

The Struggle for 'Global Opinion' and the War on Iraq: The Global Internet-based Anti-War/Peace Movement Vs. the U.S.

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Abstract.

The purpose of the paper¹ is to raise a question of whether it is possible to regard the global internet-based anti-war/peace movement as a challenger to the premises of the U.S. foreign policy and U.S. power. The anti-war movement, like most transnational social movement organizations (TSMOs), does not possess much hard power but in terms of soft power, which has become increasingly important in the global information age (Nye 2004), it is doing significantly better. Not only the role of soft power has grown but also information can be regarded as power (Nye 2004; Beck 2000; Castells 2002). Therefore, the U.S., although undeniably dominant in military terms, is gaining new kind of challengers (of which the terrorist networks is only one example) whose power is based much on their ability to influence the 'global opinion' by informational and symbolic politics (Keck & Sikkink 1998). Actually, Noam Chomsky (2003) has argued that the only (f)actor that can challenge the global supremacy of the U.S. is the international public opinion. Whether this is true or not, the unpopularity of the War on Iraq as well as the ever-growing distrust in U.S. policies have illustrated that international opinion can seriously undermine soft power of a country, the ability to attract and shape preferences of others.

Therefore, the paper starts with discussion on global attitudes towards the War on Iraq and the role of the U.S. in world politics. In this regard, different reasons for the degeneration of the U.S. image are discussed. Next, the global internet-based anti-war/peace movement is taken up for a closer examination. The paper argues that there are several reasons why to pay attention to the global anti-war/peace movement as a potential challenger to the U.S. power. (There are also many constraints and open questions which will be discussed as well.) First of all, due to globalization, all transnational movements have gained more power in the international system at the expense of state(s), which the information revolution, and especially the internet, has highlighted even more. Secondly, the nature of power has been transformed as soft power and information-related power have become more important. Thirdly, the anti-war/peace movement has succeeded quite well in the political-informational struggle for information and interpretations concerning the War on Iraq. It has been able, with the help of internet and alternative media, to counter much of the war-related information provided by the U.S. as well as to challenge interpretations of the mainstream media. The global anti-war/peace movement uses the internet as its main forum and instrument for its internal and external communication. Via the internet it is possible for a political movement to organize in spite of the locations of the people taking part in it, and it can be used as a channel for forwarding political messages to a world-wide audience in real-time. In this sense, the internet offers alternatives for mainstream media as well as mainstream politics, and resistance.

¹ The paper is a draft, and has not been language-checked. Please do not quote without permission.

1 INTRODUCTION

To this day, the patterns of our lives are shaped politically by the actions of state authority; yet, morally, rulers of contemporary states are open to outside moral criticism of kinds that have not been widely available since before 1650. Even the most forceful superpowers can no longer ignore the fact. [...] Lilliputian organizations cannot compel immoral rulers to apologize on their knees, as Henry II had to do; but they do subject rulers who refuse to mend their ways to damaging embarrassment in the eyes of the world. If the political image of Modernity was Leviathan, the moral standing of ‘national’ powers and superpowers will, for the future, be captured in the picture of the Lemuel Gulliver, waking from an unthinking sleep, to find himself tethered by innumerable tiny bonds.²

The quote above crystallizes the thematic of this paper. The basic question is whether Toulmin’s argument can hold true in regard to a hegemony like the U.S.? Can the U.S., in any sense, be regarded as Gulliver ‘tethered by innumerable tiny bonds’ by the actors of world (civil) society? And could the hegemony really be challenged merely by subjecting it to ‘damaging embarrassment in the eyes of the world’? Is power in the global information age really that connected to information, representations and discourses? What kind of a role can ‘global opinion’ play in challenging the power of the hegemony? Moreover, what actors (‘Lilliputian organizations’) are relevant in influencing the global opinion regarding the hegemony (Gulliver)?

The paper³ raises a question of whether it is possible to regard the global internet-based anti-war/peace movement as a challenger to the premises of the U.S. foreign policy and U.S. power. In this regard, the paper discusses the ability of the anti-war/peace movement to influence the ‘global opinion’ with the help of the internet and alternative media. In Chapter 2, the paper starts by introducing the current situation in which the War on Iraq is highly unpopular and has affected the attitudes towards the U.S. also in more general terms. In this regard, different reasons for the degeneration of the U.S. image are also discussed.

In chapters 3 and 4, the paper reflects the debate on the growing significance of transnational and nongovernmental actors in the global information age characterized by continuous and multiple information flows. Especially the role of the internet in political-informational struggles is discussed, first on a more general level and then more specifically in relation to the global internet-based anti-war/peace movement. In concluding Chapter 5, the discussion is summarized and some important issues for further research are outlined.

² Toulmin 1990, 197-198, quoted in Beck 2000, 72.

³ The paper is based on my on-going PhD research titled ‘The Global Internet-based Anti-War/Peace Movement and Alternative Media on the Web as Challengers of the U.S? The Struggle for Information and Interpretations of the War on Iraq’ (forthcoming in 2008/09).

2 THE GLOBAL OPINION AS A CHALLENGE TO U.S. SOFT POWER

Recently, there has been an extensive amount of research and theoretical debate in IR in regard to the dominant position of the U.S. in the international system⁴. There is not much disagreement on the fact that the U.S. is the most powerful actor in the international system, but there seems to be no clear consensus on how to explain or name the dominant position of the U.S.⁵, or what kind of realistic challengers the U.S. might have. If the U.S. supremacy in the international system is evaluated from the perspective of Political Realism, emphasizing power politics and military power, the facts are undeniable: the U.S. is militarily stronger than the next fourteen states altogether, and the military budget of the U.S. is almost as much as the rest of the world's put together⁶.

However, today's world is much more complicated than the post-World War II world, which acted as a breeding ground for Political Realism. Now there are many non-state actors in the international arena whose significance cannot be measured in military terms. No longer can the relevance of other forms of power be undermined. In contemporary IR discourse it is emphasized that soft power⁷, related to persuasion and tempting, is challenging the role of military related hard power⁸. Joseph S. Nye, Jr. argues that there has been a transformation in the agenda of world politics that can be described as a transformation from a one-dimensional chess game into a three-dimensional one. The three-dimensionality derives from three boards: the top board, the middle board, and the bottom board. The top board represents the classic interstate military issues, and the middle board economic issues, whereas the bottom board is related to transnational issues such as terrorism, international crime or climate change. Nye argues that in the global information age (a term that he uses constantly and plentifully) a pattern of a complex three-dimensional chess game is the way power is distributed among countries. To be effective, influential and powerful in this multilayered game, a player needs to be able to play both vertically and horizontally. The player also needs power resources that derive both from hard and soft power. Hard power is potentially relevant on all boards, especially on the top and middle ones, but hard power is simply not enough on the bottom board where transnational issues such as terrorism and climate change, are not to be resolved by military force. By definition, transnational issues require cooperation and multilateral approach. In dealing with these issues, soft power is particularly important.⁹

From this perspective, the role and power of state is quite different from the traditional view of Political Realism that military issues are not only on the top of the agenda but hard power also pretty much defines the agenda. In the new view, the division of power is multidimensional. Thus, the role and power of the U.S. should also be defined in new terms. For Nye, no single actor, not even the U.S., is to be regarded hegemonic in all of the boards. He admits that the U.S., with global military reach, is the only superpower on the top board of classic interstate military issues, and in this regard it makes sense to speak of hegemony and unipolarity. However, on the two other boards

⁴ See e.g. Cox 2003; Dunne 2003; Mann 2003; Kaldor 2003; Leffler 2003; Posen 2003; Todd 2003; Wendt 2003; Harle 2005; Harle & Seppälä 2005; Harle & Moisiu 2006.

⁵ For some, the U.S. is a hegemony, or an empire (with a negative or a positive connotation) (see e.g. Fergusson 2004; Ikenberry 2004; Ikenberry & Slaughter 2006), while some argue that the U.S. hegemony is now so substantial that not even the concept of empire is enough: the U.S. has gained such a position that it exceeds all the previous empires. According to Kenneth Waltz (2000, 17), after the Roman Empire, power has not ever been as concentrated as it now is to the U.S.. Some call the U.S. 'hyperpower', and argue that this concentration of power is transforming the whole international system from anarchic to hierarchic (see e.g. Dunne 2003; Harle 2005; Harle & Moisiu 2006).

⁶ Muzaffar 2005. As Barry R. Posen (2003, 7-9) points out, military power supports other forms of power as well.

⁷ Nye (2004) defines soft power as state's ability to reach its goals in such way that it can convince others free-willingly to do as it wishes. Soft power is based on persuasion and not on direct influence.

⁸ Nye 2004; see also Nye 1990; Keohane & Nye 2002.

⁹ Nye 2004, 4-5, 137.

the distribution of power is not at all as clear. In regard to the middle board of interstate economic issues, the U.S. has to cooperate closely with China, Japan and other states. Especially in relation to the European Union the U.S. must bargain ‘as an equal when Europe acts in a unified way’¹⁰. Hence, the distribution of power on the middle board is multipolar, and it does not make sense to regard this as an American hegemony.¹¹

On the bottom board of transnational issues the situation is even more complicated as power is widely distributed and ‘chaotically organized’ among state and non-state actors¹². Nye¹³ argues that it ‘makes no sense at all to call this a unipolar world or an American empire – despite the claims of propagandists on the right and left’. According to him, those who regard the U.S. as an empire, or recommend imperial foreign policy for the U.S., are ‘relying on a woefully inadequate analysis’. When participating in a three-dimensional game, one is likely to lose if focusing only one board and failing to recognize the other boards and vertical connections between them. Nye illustrates the complexity by pointing out to ‘the connections in the war on terrorism between military actions on the top board, where war removed a dangerous tyrant in Iraq, but simultaneously increased the ability of Al Qaeda network to gain new recruits on the bottom, transnational, board’.¹⁴

In other words, there are now new actors that can challenge state power in many levels, especially on the middle and bottom boards. According to Nye¹⁵, these actors can develop their own soft power resources, and use them for challenging official foreign policy goals. He argues that these kinds of ‘private sources of soft power’ are becoming increasingly important in the global information age. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that also the U.S. will gain (and it already has) new kinds of challengers, at least on the transnational board of issues. One of the most interesting arguments in this regard has been presented by Noam Chomsky. He claims that the only (f)actor that can challenge the supremacy of the U.S. is the international public opinion. According to Chomsky, there are now two superpowers in the world. The first one is the U.S. and the second one is the ‘world public opinion’.¹⁶ Without further analyzing Chomsky’s hypothesis at this point, one has to admit that it is difficult to come up with a realistic *state level* challenger to the U.S. hegemony in the international system. It is at least prompting to assume, following the vivacious debate in IR, that there is no rivalry worthy of consideration when it comes to the traditional IR theory¹⁷. It is not possible to find a ‘real’ challenger in the area of violence and traditional military power since it is hard to imagine which countries, even together, would have the courage to attack the U.S. that is militarily so superior to them all¹⁸. There have been activities related to violent resistance – that is exactly what terrorism is all about – but so far violence and terrorism have turned against themselves as they have strengthened the U.S. legitimation to fight terrorism by military force.

