UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary Level

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES **8987/03/PRE**

Paper 3 Presentation **October/November 2013**

PRE-RELEASE MATERIAL

To be given to candidates

6137598414

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Guidance for Teachers

This Resource Booklet contains stimulus material to be used by candidates preparing their presentation for 8987/03. One copy should be given to each candidate.

Presentations must be prepared in a four-week period. This may take place at any point before 31 October 2013, by which date all presentations must have been submitted to CIE via MOVEit.

The Presentation is marked out of 40.

Instructions to Candidates

- You should use the enclosed stimulus material to help you identify the subject for your presentation.
- Your presentation should attempt to answer a question.
- Your presentation must address alternative perspectives on the question you select and must engage directly with an issue, an assumption, a piece of evidence and/or a line of reasoning (explicit or implicit) in one or more of the documents within this Booklet (i.e. you should not just pick an individual word or phrase which is not central to the reasoning of or the issues covered by the documents).
- Include in your presentation an explanation of how it relates to these pre-release materials.
- Your presentation should be designed for a non-specialist audience.
- Originality in interpretation is welcomed.
- Your presentation may be prepared in a variety of formats (e.g. PowerPoint, weblog or web pages) and should normally include an oral presentation or commentary.
- The speaking or running time of your presentation should be a maximum of 15 minutes.
- Whether presented or not, the submission must include a verbatim transcript of the presentation.

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Introduction

You should read these notes before preparing your presentation.

The documents deal with issues and questions arising from two significant world events. It is likely that there will have been further developments in these events by 2013, which might show different perspectives on the key issues and questions. It is also possible that there will have been other significant world events which raise similar questions or throw new light on the events of 2010 and 2011.

You are encouraged to research, explore and reflect on any such developments or new world events as part of your response to the documents, issues and questions raised in this Resource Booklet. You should, however, avoid merely describing or chronicling any such events.

Document 1

'Q&A: Wikileaks and freedom of expression.'

Adapted from an article on Amnesty International's website, 16 December 2010

Amnesty International examines some of the human rights issues at stake in the international controversy over the Wikileaks release of US diplomatic cables.

Would prosecution of Julian Assange for releasing US government documents be a violation of the right to freedom of expression?

The US government has indicated since July 2010 that it is conducting a legal investigation into the actions of Wikileaks and its founder Julian Assange for distributing secret documents. A range of US political figures have called for a criminal prosecution of Assange.

According to Amnesty International, criminal proceedings aimed at punishing a private person for communicating evidence about human rights violations can never be justified. The same is true with respect to information on a wide range of other matters of public interest.

At the very least, a significant number of the documents released by Wikileaks appear to fall into these categories, so any prosecution based in whole or in part on those particular documents, would be incompatible with freedom of expression.

Freedom of expression is an internationally-recognized human right that limits the power of the state to prohibit the receipt and publication of information. The burden is on the state to demonstrate that any restriction is both necessary and proportionate, and does not jeopardize the right to freedom of expression itself.

We are unaware of any legal action having yet been taken against Julian Assange for releasing the documents. As such, Amnesty International is not in a position to comment on any possible case against him specifically, as there are no charges to comment on.

Would interfering with payments to Wikileaks via online donation constitute an infringement on freedom of expression?

Over the last week, Paypal, Visa and Mastercard have removed their users' ability to donate to Wikileaks online, asserting as grounds that Wikileaks engages or may engage in illegal activities. There has been speculation that this restriction was due to US government pressure.

Amnesty International does not have information to confirm or refute that speculation, but emphasizes that governments cannot avoid their obligations to respect the right to freedom of expression by attempting to do indirectly what they would be forbidden from doing directly. Businesses, too, should ensure that their own actions, at minimum, respect human rights.

Would prosecution of employees of the US government who may have provided documents to Wikileaks be a violation of freedom of expression?

US soldier Private Bradley Manning is currently in detention facing charges that include the leaking of national defence information.

