The Contemporary Transformation of the International System

Professor John Wilton

Lecture 6

The impact of the global network society on the contemporary international system: technology, inequality and social networks

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1) The processes through which political, economic, cultural and rights issues are transmitted within the international system;

2) social networks (non-governmental, non-state)

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- rapid development and growth of ICTs has facilitated different and wider forms of international interaction

- growth of social networks created communities operating within and across territories of states = challenge to ability of states to order international system

- 'networks of dissent' challenge existing social, political and economic arrangements + seek to influence governance of international system

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'**Global Network Society**' (Manuel Castells, *The Information Age*, 3 volumes, 1996-98)

- 2 main modes/forms of historical development in international system:

    a) *Agrarian mode/form:* economic growth through increasing amount of labour devoted to production based bon the land;

    b) *Industrial mode/form:* economic growth through wider and more efficient use of energy sources to produce mechanisation of production + technological innovation

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- witnessing third mode of historical development in international system:

    c) ***The Information Age mode/form:*** economic growth from generation of new knowledge as key source of productivity

    - social order in international system today based on new technological information knowledge systems *(not confined to national boundaries)*

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- for Castells, international order today should be understood as a *GLOBAL NETWORKED ORDER*

- *if Industrial capitalism gave rise to national economies and the nation-state*

- *THEN,*

  Informational capitalism gives rise to networks and globalisation

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'Networks of Dissent'

- *'positive networks'* (global inequality, human rights, debt cancellation)

  a) transnational;

  b) organised around shared values;

  c) express disagreement from established systems;

  d) have an influence on international system

- *'negative networks'* (political violence, terrorism)

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Example of **'*Positive Network of Dissent*'** and impact of ICT :

Peretti, J. (2001) 'USA: my Nike media adventure', The Nation, 9 April (online). Available from

http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=2001040 9&s=peretti

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2 further areas where networks have had a growing effect on international system through ICT development:

a) private financial institutions;

b) military and terrorism

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THE 'INTERNATIONAL'

POLITICAL	ECONOMIC	CULTURAL	TECHNOLOGY
States-system	liberal free market	identity ('feeds' nationalism - or being eroded by cosmopolitan values?)	Transmits values & information
historically specific			facilitates net-work growth

INTERACTION