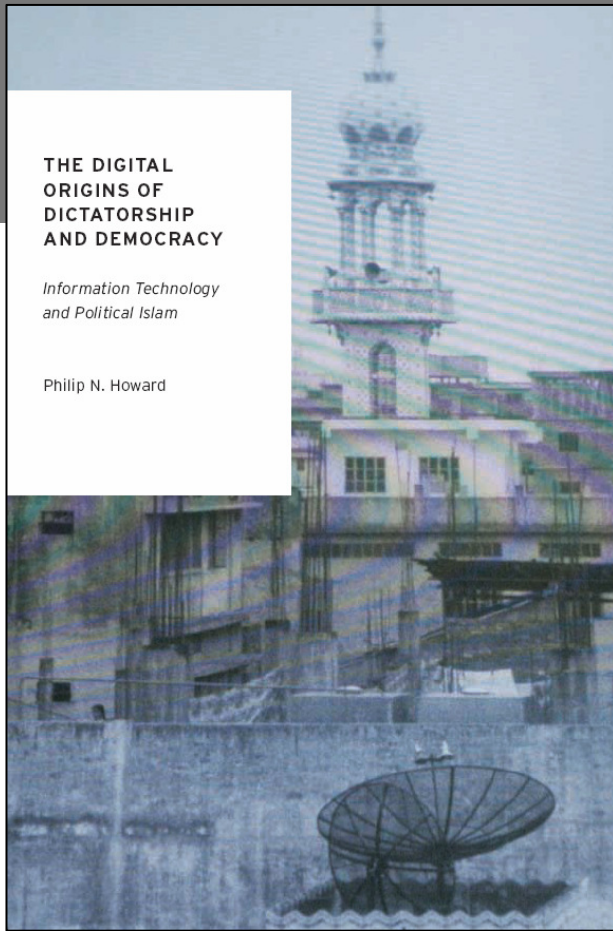


September 2010



- The newest volume in the *Oxford Studies in Digital Politics* series
- An insightful look at the relationship between technology and democratic transition

The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy

Information Technology and Political Islam

PHILIP N. HOWARD

Around the developing world, political leaders face a dilemma: the very information and communication technologies that boost economic fortunes also undermine power structures. Globally, one in ten internet users is a Muslim living in a populous Muslim community. In these countries, young people are developing their political identities—including a transnational Muslim identity—online. In countries where political parties are illegal, the internet is the only infrastructure for democratic discourse. And in countries with large Muslim communities, mobile phones and the internet are helping civil society build systems of political communication independent of the state and beyond easy manipulation by cultural or religious elites.

The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy looks at the role that communications technologies play in advancing democratic transitions in Muslim countries. As such, its central question is whether technology holds the potential to substantially enhance democracy. Certainly, no democratic transition has occurred solely because of the internet. But, as Philip Howard argues, no democratic transition can occur today without the internet. According to Howard, the major (and perhaps only meaningful) forum for civic debate in most Muslim countries today is online. Drawing upon material from interviews with telecommunications policy makers and activists in Azerbaijan, Egypt, Tajikistan and Tanzania and a comparative study of 74 countries with large Muslim populations, Howard demonstrates that these forums have been the means to organize activist movements that have led to successful democratic insurgencies.

About the Author:

Philip N. Howard is an Associate Professor of Communication at the University of Washington. His previous authored book, *New Media Campaigns and the Managed Citizen* (Cambridge, 2006), won the American Sociological Association's Communication Technology and Society Section Best Book Award and the International Communication Association's Outstanding Book Award.

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Advance Praise for the Book:

"For too long the literature on the politics of the new information technologies has been empirically thin and theoretically overheated. By substituting systematic empirical analysis for anecdote and nuanced interpretation for hyperbole, Howard has written an original and important book that scholars of comparative politics, democratization, contentious politics and the new information technologies will be obliged to read. As he provocatively reminds us (quoting Kranzberg), 'technology is neither good nor bad, nor is it neutral.'"

—**Doug McAdam, Professor of Sociology and Director of Urban Studies, Stanford University**

"This book presents a most challenging and original analysis of the cultural and political dynamics of the Muslim world through the lens of the interaction between communication technology and politics. It breaks new ground in our understanding of the implications of digital technology for socio-political change. It will become a reference in political communication for the years to come."

—**Manuel Castells, Wallis Annenberg Chair of Communication Technology and Society, USC**

"In contests between dictatorship and democracy, new media exert increasingly determinative influence. Philip Howard provides a detailed, thoughtful analysis of how the flow of information and tools of communication are reshaping global politics."

—**Philip Seib, Director of the USC Center on Public Diplomacy**

"Philip Howard develops an empirically grounded case for the role that the Internet and related communication technologies are playing in supporting democratic developments within Islamic states. This would be an excellent book for courses on 21st Century politics and the Internet."

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