IV. Collective Images in the Hypermedia Environment

The four collective images outlined above circulate as alternative paradigms of Internet organization and, by extension, world order. Which of the four predominates will have significant consequences for the nature of politics, authority, and community into the twenty-first century. While the analytical framework derived from a critical security studies approach helps illuminate the normative content of these collective images, and thus provides a more clear basis to formulate Canadian policy options, it does not provide any clues as to which of them will likely predominate over the others. Before concluding this analysis, it is helpful to consider some properties of the material context -- the communications environment -- in which these collective images circulate, compete, and are facilitated and constrained.

Obviously, given the considerable support that exists for each of the collective images above, we should not expect one of them to prevail fully over the others in the short-term. The institutional inertia and material interests surrounding all of these collective images ensure that none will wither immediately. Shifts in world order -- though abrupt in historical terms -- occur gradually, often spanning generations. Three elements of the communications environment, however, suggest that the network security collective image will thrive over time while national and state -- and to a somewhat lesser extent, private -- security collective images will be constrained:

Pakistan, Russia, and Singapore all maintain tight domestic controls on cryptography use.