BOOK REVIEW


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It is very easy to over-hype information technologies as a panacea for all problems rooted in the political regimes that claim to be “democratic” but are really dictatorships in disguise. The book gives a realistic look into the role new information technologies are playing in Muslim countries around the world and how these are challenging the state-of-affairs.

The book starts with an interesting overview of “evolution and revolution, transition and entrenchment” of the proliferation of information technologies in Muslim countries since the early 1990s. The information technology has increased democratic activism in many counties and leaders in exile can stay connected with citizens. From the (1) end of Suharto’s rule in Indonesia to (2) Tulip revolution in Kyrgyzstan, (3) Kuwait’s women’s suffrage movement, (4) Turkish military leaders’ statements to curb elected Islamists, (5) online “reappearance” of cracked down Labour Party and Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, (6) server relocations for Tunisian newspapers, and (7) green revolution in 2009 Iranian presidential elections are all discussed here.

The philosophical depth of questions, answers and discussion is spectacular. It was a common belief in many Muslim countries that adopting foreign technologies will lead to fundamental changes in the social fabric of the country. They feared that they will adopt foreign culture and will become “Americanized”. The author answers and discusses these issues by highlighting the role of information technologies in creating an online Muslim identity and providing a shared source of grievances and collected sense of persecution. People in Muslim countries are not mere consumers of

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online content but they are producers of such content as well.

A great deal of discussion is devoted to topics such as lineages of digital state, new media and journalism online, civil society and systems political communication, and censorship and the politics of cultural production. It is an excellent read for those who want to understand the process of political discourse in Muslim countries in the digital age.

Nazir Sangi is Vice Chancellor of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) in Islamabad Pakistan. Dr. Nazir A. Sangi received his Bachelor’s in Engineering in 1981 and PhD in 1989 from Liverpool University in United Kingdom. Dr. Sangi won a prestigious National NCR IT Excellence Award in 2004 and 2009. At Allama Iqbal Open University, Dr. Sangi lead ICT projects development efforts that included “Open Learning Institute of Virtual Education (OLIVE)”, Multimedia Electronic Courseware Design Centre (MECDC), IT Services Networking Project (ITSN), E-Assessment methods and model for students in Asia (an IDRC PAN DLT Project). His contribution in ICT research has resulted in an improvement of quality of learning of distance learning graduates nationwide.