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View From Practice

A Cuban Spring? The Use of the Internet as a Tool of Democracy Promotion by United States Agency for International Development in Cuba

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Abstract

This paper is an exploration of the use of Internet technologies as tools that form a part of democracy promotion programs in authoritarian regimes by international development actors – in particular United States Agency for International Development. It discusses the role of development actors in democracy promotion, the role of the Internet and new media in democracy promotion and the impact this has had on Cuba's nascent Internet infrastructure. It discusses and asks questions about the role of development actors in the promotion of democracy, the emergence of online dissidents in Cuba and their impact on discussions pertaining to a so-called Cuban Spring and the challenges of introducing the Internet into Cuba.

Keywords:

IT Ethics | Cuba | democracy promotion | USAID | development agencies | ICT

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Notes on contributor

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Notes

Democracy promotion here is defined to include democracy assistance programs engaged in by external actors to encourage the development of democracy within a given state.

Please see http://www.devdir.org/la_caribbean.htm.

Please see http://www.careinternational.org.uk/where-we-work/cuba; http://www.oxfam.org/en/cuba.

For more information, see http://www.itu.int/en/about/Pages/default.aspx.

For more information, see http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/connect/americas/.

Data for the World Development Indicators on Internet users are based on nationally reported data to the ITU. Some countries derive these data from surveys, but since survey questions and definitions differ, the estimates may not be strictly comparable. Countries without surveys generally derive their estimates by multiplying subscriber counts reported by Internet service providers by a multiplier and this method may undercount actual users, particularly in developing countries. However, it is a good indication of Internet usage in Cuba in relation to the region.

http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/15/net-us-cuba-telecommunications-idUSBRE85D14H20120615.

Retrieved March 27, 2012, from http://www.informaticahabana.cu/en/home.

Retrieved March 27, 2012, from http://blogssobrecuba.blogspot.com/.

In 2008, the Cuban government allowed consumer sales of personal electronic goods such as mobile phones.

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The Consequences of the Internet for Politics
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