

The Contemporary Transformation of the International System

Professor John Wilton

Lecture 7

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

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CASTELLS, Manuel. "Communication, Power and Counter-power in the Network Society". International Journal of Communication, Vol. 1, 2007, pp. 238-266.

Also available along with various other resources on his web site:

<http://www.manuelcastells.info/en/index.htm>

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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 on 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=20010409&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'

