

Internet politics, policies have rapidly become integral to US international affairs

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Internet governance policy has rapidly risen from a relatively marginal issue for the United States' foreign policy establishment to a significant component of the country's international affairs and national security strategy, according to a new paper from Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy.

The study, "From Tunis to Tunis: Considering the Planks of U.S. International Cyber [Policy](#) 2005-2011," investigates how and why the Internet, the wider cyberspace and information technology have come to matter a great deal to the departments of Defense and State as well as other key agencies.

"We have witnessed how the United States has managed an enormous shift in how the politics of digital international communications impact its international statecraft," said Christopher Bronk, the paper's author and a Baker Institute fellow in [information technology policy](#). "Federal agencies have made an important pivot on recognizing the value of what remains a vague catchall term, 'cyber.'"

Bronk bookends his study with the 2005 World Summit of the Information Society (WSIS), which took place in Tunis, Tunisia, and led to the creation of the global [Internet Governance Forum](#), and 2011's Arab Spring revolutions, which were sparked in Tunis. In between these milestones, he shows how the U.S. adopted, refined and grew its strategy in the face of a number of pivotal events – Internet crackdowns in Burma (2007) and Iran (2009); likely state-sanctioned cyberattacks

against Estonia (2007) and the Republic of Georgia (2009); the impact of the WikiLeaks data breach; the Stuxnet worm's apparent damage to the Iranian nuclear enrichment program; and the role of social media in the Arab Spring revolutions.

Bronk points to the FBI's rapid-response Cyber Action Team's work in aiding the governments of Turkey and Morocco in their joint investigation of the 2005 Zotob worm as well as U.S. embassies' increasing use of Twitter to transmit critical official statements as examples of this adoption and transformation in real time.

As a final thought, Bronk raises the question as to whether a connection exists between the events of the WSIS and Tunisia's revolution. "While there may not be any, it is at the very least a novel coincidence."

More information: "From Tunis to Tunis: Considering the Planks of U.S. International Cyber Policy 2005-2011":
bakerinstitute.org/publication ... berPolicy-052112.pdf

Provided by Rice University

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