While employees of a government have the right to freedom of expression, they also have duties as an employee, so a government has more scope to impose restrictions on its employees than it would have for private individuals who receive or republish information.

However, Amnesty International would be concerned if a government were to seek to punish a person who, for reasons of conscience, released in a responsible manner information that they reasonably believed to be evidence of human rights violations that the government was attempting to keep secret in order to prevent the public learning the truth about the violations.

Is it legitimate for governments to seek to keep their diplomatic discussions and negotiations confidential when they perceive it to be in their national interest?

Governments can of course in general seek to keep their communications confidential by using technical means or by imposing duties on their employees; it is not, however, legitimate for governments to invoke broad concepts of national security or national interest in justification of concealing evidence of human rights abuses.

Also, once information comes into the hands of private individuals, states cannot rely on sweeping claims of national interest to justify coercive measures aimed at preventing further public disclosure or discussion of the information.

International human rights law allows states to restrict freedom of expression only on specific and narrowly-applied grounds: national security, public order, public health or morals, or protection of the rights and reputations of others. However, even where one of these grounds might apply, states do not have a blank cheque to keep information secret or to punish individuals for publishing it, simply by declaring the information to be “classified” or declaring it necessary to restrict it as a matter of “national security”: the state must show that the particular restrictions are necessary and proportionate to the specific threat they claim justifies the restriction.

Is Amnesty International concerned about the potential for harm to individuals as a result of the leaked information?

Amnesty International has consistently called on Wikileaks to make every possible effort to ensure that individuals are not put at increased risk of violence or other human rights abuses as a result of, for instance, being identifiable as sources in the documents.

However, risks of this kind are not the same as the risk of public embarrassment or calls for accountability that public officials could face if documents expose their involvement in human rights abuses or other forms of misconduct.

Do the diplomatic cables being leaked by Wikileaks contain information relevant to human rights?

Some of the Department of State documents released confirm or provide more detail about human rights violations that Amnesty International has publicly raised in the past. For example:

The February 2007 cable discussing US opposition to the possible issuance by German authorities of international arrest warrants for thirteen CIA agents allegedly involved in the Khaled el-Masri rendition and enforced disappearance relates to a number of Amnesty International reports, most recently Open Secret: Mounting Evidence of Europe's Complicity in Rendition and Secret Detention (15 November 2010).

The January 2010 cable reporting on a meeting between the President of Yemen and US military corroborated Amnesty International's earlier findings that a US cruise missile appeared to have been used in a 17 December 2009 attack on the community of al-Ma'jalah, in the Abyan area in the south of Yemen. Amnesty International had called on the US government to disclose its involvement in the incident – despite the fact that the Yemeni government claimed that it alone had carried it out.

Previous Wikileak releases on the Afghanistan and Iraq wars corroborated information that we received from other sources. Amnesty International will continue to appraise and cite information from documents provided by Wikileaks that are relevant to human rights issues, alongside many other sources of information.

What is Amnesty International's position on the most recent release of materials by Wikileaks?

Amnesty International welcomes efforts to put information about human rights abuses in the public domain. Wikileaks have publicly announced that they will release thousands of documents gradually over the coming weeks or months, and Amnesty International will carefully study any documents that appear to concern human rights abuses.

While not all of the documents being released by Wikileaks at the moment are relevant to human rights abuses, we would stress that the right to freedom of expression includes the right to receive and impart all kinds of information, subject only to narrowly-defined exceptions.

Document 2

'WikiLeaks and the freedom-of-speech myth.'

Adapted from an article by Sam Leith in the *Evening Standard*, a UK newspaper, 6 December 2010

In a recent Q & A with *The Guardian*, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange said something that seemed very bizarre. He was asked about the fact that, under pressure from the US government, Amazon – whose servers hosted his website – had shut the site down. "Since 2007 we have been deliberately placing some of our servers in jurisdictions that we suspected suffered a free-speech deficit," he said, "in order to separate rhetoric from reality. Amazon was one of these cases."

