Chapter 4
The Evolution of Cyberspace, the Blogosphere, and Their Impact on Political Autonomy and Political Participation

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the impact of cyberspace, the blogosphere on political autonomy and political participation. The cyberspace and the blogosphere have had a role to play in political autonomy and participation for as long as the internet has existed. The internet gives one a worldwide broadcasting capability. It is a mechanism for dissemination of information and a medium of collaboration and interaction between people irrespective of where they are situated in the world. Cyberspace and blogosphere are part of the bigger picture that is the internet.

I. INTRODUCTION
The cyberspace and the blogosphere have had a role to play in political autonomy and participation for as long as the internet has existed. The internet gives one a worldwide broadcasting capability, it is a mechanism for dissemination of information and a medium of collaboration and interaction between people irrespective of
where they are situate in the world (Leiner, 2013). Cyberspace and blogosphere are part of the bigger picture that is the internet.

When it comes to the relationship between the internet and politics there exists two schools of thoughts, on one hand there are individuals who believe that this technology has some traits that help spread democracy around the world, and on the other hand there are those who believe that this instrument consolidates authoritarianism and political repression (Torres Soriano, 2013).

For a long time the internet was considered pro democratic in nature however in recent years this has been challenged by another antagonist perspective which furthers the notion that the internet not only fails to support the democratization process; but rather moreover it possess characteristics that lead to regression, by endowing authoritarian regimes with resources that empower social control and the effective persecution of dissidents (Torres Soriano, 2013).

Irrespective of the school of thought that one ascribes to it is agreeable that the internet through the cyberspace and blogosphere has hugely impacted the political scene in the world. The magnitude of the impact has progressively increased over the years as a result of the increased number of internet users in the world.

II. THE EVOLUTION OF CYBERSPACE AND BLOGOSPHERE

1. Historical Development

Military build-ups, political sparring and political manoeuvring during the Cold War between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had a profound effect on research and education. In 1957, the United States made an effort to boost scientific research in what was a “knowledge race.” Production of scientific literature skyrocketed and collections boomed. To contain the resulting deluge in bibliographical data, computers were procured to process the information then published as print or microfilmed indexes- which would be transformed into databases accessible through the large host services that sprouted in the early 1970s, such as Dialog (Perrit Jr, 2012).

In 1962, following the Cuban missile crisis, the United States Defense Department’s Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) was commissioned to establish a secure network linking centers working on military research in a way that the communications would remain intact even if some of the centers were knocked out. This paved way for the development of a distributed network, whereby the connections would continue to work even in the absence of one or more of its parts (Keefer & Baiget, 2001).
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