Preface

When President Obama introduced social networking, e-mail, blogging, and text-messaging as the major means for communicating with his supporters, it was hailed as the first time that electronic media had been utilized in American politics. However, the truth is, that E-Politics, which we define in this volume as “political activities that are undertaken via electronic media,” has been around for decades.

The roots of E-Politics can be traced to the 1960’s when the advent of the PC heralded a major shift in the power of the IT function within organizations relative to their role in previous decades. As a result of the diffusion of the PC, the IT department was no longer in control of the main database of the organization (the mainframe computer) and, consequently, it became less politically influential than it was before. The advent of the PC turned the IT department from a centralized unit with direct links to top management into a decentralized support function, with much less political clout than it had before.

A similar shift in power, but in the opposite direction, took place when the Internet and Internet related technologies (e.g., eCommerce, e-mail, social-networking services, etc.) became prominent. The emergence of these new technologies heralded a new shift of power, with the IT department playing a central role again through control of companies’ intranets, extranets, centralized ERP systems, CRM systems, etc. In the new power distribution heralded by the advent of Internet technologies, the IT department resumed the central role that it had during the days of the main-frame, with its management exercising again more political clout than they had before.

Another area where E-Politics manifests and which has been researched extensively is electronically enabled organizational politics. Indeed, many of my previous publications, including my very first book on Virtual Politics (Romm-Livermore, 1999) focused on the ways in which e-mail made virtual politicking possible.

The utilization of electronic media by virtual communities of various types is another manifestation of E-Politics. The past two decades have seen a proliferation of research activity on the political dynamics of virtual communities, including the utilization of electronic media to support community development (community informatics), the social dynamics of commercially supported communities of customers, the interactions within communities of gamers, learning communities, eDating communities, support group communities, and social networking communities, to name just a few.

The body of literature that already exists in this area demonstrates that E-Politics, the politics of virtual communities, is not that different from the politics of face-to-face or real communities. Virtual communities, like their face-to-face counterparts, undergo similar developmental processes, where members discuss the goals of the community, select and sometimes change leaders, start revolutions and engage in conflict resolution. Similarly, the politics of virtual communities has been shown to be as complex as the politics of face-to-face communities, with political actors utilizing political means that are sometimes explicit but often disguised and hidden from the public eye.
Finally, a recent new area of manifestation for E-Politics that has not drawn much research activity to date involves the utilization of electronic media to support organized Party Politics. This area of research involves studies of the utilization of blogging, e-mail, social networking and text-messaging by community activists and political parties in the US and in other countries. In addition, this new area of growth for E-Politics includes the study of technologies like e-voting to support political activities.

To summarize, E-Politics is considered an area of research and practice consisting of four major sub-areas or levels of research:

1. **The organization level**: The politics of the IT function and its role in organizations, the politics of virtual communities within organizations, etc.
2. **The community level**: The political activities of city, state, and national level, including professional communities, learning communities, communities of customers, social networking communities, etc.
3. **The national level**: Party and grass-roots political activism enabled by electronic media, electronically supported governance, etc.
4. **The global level**: Cross-national political activities, global movements, etc.

Reflecting the above understanding of E-Politics, this book consists of the following areas of research on E-Politics, (1) E-Politics at Work, (2) E-Politics in Cyberspace, (3) E-Politics Among the Youth, (4) E-Politics for Party Politics, (5) E-Politics of Grass-roots Social Movements, and (6) E-Politics as a Facilitator of Democracy in the Muslim World.

1. **E-Politics at Work**: The E-Politics at Work section of the book consists of two chapters. The first chapter by Nadia K. Kakabadse, Alexander Kouzmin, and Andrew Kakabadse focuses on the pros and cons of using Radio Frequency identification particularly within the context of work organizations. The second chapter in this section by Celia Romm-Livermore and Pierluigi Rippa focuses on the politics of implementing ERP systems across cultures, demonstrating with two cases from the US and Italy that culture makes a difference to how politics manifests in IT diffusion.

2. **E-Politics in Cyberspace**: The E-Politics in Cyberspace section of the book consists of three chapters. The first chapter by Yasmin Ibrahim explores the politics of images on Facebook, demonstrating with a number of cases studies that the utilization or barring of image use has powerful political implications. The second chapter by Celia Romm-Livermore discusses the politics of social networking communities, using as an example an on-line support group community. Finally, the third chapter in this section by Katherine Ognyanova is a historical analysis of media censorship in Russia, highlighting the implications from this censorship to on-line content in Russia.

3. **E-Politics among the Youth**: The E-Politics among the Youth section of the book consists of four chapters. The first by Dominic Thomas discusses the participation of young adults in civic engagement web sites. The second by Christian Fuchs focuses on youth participation in social networking sites. The third by Philippa Collin studies the building and connecting of on-line communities for everyday politics. Finally, the fourth chapter in this section by Lara Khansa, Tabitha James and Deborah F. Cook explores the acceptance, use, and influence of political technologies among young voters in the 2008 U.S. presidential election.

4. **E-Politics for Party Politics**: The E-Politics for Party Politics section of the book consists of five chapters. The first chapter by Anastasia Deligiaouri and Panangiotis Symenonidis discuss the im-
impact of television debates on citizens’ political participation in the elections in Greece. The second chapter by Jens Hoff discusses the effect of political Internet use on voters’ attitudes and actual political behavior. The third chapter by Jang Kim, George Barnett and Kyunghee Kwon compares the influence of social networks on-line and off-line, using the US Senate as a case study. The fourth chapter by Kristin Johnson and Brian Krueger focuses on the impact of unsolicited political e-mail on politicians. Finally, the last chapter in this section by Michael Raisinghani and Randy Weiss looks at the present and the future of E-Politics, outlining some intriguing directions for future research in this area.

5. **E-Politics of Grass-roots Social Movements:** The E-Politics of Grass-roots Social Movements section of the book consists of four chapters. The first chapter by Andrea Calderaro explores the role that e-mail lists play in creating political spaces for social movements. The second chapter by Yana Breindl discusses the effect of the digital rights advocate movement on the European Union intellectual property rights legislations. The third chapter by Anastasia Kavada focuses on the differences between e-mail lists and face-to-face contact in their effect on the politics of the global justice movement. Finally, the last chapter in this section by Lorenzo Mosca focuses on general trends in using the web politically to support social movements and social organizations.

6. **E-Politics as Facilitator of Democracy in the Muslim World:** The E-Politics as Facilitator of Democracy in the Muslim World section of the book consists of three chapters. The first by M. A. Muqtedar Khan, Reid T. Smith, and Onur Tanay focuses on Islam revolution and radicalism and the role that information technology plays in this process. The second chapter by Hamid Nemati and Amna Latif studies the unintended consequences of using ICT for national transformation. Finally, the third chapter by M. Naveed Baqir takes a critical look at the discourse surrounding the ICT growth in Pakistan.