If what he says is to be taken at face value, he got Amazon to host the site because he had a hunch that when push came to shove they'd close him down – thus (downside) removing a quarter of a million leaked documents from public view but revealing themselves to be censorship-prone lickspittles of the repressive state apparatus and stuff.

Like I say, bizarre. You'd think testing Amazon's commitment to press freedom would be rather secondary, as a purpose for the WikiLeaks site, to things such as ensuring that those leaks stay leaked.

But the second reason it was bizarre is that if you're in the disclosure business you should have some idea of what it means to disclose things. It's disquieting to hear Mr Assange echoing the muzzy-headed idea that WikiLeaks is championing "free speech" (which, with the exception of crowded theatres, is held to be an unalloyed public good).

It is not. WikiLeaks is not a freedom-of-speech issue, any more than rifling through your neighbour's bins and publishing his bank statements on the internet is. You might be able to make a case – if your neighbour is laundering drug money, say – for it being in the public interest to publish your neighbour's bank statements. But that case will be nothing to do with freedom of speech.

When you talk about freedom of speech, what you're really talking about is freedom of conscience. Only in the most numbskulled of accounts does "freedom of speech" mean "the freedom to publish all and any information you feel like". Many people who are firm believers in freedom of speech are equally firm believers in a right to privacy. The two are not contradictory.

When WikiLeaks blurts a quarter of a million super-classified documents full of solid gold diplomatic scuttlebutt, journalists' instant reaction is to hang out the bunting. But we recognise that the issue admits of nuance. No adult thinks the affairs of state can be conducted without confidentiality. Of course, confidentiality is often a cover for self-interest or abuse. That's why hacks dig and leakers leak.

But "openness", "transparency", and "freedom of speech", are in danger of becoming slogans: the substitute for careful thought rather than the expression of it. Muddle freedom of speech with disclosure in the public interest and we do both principles a disservice.

Document 3

'Wikileaks: a Big Dangerous US Government Con Job.'

This is adapted from an article by F. William Engdahl on the website of voltairenet.net, a non-aligned press network, 10 December 2010.

F. William Engdahl is a widely discussed US analyst of current political and economic developments whose articles have appeared in numerous newspapers and magazines and well-known international websites.

The story on the surface makes for a script for a new Oliver Stone Hollywood thriller. However, a closer look at the details of what has so far been carefully leaked by the most ultra-establishment of international media such as the *New York Times* reveals a clear agenda. That agenda coincidentally serves to buttress the agenda of US geopolitics around the world from Iran to North Korea. The *Wikileaks* is a big and dangerous US intelligence Con Job which will likely be used to police the Internet. It is almost too perfectly scripted to be true. A discontented 22-year-old US Army soldier on duty in Baghdad, Bradley Manning, a low-grade US Army intelligence analyst, described as a loner, a gay in the military, a disgruntled "computer geek," sifts through classified information at Forward Operating Base Hammer. He decides to secretly download US State Department email communications from the entire world over a period of eight months for hours a day, onto his blank CDs while pretending to be listening to Lady Gaga.

Excuse to police the Internet?
What is emerging from all the sound and *Wikileaks* fury in Washington is that the entire scandal is serving to advance a long-standing Obama and Bush agenda of policing the until-now free Internet. Already the US Government has shut the *Wikileaks* server in the United States though no identifiable US law has been broken.

The process of policing the Web was well underway before the current leaks scandal. The US Department of Homeland Security, an agency created in the political hysteria following 9/11 2001 that has been compared to the Gestapo, has already begun policing the Internet. They are quietly seizing and shutting down internet websites (web domains) without due process or a proper trial. DHS simply seizes web domains that it wants to and posts an ominous "Department of Justice" logo on the web site. See an example at http://torrent-finder.com. Over 75 websites were seized and shut in a recent week. Right now, their focus is websites that they claim "violate copyrights," yet the torrent-finder.com website that was seized by DHS contained no copyrighted content whatsoever. It was merely a search engine website that linked to destinations where people could access copyrighted content. Step by careful step freedom of speech can be taken away. Then what?

