

**Launching into Cyberspace:
Internet Development and Politics in Five World Regions**

*By Marcus Franda
Reviewed by Christina Jackson*

In *Launching into Cyberspace*, Marcus Franda seeks to explore the impact of the Internet on international relations in the early twenty-first century through its development in five unique world regions: Africa, the Middle East, the former Soviet Union with portions of Eurasia, Central and Eastern Europe, and China and India. Almost all countries have created regulations and laws for Internet behavior, both intra- and inter-state. In researching each region's reception of the Internet, Franda uses clear, extensive empirical evidence and examples to lay a substantial groundwork for a discussion of the internal and global tensions created by their diverse reactions to this new technology.

This volume is the second in a series of three. The first volume looked at the advanced Internet Technology countries of the U.S., Europe, and Japan, while the third delves into detail on China and India. In this volume, Franda broadly explores regions that have previously been much less involved with the development of the Internet's international structure, but are likely to play significant roles in shaping discreet aspects in its future. The global dimension of the Internet is unmistakable: due to its reach and pervasiveness, it has created major challenges to existing laws from the local to the international level, and new predicaments for existing governance. In his introduction, Franda recognizes the enormity of any attempts to corral such issues, and makes his goals in this book clear. He does not claim to predict where the Internet is going, but only to understand, from an empirical perspective, how it has evolved from its earliest years. It is necessary to recognize and understand the Internet's varied, global reception, he states, in order to understand it in terms of international relations.

Franda argues that it is likely the Internet has increased both the ability and the willingness of national governments to communicate with each other. Within what he terms "positive comity" and under the theory of "transgovernmentalism", Franda sees the Internet as a key tool for judiciaries and justice departments from different countries to work closely together. By utilizing the Internet, nations separated by distance and culture can ensure amicable conflict resolution, and resolve or altogether avoid infringements of their sovereignty.

The development of an international regime for the Internet will come from both this transgovernmentalism and from working with non-governmental organizations. Franda refers to Norwegian scholar Torbjorn L. Knutsen's concept of a *publicum*, or a 'public sphere of civil society,' as derived from Kant, Hegel, Weber, and Schmitt. This regime creates the basic principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures governing the Internet. Franda rightly considers it imperative for the increasingly interdependent global economy to be based on collaboration, instead of standardization. Yet this method raises valid constitutional concerns. In this 'negotiated order,' the interests of the U.S. are represented by private organizations. Franda references Harvard Professor Lawrence Lessig's concern with this significant new jurisdiction being constructed outside of the Constitution's ambit.

In the first chapter, Franda begins with what he calls the "Thin Cyberspace in Africa and the LDCs" or less developed countries. Estimates show that less than .01% of the population in Africa were Internet users in 2000. Franda suggests this is because of three key factors: a lack of basic telecommunication and other infrastructures; high costs; and a lack of skills, resources, and awareness. Franda traces the lack of infrastructure to years of large, government-run telecommunication monopolies. He describes how post-colonial policies resulted in distribution patterns less related to race than to authoritarian rulers favoring their supporters or favoring areas necessary for their continued positions. Cost factors in these areas are also huge hurdles: people can't afford phone service, maintenance is rare where it is impossible to maintain roads or modern amenities, and the very copper in the wires is worth more than the phone service itself. Unlike other world areas, foreign investment has not been a realistic solution. Franda cites Africa's global financial rating as the riskiest region in the world to invest. He suggests improvement through increased EU and WTO funding, more transparent policy decisions, and the creation of independent authorities for central banks and revenue authorities. Yet Franda simultaneously recognizes that any of these changes would pose serious tenure risks for anyone in African politics, making their implementation unlikely.

Shifting to the Middle East, Franda demonstrates the region's varying degrees of accommodation and control of the Internet. While Arab leaders have refused to adopt entire U.S. and European legal frameworks governing the Internet, declaring them inappropriate and foreign, an indigenous regime has made slow progress due to the lack of regional consensus. Yet some countries have welcomed Internet technology. Franda commends Israel's progress on its

quest to be a major producer of Internet-related equipment and software, made possible by government policies pushing the economy toward high-tech development. Despite the lack of the Internet's integration into Israeli society, several factors support Israel's position as a technology leader: entrepreneurs; conscience policies to develop human and financial resources and physical infrastructure; the defensive forces acting as a breeding ground for technical innovation and improvisation; and ties to U.S. educational experiences and high tech firms. Additionally, Franda cites Jordan as the most liberal Arab nation and the one most likely to take the lead in e-commerce, due to their restructured laws that stress the benefits of the Internet.