¹⁰ Nye 2004, 137.

¹¹ Ibid., 4-5, 137.

¹² Ibid., 4.

¹³ Ibid., 4-5.

¹⁴ Ibid., 137.

¹⁵ Ibid.; see also Beck 2000; Castells 2002.

¹⁶ Chomsky 2003.

¹⁷ See e.g. Posen 2003; Wendt 2003; Harle 2005; Harle & Moisis 2006; see also Waltz 2000; Dunne 2003; Kaldor 2003.

¹⁸ Although there are states that are not satisfied with the dominant role of the U.S., in economically and politically interdependent international system it is not regarded as a wise move to risk many of the benefits that being on the U.S. ‘side’ – or at least accepting its lead role – provides. Hence, many states have rather allied themselves with the U.S. than actively sought to oppose it. However, although a military balance of power might be impossible, in the future other countries may want to ‘band together to deprive the U.S. policy of legitimacy and thus weaken American soft power’ (Nye 2004, 26).

If there really is no serious state level challenger to the U.S. supremacy, it might be interesting as well as necessary to look elsewhere, that is – as Christine Sylvester has put it – ‘where the International Relations is not supposed to be’. In this regard I find the above mentioned Chomsky’s hypothesis fruitful – could the challenge really situate in the public sphere of international, or global, opinion? And if so, in what terms and what forms? What kind of role the international media plays in this battle for opinions that both the superpower and those who oppose it are actively taking part in? How have the new communication technologies, the internet in particular, affected the possibilities of this kind of resistance and counter-politics?¹⁹

In this paper, I try to give some, although very preliminary answers to these questions. First of all, however, it is useful to take a closer look of the case, the War on Iraq, and the global opinion regarding it. The unpopularity of the war, and the ever-growing distrust in the U.S. policies, has illustrated that international opinion can seriously undermine soft power of a country. Primarily, soft power of any particular country is based on three resources, ‘its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)’²⁰. It is obvious that lately the U.S. has not succeeded very well, especially in regard to foreign policy.

The Unpopular War on Iraq

On February 22nd 2007, less than a month before the 4th anniversary of the War on Iraq, the former U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright said that the War on Iraq might be the worst catastrophe in the history of the U.S. foreign policy. According to Albright, due to the war the U.S. has lost its moral authority. Also Jimmy Carter, the former President of the U.S, pointed out that the international community has lost its trust and respect for the country.²¹ A growing number of foreign policy experts and international relations scholars have made similar statements in the U.S. and elsewhere²². Critical and negative notions of the U.S. are commonplace everywhere in the world, and these views are expressed and shared not only by political actors and experts but also by the media and the public as well. In the international media, the War on Iraq is being portrayed in highly critical terms even in the countries that are traditional western allies of the U.S.. Interestingly, and contrary to the common assumption that the U.S. is portrayed most critically in the media of Arab countries, a study by a global media research firm found that the BBC, for example, has more critical views of the U.S. government than the Arab media. About 60 percent of British and Italian television references to the U.S. were negative, while the share of negatives references in the Al-Jazeera International and Arab satellite television was only about 40 percent.²³

Also the ‘world public opinion’ has reached historical levels in terms of criticism towards the foreign policy of the U.S., especially in regard to the War on Iraq. In January 2007, the BBC World Service Poll²⁴ of more than 26,000 people across 25 different countries found out that 73 percent of the respondents disapprove of how the U.S. has dealt with Iraq²⁵. In the U.S. as well, the public support for the war has been in constant decline. An opinion poll by the Pew Research Institute in

¹⁹ To approach the issue of resistance this way is a choice not to emphasize potential military and economic rivalries of the U.S. (e.g. China, Russia, and the European Union) but rather to concentrate on a wholly different level – or a board, as Nye (2004) would say, which is transnational by nature, and thus, requires a different approach.

²⁰ Nye 2004, 111.

²¹ Helsingin Sanomat 23.2.2007.

²² See e.g. Nye 2004; Ikenberry & Slaughter 2006.

²³ Media Tenor International 21.3.2007.

²⁴ A survey of 26,381 respondents across 25 countries, conducted for the BBC World Service by an international polling firm GlobeScan together with the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA).

²⁵ BBC World Service Poll 23.1.2007.

February 2007 showed that a majority, 53 percent of Americans (the highest percentage since the beginning of the war), think the U.S. should bring its troops home as soon as possible^{26, 27}. After four years of war in Iraq, the attitudes are very critical all over the world not only towards the war but towards the U.S. government and foreign policy also in more general terms. The opposition and explicit resistance towards the U.S., even anti-Americanism, have become more common in various social and political arenas. The BBC World Service poll of January 2007 concludes that the 'global view' of the United States' role in world politics has significantly deteriorated. In those 18 countries that were previously polled, the average percentage of people saying that the U.S. is having mainly a positive influence in the world had dropped from 36 percent to 29 percent from a year before. Across all 25 countries polled, 49 percent said the U.S. is playing a mainly negative role in the world, and 68 percent think that the U.S. military presence in the Middle East provokes more conflict than it prevents.²⁸ The view is even shared by the U.S. intelligence service. In a classified U.S. intelligence report that was leaked into publicity in September 2006 it was stated that the 'War on Terror', and especially the War on Iraq, has generated deep anger in the Muslim world and given rise to terrorism all over the world.

The 'world public opinion' is challenging the hegemonic role of the U.S. also in more straightforward terms. In April 2007, a multinational poll found that 'publics around the world reject the idea that the United States should play the role of preeminent world leader', and that the U.S. 'plays the role of world policeman more than it should, fails to take their country's interests into account and cannot be trusted to act responsibly'. Even most of the Americans polled for the survey suggest that the U.S. should not remain the world's preeminent leader/world policeman. The respondents would prefer the U.S. taking a more cooperative role.²⁹

Having followed the War on Iraq since its beginning, hardly anyone would find these developments surprising. It is not difficult to find reasons for the world-wide degeneration of the U.S. image. Instantly, it is possible to come up with at least five different explanations: 1) The political 'reality': the current U.S. foreign policy, the 'War on Terror', and particularly the War on Iraq by the neo-conservative administration of the President George W. Bush³⁰, 2) the gap between the political 'reality' and the U.S. political rhetoric related to democracy, freedom and justice, 3) the failure of the U.S. public diplomacy to convince the world of its 'good intentions', 4) the failure of the U.S. media management to control information and interpretations concerning the War on Iraq, and 5) the success of the opponents of the war (including states, political parties, nongovernmental actors,

²⁶ Pew Research Institute, Survey Report 15.2.2007.

²⁷ The domestic support for the War on Iraq has lessened steadily. In July 2003, 21 percent of Americans thought the U.S. was not doing well in Iraq. By February 2004 the proportion was 34 %, by February 2005 42 %, and by February 2006 46 %. The February 2007 poll showed that as much as 67 percent of the Americans think the U.S. is not doing well in its military effort in Iraq, while 68 percent do not believe that the U.S. can prevent a civil war in Iraq. Furthermore, 66 percent of the Americans say that the U.S. is incapable of reducing civilian casualties, and 55 percent do not believe that the U.S. can defeat the insurgents militarily. (Pew Research Institute Survey Report 15.2.2007.)

²⁸ BBC World Service Poll 23.1.2007. In short, the poll suggests that 'world citizens disapprove of the way the US government has handled all six of the foreign policy areas explored. After the Iraq war (73% disapproval), majorities across the 25 countries also disapprove of US handling of Guantanamo detainees (67%), the Israeli-Hezbollah war (65%), Iran's nuclear program (60%), global warming (56%), and North Korea's nuclear program (54%)'.

²⁹ Chicago Council on Global Affairs & WorldPublicOpinion.org, Survey Report 17.4.2007. The survey suggests that 'majorities in most countries want the United States to participate in international efforts to address world problems', and that 'despite the negative views of US foreign policy, publics around the world do not want the United States to disengage from international affairs, but rather to participate in a more cooperative and multilateral fashion'.

³⁰ Snow and Taylor (2006, 398) argue that the rise of anti-Americanism since 2001 has had most to do with the Bush administration (see also Nye 2004, 14). In January 2005, a BBC poll showed that more than half of 21953 people surveyed believed that the re-election of George W. Bush had made the world more dangerous (BBC News 19.1.2005). In the U.S, the support ratings of the President Bush have dropped remarkably low. In January 2007, his job approval ratings were as low as 33 percent (Pew Research Institute, Survey Report 15.2.2007).

and transnational social movement organizations such as the global anti-war/peace movement) in framing war-related information in such a way that has put the U.S. policies under suspicion. Taken together, all of these issues have resulted in high level of criticism towards the U.S. in the international media (including both mainstream and alternative media) that has affected the public opinion all around the world.

Before the War on Iraq started, the attitudes towards the U.S. were more favorable in relation to the U.S. led coalition's military operation in Afghanistan, although there were critical insights already then. However, as the U.S. focus changed from Afghanistan to Iraq, the critique started to grow substantially. There were massive, world-wide demonstrations against the War on Iraq even before the war had started.³¹ Later on, over-exaggerating the threat of Saddam Hussein and Iraq's ability to manufacture weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), torture scandals in both Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib, as well as the growing number of civilian and military casualties in Iraq, have played a major role in the growing criticism towards the U.S. foreign policy. In other words, both the political 'reality' (the decision to wage war on Iraq, the implementation and consequences of the war) as well as the efforts by the U.S. to sell the war to the world with the help of various methods of image management, public diplomacy and propaganda can be regarded as a failure that has been costly for the U.S. in terms of soft power³².