Document 4

'Internet Rights and Wrongs: Choices and Challenges in a Networked World.'

Extracts from a speech given on 15 February 2011 by the US Secretary of State, Hillary Rodham Clinton

A few minutes after midnight on January 28th, the internet went dark across Egypt. During the previous four days, hundreds of thousands of Egyptians had marched to demand a new government. And the world, on TVs, laptops, cell phones, and smart phones, had followed every single step. Pictures and videos from Egypt flooded the web. On Facebook and Twitter, journalists posted on-the-spot reports. Protestors coordinated their next moves. And citizens of all stripes shared their hopes and fears about this pivotal moment in the history of their country.

Millions worldwide answered in real time, "You are not alone and we are with you." Then the government pulled the plug. Cell phone service was cut off, TV satellite signals were jammed, and internet access was blocked for nearly the entire population. The government did not want the people to communicate with each other and it did not want the press to communicate with the public. It certainly did not want the world to watch. The events in Egypt recalled another protest movement 18 months earlier in Iran, when thousands marched after disputed elections. Their protestors also used websites to organize. A video taken by cell phone showed a young woman named Neda killed by a member of the paramilitary forces, and within hours, that video was being watched by people everywhere.

The Iranian authorities used technology as well. The Revolutionary Guard stalked members of the Green Movement by tracking their online profiles. And like Egypt, for a time, the government shut down the internet and mobile networks altogether. After the authorities raided homes, attacked university dorms, made mass arrests, tortured and fired shots into crowds, the protests ended.

In Egypt, however, the story ended differently. The protests continued despite the internet shutdown. People organized marches through flyers and word of mouth and used dial-up modems and fax machines to communicate with the world. After five days, the government relented and Egypt came back online. The authorities then sought to use the internet to control the protests by ordering mobile companies to send out pro-government text messages, and by arresting bloggers and those who organized the protests online. But 18 days after the protests began, the government failed and the president resigned.

What happened in Egypt and what happened in Iran, which this week is once again using violence against protestors seeking basic freedoms, was about a great deal more than the internet. In each case, people protested because of deep frustrations with the political and economic conditions of their lives. They stood and marched and chanted and the authorities tracked and blocked and arrested them. The internet did not do any of those things; people did. In both of these countries, the ways that citizens and the authorities used the internet reflected the power of connection technologies on the one hand as an accelerant of political, social, and economic change, and on the other hand as a means to stifle or extinguish that change.

There is a debate currently underway in some circles about whether the internet is a force for liberation or repression. But I think that debate is largely beside the point. Egypt isn't inspiring people because they communicated using Twitter. It is inspiring because people came together and persisted in demanding a better future. Iran isn't awful because the authorities used Facebook to shadow and capture members of the opposition. Iran is awful because it is a government that routinely violates the rights of its people.

So it is our values that cause these actions to inspire or outrage us, our sense of human dignity, the rights that flow from it, and the principles that ground it. And it is these values that ought to drive us to think about the road ahead.

The internet has become the public space of the 21st century – the world's town square, classroom, marketplace, coffeehouse, and nightclub. We all shape and are shaped by what happens there, all 2 billion of us and counting. And that presents a challenge. To maintain an internet that delivers the greatest possible benefits to the world, we need to have a serious conversation about the principles that will guide us, what rules exist and should not exist and why, what behaviours should be encouraged or discouraged and how.

The rights of individuals to express their views freely, petition their leaders, worship according to their beliefs – these rights are universal, whether they are exercised in a public square or on an individual blog. The freedoms to assemble and associate also apply in cyberspace. In our time, people are as likely to come together to pursue common interests online as in a church or a labor hall.

Together, the freedoms of expression, assembly, and association online comprise what I've called the freedom to connect. The United States supports this freedom for people everywhere, and we have called on other nations to do the same. Because we want people to have the chance to exercise this freedom. We also support expanding the number of people who have access to the internet. And because the internet must work evenly and reliably for it to have value, we support the multi-stakeholder system that governs the internet today, which has consistently kept it up and running through all manner of interruptions across networks, borders, and regions.