In contrast, most Arab nations have traditionally failed to embrace new technology, and the threat of the Internet looms especially high over their social, political, and cultural mores. Franda faults a governmental fear that a loss of control over basic information networks may result in revolutionary political change. Franda also distinguishes the contemporary and controversial disparity among Western-Arab positions regarding both the legal responsibilities of Internet Service Providers, as well as some countries' support of – or failure to control – the use of the Internet by terrorist organizations. According to Franda, cultural issues based on Western secularism, perceived wrongs from colonial rule, and the West's role in creating and sustaining Israel have resulted in Arab nations' aversion to following a Western lead in development of an international regime for the Internet.

The Eurasian and Eastern European disparity is also stark. Russia and the Former Soviet Union bloc countries are stymied by a lack of infrastructure and a lack of English-speaking population (the dominant web language.) Additionally, investors fleeing and companies folding because their “legal and economic rights are abused there with consistency and impunity” serves to stunt the growth of the Internet in that region. In contrast, the Baltic nations of Latvia, Lithuania, and especially Estonia, are competing with Eastern Europe countries like Hungary to break down old Soviet constraints and privatize in efforts to join the European Union. Franda cites Estonia as leading the way on Internet growth: it boasts telecommunication lines, new privatization laws, and many technical, entrepreneurial, and managerial resources. Estonia's parliament broadcasts real-time and newly passed laws are immediately available online. In competition, Hungary struggles to reinforce weak legal protections against fraud and attract foreign investors. Furthermore, its scientific and engineering workforce is well-educated and

requires a lower wage, and its economic and governmental frameworks are conducive to private sector innovation.

While Franda plans to publish another text on China and India alone, the fact that together they comprise 40% of the earth's population and more than twice that of the entire Western hemisphere warrants them a chapter in this volume. Interestingly, the two are very diverse in their approach to the Internet. Since the 1980s China has invested considerable resources to wall-off their country via a massive intra-net, channeling almost all Internet participation through a government bottleneck. The system is popular among users because it reduces down- and up-load times and online costs, but it also enhances the government's monitoring of Internet communications. While the WTO requires that members' markets be open to foreign investment, China's leaders strengthened their institutions against this competition before joining the WTO. With an eye for the future, Franda notes another repercussion of the government's policies: poor software development. He notes that this region's lack of English skills and restricted Internet use sustains the lowest creativity and technical capabilities in Asia.

India, with a poor infrastructure and less than 1% of worldwide private financial funds (compared to China's 26%, or \$40 billion), exports 100 times the amount of software as China. Liberal economic policies encourage software development and production, and huge industrial parks like Bangalore have enticed companies to build world-class facilities and have spawned hundreds of Indian companies. By changing investment laws and procedures to ease the move, India and other countries such as Romania have benefited from companies locating their plants and business where engineering and computer skills exist, instead of trying to entice people to relocate. Franda predicts India's contribution will not be to the Internet's regime, but rather arise from its entrepreneurs.

In more than half the states he reviewed, Franda found leaders who took an isolationist position and limited Internet use to a small elite. He claims that laws restricting use, imposing fines, and providing for arrests all thwart Internet development. Additionally, proxy server banning of sites and filtering systems, government monopolies, lax or un-enforced protection of investor and businesses serve to impede the growth of the Internet. Franda states that while the Internet could encourage more democratic governments, this is not a guaranteed result. Even without fear and distrust, many leaders are forced to de-emphasize the Internet when faced with

higher political priorities. As a result, the mere presence of the Internet will not guarantee a more democratic government.

Franda's thorough and compelling analysis of the diverse reactions to the spread of the Internet in five regions provides the necessary groundwork for a meaningful discussion about global business, international legal and governmental relations, and the future of e-commerce. It is a broad subject, which he deftly handles in a direct, thoroughly referenced, and easily readable manner. Franda's empirical evidence, examples, and analysis are an excellent basis for a solid understanding of the past and current status of the Internet in regions that will serve to significantly alter its future. *Launching into Cyberspace* is an approachable overview, necessary for anyone with an interest in the future of the Internet on a world scale.

1. You use the word "regime" a lot, which implies a legal structure or the like. I think you should clarify what you mean by it when you first use it. I clarify the term in the fourth paragraph. I tried to move it up, but I thought it read better this way. I replaced the text re: Kant et al because it is a known concept, something people would be familiar with, and I wanted to give full acknowledgment. Please let me know your thoughts on it!
2. You also reference "empirical" studies a lot. Do you mean statistics and the like? If so, include some striking ones in the review or clarify what you mean by "empirical." I mean statistics, and I did include several references to some of the more interesting numbers. Were these not sufficient, or did they not stand out?