However, at the same time it is important to remember two things. Regardless of the situation now, the U.S. was able to start the War on Iraq in March 2003, and after the U.S. propaganda campaign Iraq was regarded as a 'real' threat in many countries. Hence, at least the legitimation period preceding the war can be characterized as a victory for the U.S. in terms of efficiency of propaganda and media management³³. This was particularly evident in the domestic sphere: prior to the war, and even months after the war had started, around 70 percent of the Americans believed that Iraq had connections to the 9/11 terrorist attacks³⁴. Polls in the U.S. have revealed that 'before and after the Iraq war, a majority of Americans have had significant misperceptions and these are highly related to support for the war in Iraq'³⁵. 48 percent of the Americans believed, incorrectly, that there was a connection between Iraq and Al-Qaeda, and 22 percent thought that weapons of mass destruction had been found in Iraq. In addition, 25 percent of Americans believed that 'world public opinion' favored the U.S. war with Iraq. According to the poll, overall 60 percent had at least one of these three misperceptions.³⁶ Therefore, it can be argued that the U.S. government pre-war propaganda had been effective, at least in the domestic sphere³⁷. As the War on Iraq has continued,

³¹ Although anti-war demonstrations were reported in the media, they usually did not make the headlines of major newspapers or other mainstream media. Furthermore, during the first phases of the War on Iraq, the critical sentiments of 'global opinion' were not very well represented in the mainstream media. Critical views did not always surface via democratic political processes either as many states chose to take actively part in the U.S. 'War on Terror' despite the fact that their own citizens strongly opposed it. In some cases, the growing opposition of domestic public opinion has later led to some states take a more passive standing (e.g. Spain withdrew its troops from Iraq).

³² Nye 2004. For Nye, soft power is attractive power produced by soft-power resources. To find out which resources are soft-power resources can be 'measured by asking people through polls or focus groups' (Nye 2004, 6). Thus, the global opinion polls used as material in this study, can be regarded as a legitimate source of information concerning the U.S. soft power in some issue areas.

³³ In my licentiate thesis (Seppälä 2006; see also Seppälä 2005) I examined methods of the U.S. image and media management from the perspective of the U.S. constructing and maintaining her dominant position in the international system. The study focused on methods of propaganda, censorship and information warfare used in the 'War on Terror', concentrating mostly on the first phases of the concrete wars in Afghanistan (2001-02) and Iraq (2003-). The study found that the media management of the U.S. can be considered quite efficient in the first phases of these wars.

³⁴ Snow & Taylor 2006, 391; Joseph 2003.

³⁵ Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA), 2.10.2003.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Snow and Taylor (2006, 394-398) argue that in the post-9/11 world, and especially in relation to the global 'War on Terror', the U.S. propaganda has been successful at home but not abroad.

it is has become obvious that in later phases of the war the U.S. has no longer been able to control the image and information concerning the war in the national media, and remarkably less so abroad.

Propaganda researchers Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor see the overall failure of the U.S. public diplomacy as the main problem for opposition and even hatred against the country. They argue that by current public diplomacy it is impossible to convince the Arab world of the ‘good intentions’ of the U.S. for two main reasons. Firstly, the U.S. diplomacy is poor in quality and insufficient in planning. Ever since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. public diplomacy has been short-sighted, inefficient, inflexible, based too much on disinformation, and has relied too much on the ‘victory’ of free-market liberalist capitalism to sell the ‘American way of life’ universally.³⁸ The Bush administration has established the U.S. foreign policy as a national security strategy with right to pre-emptive war. In the process, the issue of (public) diplomacy and the role of ‘soft’ power have been put into secondary positions.³⁹ The second reason for failure in public diplomacy is the division between the message the U.S. wants to convey and the reality it constructs with its foreign policy. To illustrate the point, Snow and Taylor quote a prestigious Arab-language newspaper *Al Ahrām*⁴⁰: ‘It is difficult to understand how the US, with its advanced research centers and clever minds, explains away Arab hatred as a product of demagogic media and not due to its biased politics and propensity to abuse Arab interests’. In other words, if the U.S. was to improve its image, policy and presentation should be compatible with each other – not contradictory.

When discussing the success and failure of the U.S. public diplomacy and propaganda, it is important to make a difference between the domestic and the international sphere. The domestic domain is much easier to control with the help of U.S. media which has taken the role of a government ‘lapdog’ instead of being a ‘watchdog’ in the post-9/11 atmosphere⁴¹. While the U.S. administration was preparing for the War on Iraq, the government’s agenda was ‘reproduced virtually uncritically’ by the national media, without questioning the misinformation about WMDs or the alleged connections between Al Qaeda and Iraq⁴². Snow and Taylor claim that the U.S. journalists have become ‘passive recipients of news, particularly from official sources like government and corporation elites’⁴³. These developments have been widely discussed by numerous scholars in the fields of IR, Political Science, and Critical Media/Communication Studies⁴⁴.

The Power of the Global Opinion

What makes the debate over the growing criticism towards the U.S. even more interesting is the claim by Noam Chomsky that the only (f)actor that can challenge the U.S. hegemony is the international public opinion. However, international public opinion is a highly contested concept, and the impact of public opinion in general is very difficult to be evaluated or measured⁴⁵. Kalevi J. Holsti, for example, while discussing the role of legal norms and world opinion in the formulation of foreign policy, makes an effort to evaluate how much influence manifestations of opinion abroad

³⁸ Snow & Taylor 2006, 394-398; see also Taylor 2002a; Taylor 2002b; van Ham 2003; Nye 2004.

³⁹ Snow & Taylor 2006, 400. Nye argues that after the 9/11 the U.S. was right to alter the focus of the national security strategy on terrorism and weapons of mass destruction but the means the Bush administration have chosen are putting too much emphasis on hard power while not taking soft power enough into account. According to Nye, this is a huge mistake since it is through soft power that the terrorist networks are gaining support and new recruits. (Nye 2004, 25.)

⁴⁰ Quoted in Snow & Taylor 2006, 393.

⁴¹ Snow & Taylor 2006, 393; see also Kellner 2002; Kellner 2005; Calabrese 2005.

⁴² Snow & Taylor 2006, 399.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 403.

⁴⁴ See e.g. Kellner 2002; Kellner 2005; Rampton & Stauber 2003; Calabrese 2005; Lehmann 2005; Lynch & McGoldrick 2005; Ravi 2005; Seppälä 2005; Seppälä 2006.

⁴⁵ See e.g. Goldsmith et. al 2005.

can have on foreign policy purposes and action. He regards it difficult to generalize as there are so many different kinds of foreign policy situations, regimes, and even personalities. Nevertheless, a good starting point for any evaluation is to realize that public opinion *does* matter but that the fate of governments will normally depend more on domestic than foreign audiences as governments 'are usually the creatures of the societies over which they rule'.⁴⁶ In other words, governments tend not to be as sensitive to foreign opinions as they are to expressions of opinion on national level⁴⁷.

An inbuilt problem with 'world public opinion' is that the concept assumes that all world citizens would have a common understanding of the events, actions or situations that are being criticized or supported. The fact is, however, that people regard the world differently and rarely agree on how to describe a situation even if they share similar values.⁴⁸ Even if the facts are well-reported and verified (which they not always are), same conclusions are not drawn of them by different people⁴⁹:

All the sympathies that appear in everyday life also appear in opinions about events abroad. We tend to root for the underdog: we sympathize with ethnic kin more than with strangers; we find it more comfortable to support those who are like-minded than those who are "different"; we tend to be selective in our perceptions, bending considerably to try to understand our friends and allies, but being much quicker to judge harshly those whom we do not know well or whose institutions we do not know or like. It seems to require absolutely outrageous actions, such as genocide, to create anything approaching a world consensus, but even in these cases there will be many who will argue that those events are far away and not worth our attention, much less the loss of life in war.⁵⁰

When it comes to the effects of world public opinion, and influencing government behavior, it is not easy to generalize since 'there are historical examples of both the effectiveness and the impotence of foreign opinion'⁵¹. Nonetheless, it can be suggested that most governments are sensitive to opinions expressed abroad about their policies and how they execute them because otherwise they would not 'spend such large sums in trying, through diplomacy and propaganda programs, to create favorable impression abroad'⁵². However, governments are not equally sensitive to all kinds of opinions: they are 'no doubt much more sensitive to opinions expressed by their closest friends and allies than those emanating from noninvolved or hostile countries. Similarly, they are more concerned with conforming their actions to their allies' expectations than to those of states with they are not so directly involved.'⁵³ Most governments are concerned with their prestige since it can also affect their diplomatic efficacy⁵⁴. Therefore, Holsti concludes:

If we conceive of "world public opinion" as being both the spontaneous and the organized expressions of attentive publics in particular situations, often communicated through propaganda channels, it can be an effective restraint on policy, provided that there is some agreement among the publics, that the attitudes are also expressed by friendly governments and are not merely the expected hostility of unfriendly states, and that defiance of those attitudes would lower a state's prestige and diplomatic influence.⁵⁵

⁴⁶ Holsti 1992, 326.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Holsti refers to relatively open political systems since governments rarely consult neither domestic nor foreign opinions in totalitarian regimes where the media is also usually owned and/or controlled by the government.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 328.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 329.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.; see also Nye 2004.

⁵³ Holsti 1992, 329.

⁵⁴ Ibid.; see also Nye 2004.

⁵⁵ Holsti 1992, 329-330.