However, the internet continues to be restrained in a myriad of ways. In China, the government censors content and redirects search requests to error pages. In Burma, independent news sites have been taken down with distributed denial of service attacks. In Cuba, the government is trying to create a national intranet, while not allowing their citizens to access the global internet. In Vietnam, bloggers who criticize the government are arrested and abused. In Iran, the authorities block opposition and media websites, target social media, and steal identifying information about their own people in order to hunt them down.

The choices we make today will determine what the internet looks like in the future. Businesses have to choose whether and how to enter markets where internet freedom is limited. People have to choose how to act online, what information to share and with whom, which ideas to voice and how to voice them. Governments have to choose to live up to their commitments to protect free expression, assembly, and association. For the United States, the choice is clear. On the spectrum of internet freedom, we place ourselves on the side of openness. Now, we recognize that an open internet comes with challenges. It calls for ground rules to protect against wrongdoing and harm. And internet freedom raises tensions, like all freedoms do. But we believe the benefits far exceed the costs.

The first challenge is achieving both liberty and security. Liberty and security are often presented as equal and opposite; the more you have of one, the less you have of the other. In fact, I believe they make each other possible. Without security, liberty is fragile. Without liberty, security is oppressive. The challenge is finding the proper measure: enough security to enable our freedoms, but not so much or so little as to endanger them.

Finding this proper measure for the internet is critical because the qualities that make the internet a force for unprecedented progress – its openness, its leveling effect, its reach and speed – also enable wrongdoing on an unprecedented scale. Terrorists and extremist groups use the internet to recruit members, and plot and carry out attacks. Human traffickers use the internet to find and lure new victims into modern-day slavery. Child pornographers use the internet to exploit children. Hackers break into financial institutions, cell phone networks, and personal email accounts.

So we need successful strategies for combating these threats and more without constricting the openness that is the internet's greatest attribute. The United States is aggressively tracking and deterring criminals and terrorists online. We are investing in our nation's cyber-security, both to prevent cyber-incidents and to lessen their impact. We are cooperating with other countries to fight transnational crime in cyber-space. The United States Government invests in helping other nations build their own law enforcement capacity. We have also ratified the Budapest Cybercrime Convention, which sets out the steps countries must take to ensure that the internet is not misused by criminals and terrorists while still protecting the liberties of our own citizens. In our vigorous effort to prevent attacks or apprehend criminals, we retain a commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms. The United States is determined to stop terrorism and criminal activity online and offline, and in both spheres we are committed to pursuing these goals in accordance with our laws and values.

Now, others have taken a different approach. Security is often invoked as a justification for harsh crackdowns on freedom. Now, this tactic is not new to the digital age, but it has new resonance as the internet has given governments new capacities for tracking and punishing human rights advocates and political dissidents. Governments that arrest bloggers, pry into the peaceful activities of their citizens, and limit their access to the internet may claim to be seeking security. In fact, they may even mean it as they define it. But they are taking the wrong path. Those who clamp down on internet freedom may be able to hold back the full expression of their people's yearnings for a while, but not forever.

The second challenge is protecting both transparency and confidentiality. The internet's strong culture of transparency derives from its power to make information of all kinds available instantly. But in addition to being a public space, the internet is also a channel for private communications. And for that to continue, there must be protection for confidential communication online. Think of all the ways in which people and organizations rely on confidential communications to do their jobs. Businesses hold confidential conversations when they're developing new products to stay ahead of their competitors. Journalists keep the details of some sources confidential to protect them from exposure or retribution. And governments also rely on confidential communication online as well as offline. The existence of connection technologies may make it harder to maintain confidentiality, but it does not alter the need for it.

