

## The weaponized Internet



One could say that the Internet is a weapon that got out of the control of its creators. When the ARPANET was created, its intent was to provide a secure, dynamic, robust, and flexible communications system for universities and laboratories that would be resilient and functional even in the face of wartime disruption. It was never intended for civilian use. One wonders if the creators of the system now regret that the tools are now in the hands of the people.



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One of the most powerful forces in the world today is technology convergence and access. The increasing power and decreasing size of hardware and the growing capability and sophistication of software have given the average person the ability to perform tasks and achieve goals that were once the providence of large groups, organizations, and governments. The ability for the average person on the street to not only exchange information but also create (for both good and ill) new goods and services is changing the world and how we live in it.

The first victim of this disruptive force was publishing. The first Macintosh's ability to enable the average person to create documents was only hinting at the societal maelstrom that the publishing industry is still going through. Where it was once only possible to develop, write, and publish a news, article, or opinion editorial (or advertorial) vehicle with a huge staff and infrastructure, now individuals and small groups not only reach huge audiences via the web but are also successfully competing with and winning over those old organizations and systems.

We are now confronted with the societal ramifications of worldwide data exchange and information transparency. The problems we are currently having in Egypt and

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the rest of North Africa is a direct consequence of the people's ability to exchange information freely outside of the regular channels of press or politics. In this case, a very graphic protest action in public by one person in Tunisia was blogged by a bystander (enabled by device tech convergence) and goes viral, creating the social environment for change in the region. This is analogous to TV in the old communist east letting the people there know there was a world beyond their borders where people lived freer. The Internet not only informs people of the lands beyond their borders, it also exposes actions within the borders that were previously unknown to the populace.

The weaponized Internet does not only address the "soft" arts of espionage, propaganda, communications, and research, it also is a powerful agent for action, enabling those motivated to hinder, block, and delete data in target systems via DoS and other viral attacks. As I mentioned in [an earlier essay](#) [1], one can actually damage things in the physical world. This was demonstrated by the Stuxnet worm, which destroyed several hundred uranium centrifuges in a facility in Iran, a task that used to require a squadron of fighter-bombers and a lot of ordinance.

The Flat Earth also represents the international competition that now exists in every sector, as now not only can foreign companies compete with local business, but foreign individuals as well. Today anyone with a little capital and a lot of gumption can set up an international business from their living room, even to the extent of outsourcing manufacture and distribution in the case of hard products.

We are still trying to integrate (the old analogy of a pig being swallowed by a snake pops into mind) all of these new technologies and capabilities into our society, and nobody yet knows where it all will take us. One thing is for sure, it will certainly be an interesting ride.

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[1] <http://www.ecnmag.com/blog/2011/01/soapbox/cyberwar.aspx>