The threat that the internet may pose to a nation’s ability to rule, especially those nations that wish to rule with an authoritarian power, is not one to be understated as the **Arab Spring** revolutions at the start of the 2010’s have shown. When these protests began to kick off, it was quickly realized that a traditional thought-process of just blacking out the media and censoring all talk wouldn’t work for managing protests, as cutting off connectivity only further encouraged people to go out to figure out what was going on, as was the case in 2011 in Egypt. In addition, by allowing for only one internet provider to remain, techniques like accessing a **virtual private network** that functioned as a tunnel past any filters that the government would then try to set up were used to allow for media access that then would spread the news of what was happening within Egypt out of the country as the broad attempt at censorship also drew eyes inwards (Tufekci, 226-227).

In the Arab Spring protests, the internet proved critical then for spreading word of what was happening, and in doing so, it highlighted to much of the world just how critically the internet could challenge a nation’s **communication sovereignty**, allowing for their rules and legislations to be avoided entirely as media became both more accessible, easier to produce, and easier to spread as well. To try and combat this, governments try to employ many different strategies, from the far more obvious forms of control such as **state censorship** andsome types of **content filtering**, to methods far more discrete and dirty, like **disinformation campaigns**, obfuscation through attempts at **denial of attention**, to even things like acts of **digital espionage** against far more problematic actors that could be individually compromised instead.

Understanding governmental interference with the internet a struggle to gather due to a lack of understanding on the exact techniques that internet censorship and surveillance that governments use, but we know that content filtering usually occurs by either being blocked completely or by filtering more discretely through methods usually referred to as “content analysis” (Deibert & Villeneuve, 112). Though strict filters that are more emblematic of traditional censorship are rarer nowadays, they’re still used; content analysis methods of filtering often better serve a denial of attention method in which attempts are made by states at preventing the news from even being able to be reached, with disinformation often serving as an additional distraction when necessary. In nations that often have strict laws in favor of freedom of speech, these last two methods are more common; as well, though many states want to give at least the appearance of a complete freedom of speech, many exist in a so-called form of “regulatory state” has developed agencies even within nations that had laws written to allow for the freedom of speech to dictate what kind of media is allowed to catch the eye of the public and how media can be regulated, including both the regulation of their internal media and of media that might infringe on their communication sovereignty (Flew, 154-155).

All of these methods are attempts by nations to regain their communication sovereignty, and in doing so, they affect how the idea of a **global civil society** interacts with each other in the **public sphere** to influence decisions, culture, and thought processes, and in doing so, they directly affect the **global imaginary.** Through the vast, global **network** of connectivity that the internet aims to provide, an expanded idea of the public sphere exists from what it was once thought to be, in which a previously limited interaction of ideals has been massively expanded, allowing for even more sociopolitical groups to interact as purveyors of discourse communities across this wide network of ideas and ideals (Castells, 78). The global imaginary, thus, allows us to see the world in a wide variety of different perspectives that once might have never been possible, allowing us to see more of the world than is ever likely possible to experience in one lifetime (Lule, 3, 69-85).

This global imaginary directly allows for the idea of a **cosmopolitan** identity to exist, in which the public sphere has become international and thus an identity where national identities mean less. This allows for an idea of a society to exist that serves as the truest form of a cultural melting pot possible, much like immigrant communities bring to the table a mix of their own culture and the culture that they become a part of into the same place (Kraidy, 254-255). The world, as much of society imagines it now, doesn’t exist in distinct nations but as a collective human identity almost (Lule, 70).

But the idea of a truly global society, as of now, does not truly exist as a result of the so-called **digital divide** that separates society from those with internet to those without. As worldwide as the internet may appear to be, it does not truly exist as a truly global service for many people living around the globe. It is estimated that only roughly 50% of the world actually has serviceable internet access, and part of the reason that this digital divide exists is due to the processes in which the materials required to access the internet are obtained: brutal nongovernmental organizations control much of the trade of substances such as coltan and other rare earth metals that are used in devices like smartphones. Many of these mines are controlled by warlords that use forced labour, sexual services, and child soldiers to get the metals that they sell; though less traumatic, the servitude that workers experience in China and in Korea is similarly disruptive to the lives of the workers who assemble these products in sweatshops at factories like those owned by Foxconn and Samsung (Qiu, 11-12).

Society supposedly exists in a global, connected world now, but that simply is not the truth. The world has a digital divide in terms of initial access, and in their access of true information. Where profit and control have the potential to exist on the internet, both nongovernmental organizations and governments themselves will often seek to take one or the other, if not both.

Wordcount: 1037