Now, I know that government confidentiality has been a topic of debate during the past few months because of WikiLeaks, but it's been a false debate in many ways. Fundamentally, the WikiLeaks incident began with an act of theft. Government documents were stolen, just the same as if they had been smuggled out in a briefcase. Some have suggested that this theft was justified because governments have a responsibility to conduct all of our work out in the open in the full view of our citizens. I respectfully disagree. The United States could neither provide for our citizens' security nor promote the cause of human rights and democracy around the world if we had to make public every step of our efforts. Confidential communication gives our government the opportunity to do work that could not be done otherwise.

Consider our work with former Soviet states to secure loose nuclear material. By keeping the details confidential, we make it less likely that terrorists or criminals will find the nuclear material and steal it for their own purposes. Or consider the content of the documents that WikiLeaks made public. Without commenting on the authenticity of any particular documents, we can observe that many of the cables released by WikiLeaks relate to human rights work carried on around the world. Our diplomats closely collaborate with activists, journalists, and citizens to challenge the misdeeds of oppressive governments. It is dangerous work. By publishing diplomatic cables, WikiLeaks exposed people to even greater risk.

For operations like these, confidentiality is essential, especially in the internet age when dangerous information can be sent around the world with the click of a keystroke. But of course, governments also have a duty to be transparent. We govern with the consent of the people, and that consent must be informed to be meaningful. So we must be judicious about when we close off our work to the public, and we must review our standards frequently to make sure they are rigorous. In the United States, we have laws designed to ensure that the government makes its work open to the people, and the Obama Administration has also launched an unprecedented initiative to put government data online, to encourage citizen participation, and to generally increase the openness of government.

The U.S. Government's ability to protect America, to secure the liberties of our people, and to support the rights and freedoms of others around the world depends on maintaining a balance between what's public and what should and must remain out of the public domain. The scale should and will always be tipped in favor of openness, but tipping the scale over completely serves no one's interests. Let me be clear. I said that the WikiLeaks incident began with a theft, just as if it had been executed by smuggling papers in a briefcase. The fact that WikiLeaks used the internet is not the reason we criticized its actions. WikiLeaks does not challenge our commitment to internet freedom. And one final word on this matter: There were reports in the days following these leaks that the United States Government intervened to coerce private companies to deny service to WikiLeaks. That is not the case. Now, some politicians and pundits publicly called for companies to disassociate from WikiLeaks, while others criticized them for doing so. Public officials are part of our country's public debates, but there is a line between expressing views and coercing conduct. Business decisions that private companies may have taken to enforce their own values or policies regarding WikiLeaks were not at the direction of the Obama Administration.

As we look ahead, let us remember that internet freedom isn't about any one particular activity online. It's about ensuring that the internet remains a space where activities of all kinds can take place, from grand, ground-breaking, historic campaigns to the small, ordinary acts that people engage in every day.

This is one of the grand challenges of our time. We are engaged in a vigorous effort against those who we have always stood against, who wish to stifle and repress, to come forward with their version of reality and to accept none other. We enlist your help on behalf of this struggle. It's a struggle for human rights, it's a struggle for human freedom, and it's a struggle for human dignity.

Thank you all very much. (Applause)

Document 5

'The irony of US Net freedom.'

This is adapted from an article by Philip J. Cunningham on the website of *China Daily*, a Chinese newspaper, 1 March 2011.

Philip J. Cunningham is a visiting fellow in the East Asia Program, Cornell University, New York.

Although the WikiLeaks case found the US government awkwardly on the "wrong" side of Internet freedom, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has tried to downplay the obvious hypocrisy of her stance – in short, anything that serves United States government interests is enlightened Internet policy – while portraying her political team and its corporate allies as model global citizens on the road to human rights and freedom, never mind the bloody war raging on in the background.

The US promotion of Internet freedom cannot be taken at face value, especially after the frantic efforts made to block and discredit WikiLeaks. Instead, US official rhetoric about Internet freedom is rather code for "do it our way", which itself can be parsed to mean: "Do as we say, not as we do."

