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The Internet and International Political Relations

A new medium of information exchange is affecting international political relations. It is the Internet, a global network of computers through which anyone with a computer and modem can broadcast views and ideas that can affect the world. An understanding of the Internet's structure, basic Internet services, their possible effect on international relations, and where one can find international political information on the Internet is a key to the future of world politics.

The Internet is intertwined with the world's telephone system. Anywhere in the world that one can find a telephone, one can find a way to use the same line to access the Internet. The main difference is that telephones are used only for voice transmission. The Internet focuses on the transmission of data. Like a fax machine, input (scanned images, keystrokes, commands) are encoded to machine language, sent across the telephone wires, and decoded on the receiving end. In addition to data transmission, the Internet also has a mass storage capability that the telephone system does not. Any data sent through the Internet can be stored on magnetic medium. The combined use of data transmission and mass storage is such that the Internet is not limited to a single purpose like allowing two people to talk to each other. Instead, the Internet serves several purposes.

The majority of Internet use falls into three services: email, the World Wide Web, and newsgroups. Email, electronic mail, is "a communication system involving the

transmission of text over communication links from one electronic workstation to another (screen to screen) and may feature `electronic mailboxes' for storing incoming and outgoing messages for later delivery (Palmer)." It is a popular Internet service because it is fast, easy, and promotes decentralized communication. The World Wide Web a.k.a. WWW, or just "the Web," is a system for organizing information on the Internet, using hypertext links. By pointing to a highlighted phrase and clicking, a user can effortlessly jump from one website (area of related information stored on the Internet) to another." (Time) The Web is a popular Internet service because it allows one to access mass quantities of research information. When one describes the Web, often it is something to the effect of "where almost anything you can think of - and some things you can't - show up as information, discussions, pictures, and files." (Keizer) Newsgroups are related email discussions of a topic organized for easy access and review. A newsgroup can have any topic. Newsgroups with discussions of international political relations include "alt.politics.british" and "alt.politics.org.un". These three Internet services are the most likely services where one would find the viewpoints and ideas that will shape tomorrow's international political relations.

How can one use these Internet services to shape tomorrow's international political relations? By using email, one can send a political message directly to a recipient, avoiding the third-person mail carrier. An example of using email to circumvent conventional mail channels occurred during the struggle to restore deposed Haitian President Jean-Betrand Aristide. Before U.S. military intervention, the CIA sent "ominous email messages to some members of Haiti's oligarchy who had personal computers". (Walker) Such a message would more than likely not have made it to the recipients if sent by conventional mail. The World Wide Web will probably play the

largest Internet role in future international relations. Websites like The New World International Politics (www.nerdworld.cominw392.html) have links to political groups any student, teacher, or anyone with an interest can learn about. Where else can one find the official Frequently Asked Questions sheet about Italy's largest `right' party, *Alleanza Nazionale,* or information about the Young Progressive Conservatives of Newfoundland and Labrador? Once one has found the information on the Web, one can use Internet newsgroups to discuss their findings, viewpoints, and ideas with others. Because newsgroups are a global collection of messages, one is sure to find philosophies like and unlike their own. Through Internet services like email, the Web, and newsgroups, we can access information on which to base our beliefs.

One can find information about international political relations by emailing the U.N. Department of Public Affairs at pa@un.com or one's own government departments. However, the Web is the best place to start. Point your browser to any one of these sites:

International Politics
www.nerdworld.corn

Ambassade De France En Grece
www.forthnet.gr

Cleveland Council on World Affairs
www.ccwa.org

Guto Thomas' Welsh Home Page
www.aber.ac.uk/-grt94

International Rivalries and Global Cooperation
hoover.stanford.edulinternational.html

List of International Trade Law Treaties and other relevant Trade Instruments
ananse.irv.uit.no.conventions.html

The First Virtual Volunteers of the UN-organized Internet Militia
www.bhm.tis.netlindex.htm

World Peace and Conflict Resolution
www.nerdworld.com/416.html

CNN
www.cnn.com

Discussions about international political relations can be found in the following Internet

newsgroups:

alt.earth_summit
alt.politics.british
alt.politics.datahighway
alt.politics.ec
alt.politics.europe.misc
alt. politics.immigration
alt.politics.org.un
alt.society.sovereign

To find information not available in these lists, all one has to do is conduct a search

for keywords in one of the Internet's search engines. One can use the Lycos search

engine (www.lycos.com) to search for the keywords MONROE DOCTRINE. The

search engine will respond with WWW links and newsgroup entries with the words

MONROE or DOCTRINE in them.

One theory as to why the USSR failed is that global communications' adversely

effected the USSR's generally sheltered citizens; information found its way to the people.

Global philosophies, the truth as the world sees it, will be shaped by the Internet's

exchange of information. Through Internet services like email, the Web, and newsgroups,

we can be brought face to *face with our opponents, have the freedom to* listen *and*

learn, and apply *our* mended beliefs to international political relations.

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