From this perspective, it seems that Chomsky's hypothesis – that the international public opinion might be able to challenge the U.S. hegemony – is not as 'idealistic' (that is, unrealistic) as it might seem at a first sight. Furthermore, as Holsti suggests, it has become increasingly difficult, due to many advances and innovations in media technology, to 'seal off a society from outside influences'⁵⁶. This is something that has been emphasized in a number of studies. In recent discourses – whether popular, political or academic – the concept of 'world public opinion' has been even transformed into '*global* opinion' which, however, is just as complex concept as its predecessor. Who are the people who constitute a global or a world public opinion? How is global public opinion to be measured? What is the relationship between global public opinion and the global civil society? What kind of influence can global opinion have on a foreign policy of a particular country? These are among the most relevant questions that remain mainly unanswered although there have been efforts to conceptualize and theorize global opinion in many ways. Some regard it as a *subject* that different political actors are trying to influence with their media strategies⁵⁷ whereas some see it as a pure media construction⁵⁸, or a statistical construction of 'global' opinion polls⁵⁹ while some discuss global opinion as a synonym or a form of global civil society⁶⁰. Regardless of the definition, it is safe to say that world public opinion is something that different political actors, whether governmental, inter- or nongovernmental, are more commonly referring to in their political rhetoric, and that they are also trying to influence the construction of the world public opinion – or how it is portrayed in the media, at the very least.

The concept of 'world public opinion', and particularly its symbiotic relationship to the media, invites us to ask several questions in the framework of this study. How do the new media technologies, and the internet in particular, affect this struggle for world public opinion? What kind of an influence they are making on the methods and strategies of political communication, argumentation and rhetoric of different political actors? Do the new communication technologies enable the kind of political-informational resistance that can be regarded as a real challenge for a global hegemony like the U.S.? And if yes, in what ways and in what scale this takes place? Furthermore, what are the most relevant actors in this regard?

Before going into a more specific examination, it is necessary to understand the context in which the political-informational struggle for 'global opinion' is taking place. This is especially important since there have been several developments that have affected the stage (international system), the players (states, NGOs and other actors), their assets (power resources) and thus, even the name and the game itself. Particularly important in this regard are globalization and the information revolution which together have resulted in growing interdependence, and state power being challenged by nongovernmental transnational actors and social movements with the help of the new media, the internet in particular. Also the changing nature of power (the growing significance of soft power, and information becoming a power resource) in the global information age is highly relevant in this regard. The focus of this paper lies on the 'bottom board' of transnational issues – to use Nye's terminology – as I am asking whether it is possible to affect the top board game of military issues by requiring and using power on the bottom board (the ability of the global internet-based anti-war/peace movement to challenge the premises of the U.S. foreign policy and U.S. power).

⁵⁶ Ibid.; see also Beck 2000.

⁵⁷ On the role of public opinion and media strategies in war, see e.g. Castells 2000, 486; Der Derian 2001; Kaldor 2003.

⁵⁸ Norstedt & Ottosen 2000b, 248.

⁵⁹ See e.g. Goldsmith et al. 2005.

⁶⁰ For discussion on global civil society, see e.g. Shaw 1996; Keck & Sikkink 1998, 32-37; Shapiro 1999; Hardt & Negri 2000; Väyrynen 2001; Warkentin 2001; Minkinen 2004; Held & McGrew 2005; Beck 2000; Beck 2006.

3 STATE POWER CHALLENGED: NONGOVERNMENTAL ACTORS AND TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

After the Cold War, there has been an enormous rise in the studies related to different kind of social and political movements, collective action and human agency that are challenging the state-centric view of political realism in IR theory. At the beginning of the 21st century, the state still is no doubt an important actor but it can no longer be regarded as a unitary actor but one among many actors who are taking part in the global political process in the international context. Besides states, there are several other actors, including multinational corporations, intergovernmental, supranational as well as nongovernmental actors, on all levels of international relations processes.⁶¹ The information revolution has enabled the dramatic increase in the number of NGOs which during the 1990s alone increased from 6,000 to approximately 26,000. This figure does not even tell the whole story as it represents only organizations that are formally constituted.⁶² Although very different in their organization, goals, methods and strategies, NGOs can act as a link between interests of people across nation-state borders and provide an interface between the more formal elements of politics⁶³. Many NGOs claim to act as ‘a global conscience’ as they represent public interests broadly beyond nation-states. They do not have much hard power, but are nevertheless, influential in other ways. According to Nye, NGOs have gained a lot of soft power as they are developing new norms, putting pressure on governments and altering public perceptions of how governments should be acting.⁶⁴

Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink have studied ‘transnational advocacy networks’, and argue that the links and interaction by non-state actors are significant domestically and transnationally as they ‘multiple the channels of access to the international system’. Especially in issues such as the environment and human rights, they have also made international resources available to new actors in their domestic social struggles. According to Keck and Sikkink, advocacy networks help ‘to transform the practice of national sovereignty’ by blurring the boundaries between a state and its nationals as well as the resources that they both have to the international system.⁶⁵

In terms of research, the changing status of nation-state has been widely discussed and analyzed, especially in the post-Cold War era. Somewhat paradoxically, however, in the field of IR and Political Science the changes have sometimes been downplayed or not regarded as important as in some other fields of social sciences. One explanation for this may be found in the underlying premises of IR theory. As one political scientist states, ‘the preoccupation of political scientists with the state, particularly those concerned with interstate relations – usually less precisely labeled as “international” relations – has inhibited their capacity to perceive realistically other actors crossing state boundaries’⁶⁶. However, this is to put things a bit too simplistically. Already in the early 1970s the work of Keohane and Nye, for example, showed that international relations models were ‘contaminated’ by transnational actors to an extent that international policy outcomes could not be explained without taking them into account⁶⁷. Since then there has been a wide range of studies and research literature that have proven the significance of NGOs and other actors. Nonetheless, not having such a ‘preoccupation’ with the state as political scientists, sociologists have always been more open to actors other than state, and accordingly, they have been more ready to accept and analyze some of the developments undermining state power. Sociology is also more interested in

⁶¹ Smith et al. 1997, xiii-xiv.

⁶² Nye 2004, 90.

⁶³ Smith et al. 1997, xiii-xiv.

⁶⁴ Nye 2004, 90.

⁶⁵ Keck & Sikkink 1998, 1-2; see also Smith et al. 1997.

⁶⁶ Alger 1997, 260-261.

⁶⁷ Smith et al. 1997, 74.

social movements and collective action. Therefore, I have found it extremely useful to read some of the recent research literacy by sociologists.

Ulrick Beck argues that there has been a transition from first modernity to second modernity as the 'unity of state, society and individual underpinning the first modernity is in the course of dissolution'⁶⁸. The first modernity was characterized by 'methodological nationalism' (a term by A.D. Smith) where state and society were conceived and organized as coextensive. The political definition and control of space by the state were preconditions for this.⁶⁹ Due to globalization, new power opportunities and spaces for social action have started to emerge. According to Beck, this has created a new kind of world society that, however, does not refer to world state society or world economy society but to *a non-state society*.⁷⁰ It is a 'social aggregate for which territorial state guarantees of order, as well as the rules of publicly legitimated politics, lose their binding character'⁷¹. By a non-state society is meant a situation where there is, on the one hand, a competitive relationship between nation-states and national societies, and 'the restless imprecision of the ties, players and arenas of world society'⁷², on the other hand. In the first modernity international relations was characterized by cooperation and opposition of national states and other players but in the second modernity there is a wider spectrum of actors:

The second modernity brings into being, alongside the world society of national states, a powerful non-state world society different from previously existing forms of political legitimation, which is made up of transnational players of the most diverse kinds. These players have the following key features: (a) They act across borders, even transnationally, and thereby annul the territorial principle of the national state. (b) Their activity is in many respects more inclusive, less exclusive, than that of the state players. [...] (c) They are often more effective than the authorities of national states, as measured by the key criteria of the success of state action. [...] (d) Non-state transnational players create their own 'inclusive sovereignty', as it were, by playing off the exclusive territorial states against one another.⁷³

These developments are overlapping and reinforcing each other, and when coming together, they are challenging the authority, control and legitimacy of state both in external and internal terms. This is what Beck calls 'politicization through depoliticization of states'⁷⁴. World society actually refers to a *'new world'*, a kind of undiscovered continent, which is being revealed in the transnational no-man's-land between national states and societies'⁷⁵. It is not territorially fixed, integrated or exclusive, but the resulting social and cultural diversity does not make local ties irrelevant. On the contrary, Beck argues that 'the type of local tie *cancel*s the equation of spatial and social distance implicit in the national picture of society, so that 'transnational lifeworlds' come into being'.⁷⁶ These should not be confused with inter-state phenomena⁷⁷ since transnational coexistence indicates 'social proximity *in spite of* geographical distance – or, social distance *in spite of* geographical proximity'⁷⁸. The situation differs from the paradigm of the first modernity and it should be theorized and studied empirically as 'the horizon within the capital, culture, technology and politics merrily come together to roam *beyond* the regulatory power of the national state'⁷⁹.

⁶⁸ Beck 2000, 102.

⁶⁹ Or as Beck (2000, 64) puts it, 'the state's claim to exercise power and control was the foundation of society'.

⁷⁰ Beck 2000, 65.

⁷¹ Ibid., 102.

⁷² Ibid., 102-103.

⁷³ Ibid., 103.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 107.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 104.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 104-105.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 105.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 107.

As the state power is eroding, there is more scope for action within world society and its actors⁸⁰. There has already been an enormous increase in social exchanges and interaction during recent decades. It has been manifested most visibly in increasing information exchange, growing level of economic interdependence, and recognition of global problems.⁸¹ It can be regarded as a 'quiet revolution' that has become visible after the end of the Cold War⁸². A difference in power is not only taking place in the relationship between nation-states and multinational corporations, but groups of people, and even individuals are gaining more power in the new system. Especially the opportunities of transnational social movement organizations (TSMOs) have been affected.⁸³

TSMOs are a 'subset of social movement organizations operating in more than two states'⁸⁴ aiming at promotion of some form of social or political change⁸⁵. Many scholars think that TSMOs can affect transnational politics and contribute to the development of global civil society⁸⁶. New transnational communities create a basis for a social coexistence, cooperation and a new form of bonding⁸⁷ as many citizens realize that there are forces operating beyond the state power as well as problems that their national governments cannot solve on their own⁸⁸. People all over the world experience 'a common global destiny' that for Beck, first appears as an experience of danger (evident in the debate about climate change, for example).⁸⁹ It is recognized that these problems are not just happening somewhere 'out there' but are affecting everyone. Thus, Beck argues that people are having concrete experiences of 'world society'. Public awareness of risks becomes politicized in many issues that used to belong to depoliticized areas of decision-making, handled out of the public eye. Now these risks are open for public debate, and hence, everything has to be justified publicly.⁹⁰ Beck regards this as a positive direction as it makes it possible 'to draw up legal and institutional framework that will legitimate and permanently establish this important extension of democracy'⁹¹.