Researching the Chinese press for articles in *Nieman Reports* and the *Media Studies Journal*, I was surprised at just how "polite" Chinese coverage of US politics was – even in 1998 when the media in America was lashing out against Hillary Clinton's husband, then President of the US, Bill Clinton, because of his relations with another woman. Now some would say the "polite" Chinese approach was censorship, and by American press standards it might well be. But is an absolute free-for-all the only way to go? Aren't there also valid questions of decorum and maybe just old-fashioned editing?

One doesn't have to agree with the particulars of Internet management in China to agree that the Internet need not open all the floodgates or be identical in every corner of the globe in line with Clinton's proclamation. The call to impose American-style "Internet freedom" on the rest of the world smacks of self-interest dressed up as humanitarian ideology. Far from offering a level playing field, the "free" transmission of information and entertainment as outlined by Clinton would favor established players with deep pockets and technological prowess.

In any case, it's important to distinguish between the free flow of ideas as advocated by upstarts like Wikipedia and WikiLeaks, and the corporate giants who rake in the profits while claiming the high ground of Internet evangelism. Facebook is a corporate behemoth, not a pillar of free speech, ditto for Google and Yahoo. These firms examine and manipulate personal details of people's lives, and are essentially gigantic advertising agencies masquerading as communication gurus. No sooner did Google acquire YouTube, a bustling hub of user-donated cultural product, than it started littering the entire site with obnoxious popup ads.

China, like any sovereign state, has the right to resist honey-voiced US calls to adopt a US-style Internet strategy, just as it has the right to keep multinational firms with questionable ethical standards at arm's length, especially data-mining firms that trade private information for corporate profit.

Document 6

'Egypt's big internet disconnect.'

Article by Andrew McLaughlin from the *Guardian*, a UK newspaper, 31 January 2011

As recently as a week ago, Egypt's internet was extraordinary in the Arab world for its freedom. For more than a decade, the regime has adhered to a hands-off policy, leaving unblocked everything from rumours about President Hosni Mubarak's health to videos of police beatings. Unlike most of its regional neighbours and other authoritarian regimes, Egypt's government never built or required sophisticated technical infrastructures of censorship. (Of course, the country has hardly been a paradise of free expression: the state security forces have vigorously suppressed dissent through surveillance, arbitrary detentions and relentless intimidation of writers and editors.)

Partly as a result of its liberal policies, Egypt became a hub for internet and mobile network investment, home to a thriving and competitive communications sector that pioneered free dial-up services, achieved impressive rates of access and use, and offered speedy wireless and broadband networks at relatively low prices. Indeed, Egypt is today one of the major crossing points for the underwater fibre-optic cables that interconnect the regions of the globe.

But last Thursday, the Mubarak regime shattered a decade's worth of accomplishment by issuing the order to shut down the mobile networks and internet links. Since the internet age dawned in the early 90s, no widely connected country had disconnected itself entirely. The starkness and suddenness of Egypt's reversal – from unrestricted to unreachable – marks one of the many tragedies of the Mubarak regime's brutal and hamfisted response to last week's emergence of citizen protests.

The internet cutoff shows how the details of infrastructure matter. Despite having no large-scale or centralised censorship apparatus, Egypt was still able to shut down its communications in a matter of minutes. This was possible because Egypt permitted only three wireless carriers to operate, and required all internet service providers (ISPs) to funnel their traffic through a handful of international links. Confronted with mass demonstrations and fearful about a populace able to organise itself, the government had to order fewer than a dozen companies to shut down their networks and disconnect their routers from the global internet.

The blackout has proved increasingly ineffective. A handful of networks have remained connected, including one independent ISP, the country's academic and research network, and a few major banks, businesses and government institutions. Whether these reflect deliberate defiance, privileged connections, or tactical exceptions – one might imagine, for example, that members of Mubarak's family and inner circle would want to have Internet access to move money, buy tickets, or make hotel reservations abroad – is as yet unknown.

Moreover, innovative Egyptians are finding ways to overcome the block. They are relaying information by voice, exploiting small and unnoticed openings in the digital firewall, and dusting off old modems to tap foreign dial-up services.

