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# 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

## Notes on contributor

Pamina Firchow is Assistant Professor of the Practice of Peacebuilding at the University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies.

## 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](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://blogsobre cuba.blogspot.com/>.

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

Related Research Data

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Democracy promotion before and after the ‘colour revolutions’

Source: Democratization

Will the Internet Spoil Fidel Castro’s Cuba?

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The Consequences of the Internet for Politics

Source: Annual Review of Political Science

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