However, as Beck admits, the concept of world risk society is prone to exaggerating the independence of ecological crises from other aspects of global society. Therefore, he stresses paying attention to 'the special kind of *involuntary politicization* that risk conflicts bring in all fields of social activity'.⁹² There are also some other important points to be made in relation to Beck's views. Firstly, it seems that Beck believes that (western) values and norms are widely shared. However, the dynamics of above mentioned developments is not unidirectional. Challenges to the apparent western values and cultural domination are evident, for example, in the growth of ethnic and religious particularism and fundamentalism⁹³. Secondly, it needs to be noted that transnational social movements are not a new phenomenon. In fact, these organizations have been an active part in the very construction of the international system: 'Together with other nongovernmental associations and intergovernmental ones, they played dynamic and interactive roles in the

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Kriesberg 1997, 7; see also Beck 2000.

⁸² Chatfield 1997, 19-20.

⁸³ Beck 2000, 107.

⁸⁴ Smith 1997, 42.

⁸⁵ Smith et al. 1997, 59. Like all movements, TSMOs consist of 'a set of constituent elements, including activists, who devote extensive effort; constituents of groups that provide financial and other support; and adherents, people who support the goals of a movement but are not active' (McCarthy 1997, 244).

⁸⁶ Kriesberg 1997, 3, 18; see also Smith 1997; Chatfield 1997; Pagnucco 1997; Smith et al. 1997; Keck & Sikkink 1998; Beck 2000; Castells 2001; Castells 2002; Warkentin 2001.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 49-50.

⁸⁸ Kriesberg 1997, 9; Smith et al. 1997, 60.

⁸⁹ Beck 2000, 90-91.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 99; see also Vattimo 1987; Agemben 1995; Vähämäki 1997.

⁹¹ Beck 2000, 99.

⁹² Ibid., 42.

⁹³ Kriesberg 1997, 9; see also Nye 2004.

developing international system. They pushed for and advanced international cooperation. They worked to prevent interstate conflict, to create international organizations, and to cultivate broader institutions and routines that would make cooperation across national boundaries routine. Here at work were the nonterritorial actors that came to constitute what Johan Galtung has aptly called a “sixth continent” in the world order (1975, 158)⁹⁴.

Charles Chatfield has studied a period of somewhat 100 years, from mid-1800s to mid-1900s, and argues that people started to form INGOs in response to shared interest and growing interdependence. Their motivations stemmed from the ‘need for allies in their struggle for democratic and participatory power, whether on class or national lines, and in their attempt to mitigate interstate conflict. Accordingly, international associations were formed around causes such as antislavery, organized labor, temperance, anti-imperialism, women’s suffrage, and peace.’⁹⁵ These were the prototypes of TSMOs. Since the mid-1900s there has been an enormous increase in the number of TSMOs. The growth has been especially fast in issue areas of human rights, environmental protection, women’s rights, economic justice, peace and development. Many TSMOs are now working for multiple goals and are increasingly interrelated. Jackie Smith regards the growth of these kinds of ‘world order’ TSMOs as partly due to ‘frame modifications made to respond to post-Cold War realities that make peace seem less dependent on resolving problems like arms races and more contingent on cultivating more equitable economic situations – or at least stronger multilateral institutions for conflict resolution’. According to Smith, the geographic distribution of TSMOs between industrialized and developing region has also started to become more balanced. There are formal as well as informal links between TSMOs, and they are building more links with INGOs and NGOs. In this sense, they have become stronger.⁹⁶

This relates to the third aspect, the question of effect, to be considered in relation to the debate on TSMOs. How much influence TSMOs can have on state policies, and how can the influence be measured or analyzed? There is evidence that transnational social movements and advocacy networks have been influential in their political endeavors. Keck and Sikkink have studied the successes and failures of several movements related to human rights, environmental issues and violence against women⁹⁷. Although there is a wide range of very encouraging examples, especially in regard to the women’s rights and the environmental movement, it is fair to say that there is much ‘air’ in the optimism of the TSMOs abilities to affect policies in many issue areas. Many of the most optimistic regards are not based on solid arguments. For example, when Smith et al.⁹⁸ state that even if social movements ‘do not often realize their specific goals, they clearly impact global policies’, it is difficult to understand what this means in concrete terms. Can social (political) action be social (political) if the actors ‘do not often realize their specific goals’ and although they would get something else done (‘clearly impact global policies’)? Similarly, Kriesberg⁹⁹ argues that TSMOs can, in addition to advancing their own goals, make a ‘contribution of reducing the dominance of the more powerful actors in a world characterized by immense inequalities’. However, it is not explained how this exactly happens¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁴ Chatfield 1997, 21-22.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 21.

⁹⁶ Smith 1997, 42, 48.

⁹⁷ Keck & Sikkink 1998. Moreover, as historical success stories, Keck and Sikkink (1998) introduce the anti-slavery movement in the U.S, the international movement for woman suffrage, and the campaign against footbinding in China.

⁹⁸ Smith et al. 1997, 59.

⁹⁹ Kriesberg 1997, 14.

¹⁰⁰ However, Kriesberg (1997, 16-17) does list, on a general level, different ways that give TSMOs ‘particular advantages in bringing about changes in the status quo’: they work at many levels, they can complement each other, and they also help mobilize support for particular policies on a transnational level, widen public participation in international policy, sustain attention on critical global problems, and frame issues and set policy agenda.

It is true that transnational organizations are often dedicated to social change and usually seek to change the status quo. Organizations such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace work for progressive change in protecting the environment, human rights and development. However, optimism arising from the new situation is better to be balanced with the fact that many transnational actors and associations, especially intergovernmental organizations, often reflect and even reinforce the prevailing status quo. Political and economic elites in many countries form organizations that benefit their interests and values.¹⁰¹ There are also TSMOs that are working for conservative objectives such as opposition to family planning or immigration¹⁰² as well as transnational organizations that support terrorism (e.g. Al Qaeda)¹⁰³.

Some argue that TSMOs build ‘transnational solidarity’ beyond state boundaries that can give people a global, trans-state identity with a higher loyalty¹⁰⁴. TSMOs are also said to help to form global civil society¹⁰⁵. But the critical question is, how do they do these things? Only few scholars that share these optimistic accounts offer clear answers. In much of the literature, there is much optimism but not always strong arguments to support it. It seems that those sceptical of idealistic assumptions of global civil society in general do have some legitimate concerns. Indeed, it is striking to read some of the literature in which the language related to different political actors is so different. When talking about NGOs, INGOs and social movements, the tone is often much more positive than when referring to state policies. Even different verbs are used: TSMOs and NGOs are usually said to ‘help’, ‘foster’, ‘provide’, ‘facilitate’ or ‘generate’ something whereas states, and democratically elected governments ‘restrict’, ‘manage’ or ‘control’. The selection of verbs reveals some of the inbuilt attitudes of the current theoretical discourse. This is not at all to say that TSMOs would not be able to affect policies and obtain their outcomes – on the contrary, the purpose of my study is to explore the possibilities of a particular TSMO (the global internet-based anti-war/peace movement) for challenging the premises of U.S. foreign policy and U.S. power. However, one needs to be aware of the theoretical debate so that the successes and failures of TSMOs in affecting international politics can be more realistically evaluated. Therefore, it is necessary to go into more detail about the strategies as well as the strengths and weaknesses of TSMOs.

The Strengths and Constraints of Transnational Social Movements

On a general level, it can be stated that TSMOs are challenging the legitimacy of traditional social and political policies and practices mainly by popularizing information, knowledge and alternative concepts. They aim at influencing some particular governmental actions mainly by mobilizing the public (both elite and popular). TSMOs usually target political action in relation to their own goals, legitimizing their objectives and values and trying to get support for some of their specific political decisions and programs.¹⁰⁶ The strategies are usually designed to maximize the effectiveness of collective action aimed at affecting policy processes or to change the political environment. For this, there are two distinct strategies, namely a mobilizing strategy and a separate action strategy. Mobilizing strategies aim at attracting new activists and/or resources for the cause as well as activating the existing adherents and/or resources to construct and maintain the possibilities for generating collective political action. Action strategies, for their part, aim at influencing the policies, i.e. the essential goals of a social movement.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ Kriesberg 1997, 12.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Nye 2004, 95.

¹⁰⁴ Smith et al. 1997, 72; see also Castells 1997.

¹⁰⁵ Kriesberg 1997, 18.

¹⁰⁶ Chatfield 1997, 32.

¹⁰⁷ Smith et al. 1997, 71.

There are at least five categories of transnational social movement activity: creating and mobilizing global networks (i.e. the social infrastructures for action), participating in multilateral political arenas, facilitating interstate cooperation, acting within states, and enhancing public participation. TSMOs cultivate constituencies for intergovernmental organizations, provide reservoirs of resources and redistribute them. They can also act as constituencies for other NGOs and IGOs thus stimulating one another to attack transnational sources of common problems. Thus, they diffuse norms and values about participation in decision-making and execution. Kriesberg argues that by doing so, they are ‘fostering democratization’.¹⁰⁸

Smith et al. state that ‘few social movements are successful if by “success” is meant that they achieved specific policy changes’¹⁰⁹. Nonetheless, they argue that there are several ways that TSMOs can and do influence the outcomes of international political decisions. TSMOs work for achieving focus of attention of both elites and general public on important issues and problems on a global level: ‘By facilitating transnational communication, TSMOs help to generate consensus around particular frames, or interpretations of global problems and their solutions’.¹¹⁰ They also make governments aware of problems at hand and highlight the costs of failing to act on the problems. Via their transnational networks, TSMOs gather information on whether governments are in compliance with agreements they have made. Framing problems and their possible solutions in a certain way may enhance government accountability and put pressure on them to modify their policies and endorse multilateral programs.¹¹¹

Because few governments – even democratic ones – allow for broad public participation in their foreign policy processes, most international decision making occurs with little public accountability. [...] it is increasingly clear that transnational social movements influence the outcomes of international relations at least by interacting in and shaping the *political processes* that generate global policy.¹¹²

Since there are several ways in which TSMOs affect global policies, discussion on effectiveness must also take into account the factors constraining them¹¹³. From the point of view of my study, I have divided these factors into three categories: 1) the factors related to the organization itself, 2) those related to the organization’s relationship with other TSMOs, and 3) those related to other, especially governmental, actors. First of all, when taking a look at organizational factors that can affect the power resources (and thus, the effectiveness) of a particular TSMO, an important fact to notice is that TSMOs and NGOs vary enormously in their financial resources, level of organization, and their credibility. While some may be more trusted than governments, others lack credibility among people. Nye argues that ‘it is a hyperbole when activists call such organizations “the world’s other superpower,” but at the same time, governments ignore them at their peril’. However, he admits that some NGOs have such reputations that give them domestic and international power. Furthermore, he argues that while some NGOs do not appeal to moderate citizens, they still can mobilize demonstrations that governments cannot ignore.¹¹⁴

The level of organization inside a movement is also a factor that can restrain influence. Within certain social movements the actors are not able to unite under a common organizational banner. They remain more diffuse in structure than movements that have strong centralizing organizations. Also the amount of human, material and political resources is a factor that constrains the power of

¹⁰⁸ Alger 1997, 260; Kriesberg 1997, 14.