For democracies, one lesson here is clear: diversity and complexity in our network architectures is a very good thing. Likewise, enforcement of public policies such as network neutrality – the principle that access providers should not be permitted to control what their customers can do online – are important to prevent networks from installing tools and capabilities that could be abused in moments of crisis. For dictatorships and authoritarian regimes, however, the lesson will be quite the opposite.

A central unknown at this moment is what the economic harm to the country will be. Without internet and voice networks, Egyptians are losing transactions and deals, their stocks and commodities cannot be traded, their goods are halted on frozen transportation networks, and their bank deposits are beyond reach.

Also unknown is how many Egyptians have been harmed in non-economic ways – as human beings. As things stand, a worried mother who has not heard from her son or daughter can't send an email or check Facebook for a status update. A witness to violence or abuse can't seek help, document responsibility, or warn others via Twitter or a blog.

Life-saving information is inaccessible. Healthy, civil debate about the future is squashed. And in the absence of trustworthy news, firsthand reports and real-time images, rumour and fear flourish. In all those ways, the total internet cutoff undermines the government's own interest in restoring calm and order.

What is clear, however, is that the communications cutoff has failed in its central objective, which was to stop the Egyptian people from organising and mobilising in opposition. As hundreds of thousands of Egyptians gather on the streets to demand change, we must all hope that Egypt's officials and CEOs will see the writing on the wall, weigh the costs to Egyptian businesses and citizens – to their economic interests, family needs and human rights – and defy their president's unprecedented and increasingly ineffective blackout.

Document 7

'Don't close eyes to truth.'

This article by Ahmed Al-Jarallah was published on the website of *Arab Times* in March 2011.

Ahmed Al-Jarallah is editor-in-chief of the *Arab Times* in Kuwait.

The wheel of crises that has been spinning at great speed in the Arab world, coupled with the stands and reactions of the West, must be analyzed by experts with cool brains, far from emotions and sentiments, so that we don't close our eyes to the truth and the need for development. We can never consider these events naive, especially when we recall the American terms or phrases that we have started hearing in recent years like the 'constructive chaos' and the 'new Middle East'. These expressions are sometimes coated with the language of threats, signaling what awaits the region if its leaders do not follow the instructions of the West and America.

It is only natural that reform is required in some of our political systems. However, the slogans raised in protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, Bahrain, Yemen, Libya and Algeria do not depict the real situation and have not yielded positive results. The chaotic scene that has prevailed in Tunisia and Egypt, for example, leaves no room for optimism, especially after paralyzing the national institutions. Who is ruling Egypt now? Is it the Army, which is issuing decisions, only to give excuses later that it took certain steps under pressure because of the street uprisings?

This explains the emphasis of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on the necessity of a peaceful and smooth transition of power before he stepped down. Afterwards, America took a stand against Mubarak's statement, saying that stepping down now means 'right away'. This only proves that they want to paralyze the national institutions for chaos to reign in the Arab world.

At this point, the crisis-provoking people must stop their unscrupulous acts and focus on development, so that they are not blinded by emotional slogans, which will only increase the number of unsuccessful nations in the Arab world.

Nevertheless, this does not prevent us from considering the fact that some nations actually need reforms and real revolutions to oust their tyrannical regimes, which equate reform to paganism and treason. These regimes usually counter efforts to implement reforms by resorting to arms, fire and bloodbath – similar to what is currently happening in Libya. Despite the need for change, we have to ask, 'Have those calling for change agreed on the type of nation and system of government? Have they specified the agenda to build their country? Or is their objective just to create a power vacuum and push the country towards the unknown?'

Chaos often leads to destruction and cripples institutions. Destruction can never sow seeds of change, especially in countries that face economic problems, as well as regional and international challenges. These countries are enmeshed in security crises, which have crippled their development plans, encouraged corruption and led the people to the brink of collapse. This situation has prompted some huge countries to clamor for the birth of a new Middle East with no clear features. Is there any other explanation for the uprisings in the region? We hope the 'new revolutionists' will ponder on this question.

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