their side. It came across as quite phony,

- according to activists, highlighting the struggle state-based actors face in establishing a presence in the world society realm of informal communicative practices.
120. Walker, 'Inside the ISIS Social Media Campaign'.
 121. Andrea Kavanaugh, Seungwon Yang, Steven Sheetz, Lin Tzy Li, and Ed Fox, 'Between a Rock and a Cell Phone: Social Media Use during Mass Protests in Iran, Tunisia and Egypt', *ACM Transactions of CHI*, 2011, http://eprints.cs.vt.edu/archive/00001149/01/journal_paper.Kavanaugh_et_al.social_media_middle_east.pdf
 122. During the Internet blackout, Google and Twitter offered a 'Speak-2-Tweet' service enabling protesters to call a phone number where they could post and listen to Twitter messages, available at: <https://googleblog.blogspot.com/2011/01/some-weekend-work-that-will-hopefully.html>
 123. J.M. Berger, 'How ISIS Games Twitter', *The Atlantic*, 16 June 2014, available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/06/isis-iraq-twitter-social-media-strategy/372856/>
 124. On the Khaled Said Facebook page, a typical commenter, referring to the common video game practice of 'respawns' (a player's character is reborn after death), claimed that 'Egyptian youths had "died thousands of times" before defeating the "monster" and that they will not "ever get tired or bored" in fighting military rule' (Herrera, *Revolution*, p. 74). Another quipped that 'it seems like the SCAF (Supreme Council of Armed Forces) didn't play [popular Japanese-created zombie-themed 3rd person shooter] Resident Evil' (p. 75).
 125. J.M. Berger and Jonathon Morgan, 'The ISIS Twitter Census: Defining and Describing the Population of ISIS supporters on Twitter', Brookings Institution, 2015, available at: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2015/03/isis-twitter-census-berger-morgan>; only 4 percent of supporters had more than 5000 followers.
 126. Javier Lesaca, 'On Social Media, ISIS uses Modern Cultural Images to Spread Anti-Modern Values', *Tech Tank (Brookings Institution)*, 24 September 2015, available at: <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/techtank/posts/2015/09/24-isis-social-media-engagement>; these included *Saw*, *The Matrix*, *American Sniper*, *Call of Duty*, *Mortal Combat X*, and *Grand Theft Auto*.
 127. Joshua Bieberg and Darrell M. West, 'The United States Must Respond to the Islamic State Threat (on Twitter)', *Tech Tank (Brookings Institution)*, 20 October 2014.
 128. Julia Carrie Wong, 'Social Media May Have Been Blocked during Turkey Coup Attempt', *The Guardian*, 15 July 2016, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/15/turkey-blocking-social-facebook-twitter-youtube>; Ceylan Yeginsu, *The New York Times*, 27 July 2016, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/28/world/europe/turkey-media-newspapers-shut.html>
 129. Williams (2015).

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