¹⁰⁹ Smith et. al 1997, 73.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 73-74; Kriesberg 1997, 14.

¹¹² Smith et al. 1997, 74. However, what is a *global policy*, exactly, remains undefined by them.

¹¹³ Kriesberg 1997, 15-16.

¹¹⁴ Nye 2004, 94.

TSMOs: ‘Money and members alone usually will not translate into political influence. Neither will the presence of political allies without the financial resources and activists to generate sustained political pressure.’¹¹⁵ On the local level, much activism is based on voluntary work but in the transnational context, especially in rich industrialized countries, activism is more often taking form as paid professional activism¹¹⁶. A special restraint for TSMOs is transnational operation costs which can create difficulties in implementing international coordination.¹¹⁷

The opportunities of TSMOs are better in some issue areas than in others. From the point of view of my study, it is important to note that although peace-related organizations have actually been the first and foremost active organizations in transnational area¹¹⁸, generally peace and world order movements that are mainly dealing with foreign policy issues, face ‘rather constrained opportunities to affect national policy, at least in contrast to movements targeting domestic issues’¹¹⁹. On comparison, the environmental movement, for example, has more open opportunities within national political structures since many environmental issues are transnational by nature¹²⁰.

Secondly, the relationship with other TSMOs and NGOs is an important factor. Like all political movements, also TSMOs arouse competition and opposition at regional as well as global level. Different actors may have different analyses, solutions and strategies towards same problems.¹²¹ Smith¹²² predicts that as the field of TSMOs working on a particular issue expands, there will be more competition for members and resources which may result in slower growth or even organizational decline. Sometimes TSMOs also block each other¹²³. Counter-movements, if powerful and well-organized, can generate opposition that undermines the original movement’s political impact¹²⁴. Thirdly, TSMOs are only one among many political actors on a global level. They are often ‘relatively powerless when compared to other global actors as governments, multinational corporations, and international banking institutions. Clearly, despite all these developments described above, states – particularly large, economically developed ones – remain vary powerful actors.’¹²⁵ Governments also often try to ‘frustrate’ change efforts by creating their own ‘NGOs’ to make TSMO and other NGO efforts more complicated. This can make it more difficult for TSMOs to reach consensus and plan common strategies.¹²⁶

Although TSMOs are only one among many actors, they are often stronger than organizations working in only one nation because as international organizations they are in better place to receive mass media attention¹²⁷. They have also used this advantage to their benefit. Actually, most of the influence of TSMOs is connected to media in one way or another. According to Keck and Sikkink, all transnational advocacy networks have four primary strategies in their efforts of persuasion, socialization and pressure. These are ‘(1) *information politics*, or the ability to quickly and credibly generate politically usable information and to move it to where it will have most impact; (2) *symbolic politics*, or the ability to call upon symbols, actions, or stories that make sense of a

¹¹⁵ Smith et al. 1997, 64.

¹¹⁶ McCarthy 1997, 249.

¹¹⁷ Kriesberg 1997, 15-16.

¹¹⁸ See e.g. Chatfield 1997, 19-20.

¹¹⁹ Smith 1997, 57, quoting Pagnucco & Smith 1993.

¹²⁰ Smith 1997, 57.

¹²¹ Kriesberg 1997, 15.

¹²² Smith 1997, 58.

¹²³ Kriesberg 1997, 15-16.

¹²⁴ Smith et al. 1997, 64.

¹²⁵ Kriesberg 1997, 16.

¹²⁶ Alger 1997, 273-274.

¹²⁷ Kriesberg 1997, 17.

situation for an audience that is frequently far away; (3) *leverage politics*, or the ability to call upon powerful actors to affect a situation where weaker members of a network are unlikely to have influence; and (4) *accountability politics*, or the effort to hold powerful actors to their previously stated policies or principles.¹²⁸

It seems that regardless of the perspective, there is always a strong emphasis on the informational and symbolic element. Since the capabilities of TSMOs have grown enormously due to the new information technologies, I find it necessary to devote a separate chapter for discussing the information revolution, and especially the role of the internet.

4 STATE POWER CHALLENGED: THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION AND THE ROLE OF THE INTERNET

Information is power, and today a much larger part of the world's population has access to that power (Nye 2004, 105).

Technological advances have led to a dramatic reduction in the cost and time of processing and transmitting information which has given new forms of power to non-state and transnational actors, and even individuals¹²⁹. It has become obvious that the processes of social transformation in the network society do not only affect social and technical relationships of production but have major impact on culture and power as well. In the traditional view, power is all about who wins in military or economic terms. However, as Nye points out, quoting other scholars, politics in the information age 'may ultimately be about whose story wins'.¹³⁰ When politics is more often practiced and played out in the media space, image-making becomes power¹³¹. The capacity for information sharing, and to be taken seriously, is becoming an increasingly important source of power¹³².

In fact, Nye argues that politics has essentially become a struggle over credibility – the creation and destruction of it. In this 'contest of competitive credibility' all players try to enhance the credibility of their own and weaken the credibility of their opponents.¹³³ This does not mean that all politics can be reduced to plain media effects. However, all political actors have to recognize that they are players in the 'power game through and by the media'.¹³⁴ Thus, politics has to be framed to suit the electronic media, which has 'profound consequences for the characteristics, organization, and goals of political processes, political actors, and political institutions'¹³⁵. The players are many in the new game, and they cut across national boundaries. Governments no longer compete for credibility just with each others but various actors, including NGOs, INGOs, TSMOs, business corporations, the media and epistemic communities. Nye believes that especially NGOs will play ever larger roles in the future¹³⁶. The information revolution has made states 'more porous' as they now have to share the stage with other actors that use information as a power resource in mobilizing publics and pressuring governments¹³⁷. In the new system those actors that have multiple channels of

¹²⁸ Keck & Sikkink 1998, 16.

¹²⁹ Nye 2004, 31-32, 90, 97-98, 106.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 106.

¹³¹ Castells 2002, 507.

¹³² Nye 2004, 31.

¹³³ Ibid., 106.

¹³⁴ Castells 2002, 507.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Nye 2004, 106.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 91.

communication for framing issues, and whose dominant culture and values are in ‘sync’ with prevailing global norms, will succeed¹³⁸.

The internet is one of the most important factors in the information age as it provides the material basis for social movements and networks that can emerge ‘from the resistance of local societies, aim at overcoming the power of global networks, thus reconstructing the world from the bottom up’¹³⁹. The internet is a non-controlled, horizontal and relatively cheap communication medium¹⁴⁰ that enables real-time communication of many to many on a global scale¹⁴¹. Some scholars have argued that no other technological invention has been able to give such space for local, national and transnational organization¹⁴². Some find the internet as ‘a living, historical force and one of the keys to understanding and shaping the political and cultural life of the present age’¹⁴³. Some even regard the invention of the internet as radical as the diffusion of the printing press which created something what Marshall McLuhan has called the ‘Gutenberg Galaxy’. According to Castells, the human kind has now entered a new world of communication, the ‘Internet Galaxy’.¹⁴⁴

Political use of internet is becoming increasingly common as different social and political groups use the internet as an instrument ‘for acting, informing, recruiting, organizing, dominating and counter-dominating’, thus making the cyberspace ‘a contested terrain’. Many scholars emphasize that the internet is more than just a tool for social and political protest. The very existence of this kind of communication technology changes the rules of the ‘socio-political game in cyberspace that ultimately affects the game itself – namely, the forms and goals of movements and political actors’.¹⁴⁵ Castells¹⁴⁶ regards the internet as a material infrastructure of a network that has become an ‘indispensable component’ for social movements in the network society. This is so for three reasons. Firstly, social movements of the global information age are mobilized mainly around cultural values. Castells regards the distinction between old and new social movements as misleading because old movements (such as the labour movement) redefine themselves ‘in terms of social values, and broadening their meaning of these social values: for instance, social justice for all, rather than the defense of class interests’. At the same time, those social movements that are currently important (such as nationalistic or religious movements) are old in their principles but take a new meaning as ‘they become trenches of cultural identity to build social autonomy in a world dominated by homogeneous, global information flows’.¹⁴⁷

Secondly, social movements are now trying to ‘fill the gap’ that was left behind by the vertical organizations of the industrial era¹⁴⁸. Traditional and structured organizations are being substituted by ‘loose coalitions, semi-spontaneous mobilizations, and *ad hoc* movements of the neo-anarchist brand’¹⁴⁹. They even seem to have more impact on social changes than more formal NGOs. According to Castells, this is because the internet has become *the instrument* for expressing and organizing manifestations that can have impact on political institutions mainly by influencing public opinion. This relates directly to the third feature, namely that social movements are more or less

¹³⁸ Nye 2004, 31-32.

¹³⁹ Castells 2001, 143.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴² Lappalainen (2005, 8) quoting Edward Schwartz (1997).

¹⁴³ Kahn & Kellner 2004, 88-89.

¹⁴⁴ Castells 2001, 2-3.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 139.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 141.

forced to rely on the media through symbolic actions in their efforts for a global impact because power now increasingly operates in global networks¹⁵⁰. This is what also Craig Warkentin emphasizes in his study on NGOs, the internet, and global civil society. He sees informational politics, and the use of internet in particular, as the core instrument of NGO's for pursuing their organizational goals. The internet can be used by NGOs in facilitating internal communication, shaping public perception, enhancing member services, disseminating informational resources, encouraging political participation, and realizing innovative ideas. Warkentin argues that by employing the internet in any of these ways, NGOs can potentially contribute to the development and maintenance of global civil society.¹⁵¹ Moreover, he argues that the internet and global civil society are directly connected on three levels:

First, the characteristics that have informed the Internet's development and defined its inherent qualities *parallel* those of global civil society. Second, the Internet's inherent qualities *facilitate* the development of global civil society's constitutive network of social relations. Third, as coexisting phenomena, the Internet and global civil society *reinforce* each other in an ongoing manner.¹⁵²

Examples of Political Use of Internet by Social Movements

In recent years, there has been a lot of research on political movements, various aspects of resistance, emancipation and empowerment related to the internet and other ICT's¹⁵³. Internet has gained a lot of attention especially in connection to the anti-globalization movement¹⁵⁴ which Castells¹⁵⁵ regards not just as a network but essentially an electronic, internet-based network. Also movements engaged with human and women's rights, labor, and peace have built global coalitions that are relying increasingly on global information networks which makes them highly dependent on the internet¹⁵⁶. For example, the use of new information technology has been an important feature of success in women's and feminist movements. There is also some indication that women's participation in the internet can transform, or at least challenge, the 'male bias of the global technocapitalism that is behind the Internet'¹⁵⁷. In more concrete terms Wendy Harcourt¹⁵⁸ argues that the internet, by 'linking up these localities, allowing space for women to discuss different knowledges, cultural differences, and common goals in terms of their bodies, communities, and the public arena' can result in 'breaking down the barriers between the private and the public in women's lives, along with the distances between North and South and the differences among age and ethnic groups'.

Among many others, Richard Kahn and Douglas Kellner¹⁵⁹ argue that the early adoption and successful use of the internet helped the Zapatista movement in Chiapas region in Mexico to achieve many of its political goals in the beginning of the 1990s. This actually 'dramatized how new media and grass roots progressivism might synergize, excite the world, and challenge status quo culture and politics'. Next important event was the 'Battle for Seattle' where hundreds of protesters from various movements protested against the World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in December

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 142.

¹⁵¹ Warkentin 2001, 35-36; see also Norris 2001.

¹⁵² Warkentin 2001, 32.

¹⁵³ See e.g. Warkentin 2001; Norris 2001; Norris 2003; Woolgar 2002; Routledge 2003; Anderson & Kanuka 2003; Lappalainen 2005; Garcelon 2006.

¹⁵⁴ See e.g. Routledge 2003.

¹⁵⁵ Castells 2001, 142.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 143.

¹⁵⁷ Harcourt 2001, 315.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 318.

¹⁵⁹ Kahn & Kellner 2004, 87; see also Best & Kellner 2001.

1999. This international protest movement opposed neo-liberal institutions' globalization policies. Since then, Kahn and Kellner¹⁶⁰ suggest that 'broad-based, populist political spectacles have become the norm, thanks to an evolving sense of the way in which the internet may be deployed in a democratic and emancipatory manner by a growing planetary citizenry that is using the new media to become informed, to inform others, and to construct new social and political relations'. Indeed, when considering the internet from the perspective of resistance, it is tempting to argue that global resistance in its current extent has become possible only with the capabilities provided by the internet. Via the internet one can globalize local and localize global resistance. The internet enables movements to organize in spite of the location, age, sex, race etc. of the persons taking part in them. Political organization, hence political resistance, is possible on a global scale for almost everyone.

In addition to the possibility to political organization, the internet also acts as a channel for forwarding messages in real-time to a world-wide audience. Thus, the internet has laid down a base for new kind of communication and media activities. Alternative media have found their place on the web: the number of web pages offering 'alternative' information¹⁶¹ have increased tremendously in recent years. In this sense, the *internet offers alternatives for mainstream media as well as mainstream politics*. However, the often-heard argument that the internet is the most democratic medium and forum for public debate should be regarded in relative terms. As a resource, the internet is not evenly distributed. Most people in the world are too poor to own a telephone, not to mention a computer. Pippa Norris talks of three kinds of 'digital divide': the *global divide* which refers to the divergence of internet access between industrialized and developing societies; the *social divide* referring to the gap between information rich and poor in a particular state, and the *democratic divide* referring to the difference between those who do and those who do not use the digital resources for engaging, mobilizing or participating in public life¹⁶².

Castells goes further and argues that the fundamental digital divide can not be measured just by counting the number of connections to the internet but by evaluating the consequences of both connection and lack of connection. The internet is not just a technology but a 'technological tool and organizational form that distributes information power, knowledge generation, and networking capacity in all realms of activity'. In the network society, disconnectedness to the internet means automatically marginalization: 'Development without the Internet would be the equivalent of industrialization without electricity in the industrial era'. This also relates to a misunderstanding about the nature of problems in the Third World. According to Castells, it is not possible to solve first the 'real problems' related to water, health, electricity and education if the economy and the management system of a country is not based on the internet.¹⁶³

Therefore, it should be kept in mind that due to the digital divide in its various forms, internet is only a limited forum for political action and resistance even though it is regarded as a common space and instrument for freely distributing information and expressing opinion (also in many countries where governments try to block traditional mass media)¹⁶⁴. Many other forms of resistance, especially personal and local, are still very important. Nonetheless, internet can add to those forms an international – or a global – aspect.

¹⁶⁰ Kahn & Kellner 2004, 87-88; see also Nye 2004, 91-93.

¹⁶¹ By 'alternative' is meant here more critical and subjective information than the mainstream media usually provides.

¹⁶² Norris 2001, 4; see also Schiller 2000.

¹⁶³ Castells 2001, 269.

¹⁶⁴ Nye 2004, 111.

The Global Anti-war/Peace Movement and the Internet

One of those political movements that have readily taken advantage of the globalizing element of the internet in their organization and political campaigning is the global anti-war/peace movement¹⁶⁵. It represents also the most interesting transnational social movement opposing the U.S. hegemony, or at least its militaristic foreign policy. The anti-war/peace movement has been particularly active in trying to influence the global perceptions of – and thereby the ‘global opinion’ concerning – the War on Iraq. The movement uses the internet as its main forum and instrument for both internal and external communication. The internet was a major enabler in mobilizing huge anti-war demonstrations all over the world prior to the War on Iraq in February 2003. Political movements opposing the war used the internet successfully for circulating anti-war information and organizing demonstrations¹⁶⁶. Before the age of the internet, planning a protest used to require months, and during the Vietnam War it took four years to get a half of million people mobilized in the U.S.. The global protest against the War on Iraq was organized in a few weeks, yet gathering millions of people all around the world (over 2 million protesters in the U.S. and Europe alone).¹⁶⁷

For Kellner¹⁶⁸, the emergence of a global anti-war movement in late 2002 and early 2003 proves that ‘a tide of political activism’, in which the internet plays a central role, has risen. According to Kahn and Kellner¹⁶⁹, the internet is ‘creating the base and the basis for an unparalleled world-wide anti-war/pro-peace and social justice movement during the time of terrorism, war, and intense political struggle’. Recently, the internet has been politicized in many ways, and some of the internet’s developments¹⁷⁰ have further advanced oppositional politics¹⁷¹.

Whether by using the internet to take part in a worldwide expression of dissent and disgust to divert corporate agendas and militarism through the construction of freenets and new oppositional spaces and movements, or simply to encourage critical media analysis, debate, and new forms of journalistic community, the new information and communication technologies are indeed revolutionary. To a meaningful extent, they constitute dramatic transformation of everyday life that is presently being constructed and enacted by internet subcultures.¹⁷²

In terms of research, it can be stated that while environmental, anti-globalization, and feminist related transnational movements¹⁷³ have been studied extensively, there has been not too many studies directly related to the transnational (global) anti-war/peace movement. One reason for this might be that anti-war and peace movements were ‘out of fashion’ for a long time after the 1960-70s. Simultaneously, there has been a dramatic rise in NGOs and political movements related to other issues, especially environmental issues and human rights. In comparison to these, the percent

¹⁶⁵ However, it is not clear-cut in what sense it is possible to talk about a global movement as a single noun as the anti-war/peace movement is far from a centrally-led political movement but rather a decentralized and fragmented network including various political actors and participants from all over the world.

¹⁶⁶ Kahn & Kellner 2004, 88.

¹⁶⁷ Nye 2004, 88.

¹⁶⁸ Kellner 2003.

¹⁶⁹ Kahn & Kellner 2004, 88. Furthermore, Kahn and Kellner (2004, 88) argue that activists ‘are now continuing to build a ‘virtual’ bloc that monitors, critiques, and fights against the sort of aggressive versions of Western capitalism and imperialism being promoted by Bush, Blair, and their neo-liberal G8 counterparts’.

¹⁷⁰ According to Kahn & Kellner (2004, 88), the internet ‘has undergone radical transformations during this time. New web forms of designs, such as web logs and wikis, have evolved the internet’s hypertextual architecture, even as such online phenomena as hacker culture, terrorism, and internet militancy have emerged from the technical-fringe to become a central feature of everyday life on the world wide web.’

¹⁷¹ Kahn & Kellner 2004, 88.

¹⁷² Ibid., 93.

¹⁷³ See e.g. Warkentin 2001; Routledge 2003.

share of groups working on peace has declined¹⁷⁴. Regarded from this angle, it would seem that peace as an issue would be in decline. However, this is true only in relative terms. In absolute terms, according to the figures presented by Keck and Sikkink, the number of peace-related transnational advocacy networks increased from 11 to 59 between 1953 and 1993 alone, indicating a growth of over 400 percent in four decades¹⁷⁵. The number of studies related to the transnational anti-war/peace movement does not correlate very well with this growth.

However, there have been several studies on anti-war/peace movements on national level¹⁷⁶ that also examine their use of internet and other ICTs. For example, Jenny Pickerill and Frank Webster have studied web sites of British anti-war/peace movements from the perspective of construction of 'symbolic struggles' between those supporting and those opposing war. Their study emphasizes that communication technologies, particularly the internet, are playing a significant role in challenging the legitimacy of waging war. Anti-war/peace groups have been able to take advantage of the shift towards so called 'Information War' which Pickerill and Webster define as a two-dimensional concept.¹⁷⁷ Whereas the first dimension has to do with weaponry incorporating the most sophisticated communication technologies, the second is related to the 'vastly expanded *symbolic realm* where media of all sorts play a vital role'¹⁷⁸. Furthermore, the symbolic dimension can be divided into two categories:

Information War in its symbolic dimensions is manifest in round-the-clock news reporting, the presence of hundreds and even thousands of journalists in war zones, and in internet communications ranging from e-mail to blogs. These dimensions operate in Joseph Nye's terms of 'hard' and 'soft' power: Information War symbols are hard in so far as they disable and destroy identified enemies; Information War symbols are soft in that they are concerned with meaning and understanding. Both are essential for the conduct of contemporary war, with the former most important in the early stages, though the latter are vital if the force is to prevail in the longer term.¹⁷⁹

Pickerill and Webster argue that those waging Information War militarily 'are overwhelmingly superior and sure to prevail in a matter of weeks and months (until occupation is required)¹⁸⁰ but when it comes to the long run, the military rarely succeed in controlling the information environment¹⁸¹. For this, they list altogether ten different reasons which can be summarized (and simplified) as follows: 1) In current wars, there are huge number of journalists on the war field, 2) the location of journalists is hard to control, 3) the transnationalization of journalism challenges the old 'back your own country' stand, 4) journalists are more aware of the military's effort to control them, and thus, they actively use counter-strategies, 5) the new portable and mobile communication technologies enable journalists to take the equipment anywhere, 6) through internet, journalists can get access to huge amounts of information provided by others that they can use in their own reporting, 7) e-mailing and blogging can be used for distributing information by regular citizens as well as professional journalists, 8) there is a growing number of alternative newsmakers who can make their news available world-wide in real-time, 9) war-related information is no longer produced only in conflict zones but all over the world by various media, public relations, political and other actors, and 10) the traditional mainstream media seems to be more incoherent and divided nowadays than ever before.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁴ Keck & Sikkink 1998, 10-11.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹⁷⁶ See e.g. Pickerill & Webster 2006; Anstead & Chadwik 2006; Heaney & Rojas 2007.

¹⁷⁷ Pickerill & Webster 2006, 407-408; see also Anstead & Chadwik 2006; Heaney & Rojas 2007.

¹⁷⁸ Pickerill & Webster 2006, 408.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 421.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.; see also Luostarinen 2002; Luostarinen & Ottosen 2002; cf. Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2002a; 2002b.

However, there are also views that challenge these optimistic regards about the openness of the media environment and the inability of military and government to control it. Snow and Taylor, for example, talk about ‘the revival of the propaganda state’. They argue that the ‘trend since the 9/11, especially in the US, has been away from openness and toward increasing government secrecy coupled with what can seem a rise in contempt among inner-circle policy-makers for a public’s right to know that may override national and homeland security concerns’¹⁸³. There are also studies that emphasize the effectiveness of the U.S. propaganda due to its dominant position in the global media¹⁸⁴. Nonetheless, anti-war/peace movements are ‘important players in so far they contest and confound the preferred messages of those in favour of war’¹⁸⁵. They operate in the symbolic environment that affects the understanding of people about war and conflicts¹⁸⁶.

There is much variation in movements where, for example, ‘some groups link their resistance to war or broader anti-imperialist struggles or to a pacifist ideology, while others believe in the necessity of war but that the specific war against Iraq was not justified’¹⁸⁷. Therefore, Pickerill and Webster¹⁸⁸ talk about a continuum ranging from ‘an ideological *pacifism through to opposition to one side’s involvement in a specific conflict*’. They separate between anti-war movements that are affiliated with political programs, groups that are feminist or feminist-inspired, religious-oriented organizations as well as activist/performance groups¹⁸⁹. From the perspective of this study, it might not be necessary to go into as detailed categorization. However, it is important to notice that collectively these different groups can constitute a ‘sizeable symbolic force’¹⁹⁰.

Nevertheless, the new means of communication are not only unproblematic from the perspective of political action. One problem is, for example, that people may not be as coherent ideologically or as personally committed when the ‘message’ comes only from web sites and not through personal contacts or other kind of involvement¹⁹¹. Furthermore, one of the most interesting findings by Pickerill and Webster from the perspective of my study is that their preliminary analysis of British anti-war/peace movements’ web sites ‘suggests that the information presented is not much concerned with persuasion through argument, explanation or analysis. Rather there appears to be an *assumed audience* that is already converted to the anti-war and peace message’¹⁹². Also Norris¹⁹³, while studying web pages of political parties, has suggested that they are more likely to ‘have greater impact on communication pluralism rather than by widening direct participation among disaffected groups, because their resources mainly reach citizens who are already most likely to be politically active, interested and engaged’.

¹⁸³ Snow & Taylor 2006, 390.

¹⁸⁴ See e.g. Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2002a; Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2002b.

¹⁸⁵ Pickerill & Webster 2006, 414.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 415.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 415-417.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 417.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 418; see also Norris 2003.

¹⁹² Pickerill & Webster 2006, 419; see also Thompson 2003.

¹⁹³ Norris 2003, 43; see also Norris 2001.

5 CONCLUSIONS

As the nature of power has been transformed in the global information age, making soft power more important as the role of information in the society grows, there are more possibilities for nongovernmental actors and social movements to gain power of their own, and thus challenge the status quo in world politics. The struggle for information and interpretations of the War on Iraq is an illustrative example of this kind of a new political-informational struggle that is taking place on a global media environment between various actors. The U.S. has not succeeded very well in this struggle and therefore, it has suffered from loss of soft power in the process, as Nye (2004) has pointed out. There are several factors that have affected this ‘poor outcome’ – for example, the somewhat arrogant unilateral behavior of the U.S., the gap between the policy and presentation as well as poor public diplomacy together with deployment of information that has turned out to be false – or propaganda, in other words. These are all factors that the U.S. itself has had influence on. However, the U.S. has also gained new kind of challengers in the field of political-informational struggle. These new challengers include many non-state and transnational actors that have been very active and creative in their use of new media technology, especially the internet.

Nye regards three primary resources of soft power as culture, political values, and foreign policy. Global polls clearly show that the U.S. is not doing well in regard to foreign policy. However, some sceptics of soft power argue that ‘popularity’ measured by opinion polls is ephemeral and should not be taken seriously. Nye admits that one needs to be careful ‘not to read too much into opinion polls’ as they are an essential, yet imperfect way to measure soft power resources because ‘answers vary depending on the way questions are formulated, and unless the same questions are asked consistently over some period, they represent snapshots rather than a continuous picture’. Opinions can also change. He continues: ‘Moreover, political leaders must often make unpopular decisions because they are the right thing to do, and hope that their popularity may be repaired if the decision is subsequently proved correct. Nonetheless, polls are a good first approximation of both attractive a country appears and the costs that are incurred by unpopular policies, particularly when they show consistency across polls and over time.’¹⁹⁴

The War on Iraq is not by all means the first policy or war that has made the U.S. unpopular. The Vietnam War, for example, made the U.S. highly unpopular in much of the world. As the U.S. policy changed and the memory of the war receded, the U.S. regained a lot of its soft power.¹⁹⁵ However, it seems that the losses of U.S. soft power due to the War on Iraq are not easily restored. The U.S. has encountered direct, even violent, resistance because its policies that are seen as illegitimate. Since all this is such an evident fact, it provokes one critical question in the context of this study. If the U.S. government has lost most of its soft power and attractiveness due to its unwise and selfish policies, how much weight can then be put on the global internet-based anti-war movement in influencing the ‘world public opinion’? This is a very important question, but not an easy one to answer. To be able to evaluate the relative significance of several factors would require a lot of more work, both in theoretical and particularly in empirical terms. However, the premises and objectives of my study are quite different as I am at this stage mainly aiming at understanding a somewhat new and unexplored phenomenon – the role and construction of the global public opinion by the global internet-based actors (the anti-war movement and alternative media) in the political-informational struggle concerning the information and interpretations of the War on Iraq. For this kind of a research task it is not as important to try to explain concisely the proportional significance or the influence of some specific factors but rather to chart what the factors are in the first place, and then explore them in more detail in a chosen theoretical framework.

¹⁹⁴ Nye 2004, 18.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14, 35-36.

In this paper I have taken a somewhat mixed approach to the global anti-war/peace movement's abilities to challenge the premises of the U.S. foreign policy and U.S. power. The movement has used internet successfully for its versatile political-informational strategies and techniques. It is clear that the new means of communication, the internet in particular, can act as a political/informational forum and means of resistance, but these aspects should not be emphasized too much because there are also more constrained structural aspects of power and knowledge at play, and they have to be considered as well. In this regard, it is fair to say that my perspective is not *overwhelmingly* optimistic about the possibilities of the global internet-based anti-war/peace movement to challenge the U.S. power in the international system – even if it might be able to 'shake' the premises of the War on Iraq. In the international system, these actors constitute only one part of the 'big picture', and at the same time the U.S. is, with various methods of media management, public diplomacy, propaganda and censorship, trying to influence mainstream media, and thus perceptions of a much wider audience.

Nevertheless, the role and efforts by the global internet-based anti-war/peace movement together with web sites providing alternative information should not be downplayed too much either. There is a need to explore *the possibilities* of this kind of political-informational resistance and production of alternative information. To be able to analyze the prospects of it, it will be necessary to take into account both those tendencies that advance and those that hinder or impede the possibilities of the above mentioned actors. In this regard, it is very important to realize that *there are overlapping and even contradictory developments at play at the same time*. Furthermore, the political-informational struggle is an *on-going* process and phenomenon. As Pickerill and Webster point out, 'Information War is also, and indivisibly, about symbolic struggle that lasts much longer than 'hot' battles'¹⁹⁶. This makes the information concerning the War on Iraq relevant not only in the pre-war context but also during and even *after* the war, because it affects the global attitudes towards the U.S. in more general terms and can thus have an impact on the premises and potentials of its possible *future* military actions against e.g. Iran and Syria. Therefore, this political-informational struggle must be studied further, also empirically.

¹⁹⁶ Pickerill & Webster 2006, 421.

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