The Obamachine: Techno-politics 2.0

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Abstract

The proliferation of online campaign content has brought an end to an era of broadcast media dominance over US national politics and has resulted in the drastic reconstruction of the traditional fundraising machinations of American politics. Since the mid-1990s, there have been growing discussions on Internet activism and how new media has impacted participatory democracy and social justice in the United States. The increased usage of the Internet in political campaigning has also impacted some of the foundational ways that politics has historically been conducted in the United States. This paper analyzes a framework posited by Andrew Chadwick which conceptualizes the ways in e-democracy is transformative for political engagement. Further, this paper argues that during the 2008 Presidential campaign president- elect Barack Obama attained unprecedented success through the utilization of the internet as a primary vehicle for his political campaign. Obama's innovative approaches to US politicking have led to one of the most transformative eras in US political history and catapulted him to an overwhelming victory for President of the United States.

The digitization and networking of content on the Internet has significantly altered the political landscape in the United States over the past decade. Internet usage by Americans to obtain political information and engage with others has grown to 46 percent since the 2004 presidential election (Smith & Rainie, 2008). The Internet has reshaped notions of American political identity and community and has established the Internet as a legitimate medium of the market place of ideas. The proliferation of online campaign content has also brought an end to an era of broadcast media dominance over US national politics; and has resulted in the drastic reconstruction of the traditional fundraising machinations of American politics. In 2004, Howard Dean's campaign during the Democratic primaries marked the first time a candidate successfully funded a campaign by utilizing the internet for fund-raising and partisan politicking. Four years later, the 2008 presidential election season was further redefined by a new dynamic of interaction between political candidates and the electorate. Led by charismatic candidate presidential candidate Barack Obama a new culture of US voters became empowered by the plethora of political punditry available online. The result was a presidential election battled almost exclusively on the internet, with the candidates immersing themselves in a frenzied campaigning of US citizens.

E-Democracy 2.0

The Internet by definition being a "network of networks" has enabled American citizens to easily join any type of political or special interest group. US voters can obtain political information or '*mis*information' with just a few mouse clicks. Since the mid-1990s, there have been growing discussions on Internet activism and how new media has impacted participatory democracy and social justice in the United States (Kahn & Kellner, 2005).

In order to understand the effects of internet on the US political environment, e-democracy must first be conceptualized. Andrew Chadwick, author of the "Handbook of Internet Politics", conceptualized a framework for e-democracy which utilized a technology-centered approach to elucidate the broader implications of political behavior related to voter participation. Chadwick's framework conceptualizes e-democracy in the Web 2.0 environment as being comprised of seven key components (Chadwick, 2008). Chadwick's seven themes are:

1. the Internet as a platform for political discourse
2. the collective intelligence emergent from political web
3. the importance of data over particular software and hardware applications
4. perpetual experimentalism in the public domain
5. the creation of small scale forms of political engagement through consumerism
6. the propagation of political content over multiple applications
7. rich user experiences on political websites

Chadwick's first theme of e-democracy, "the Internet as a platform for political discourse," essentially means that the web has evolved from the web 1.0 model of static pages and linear searching towards enabling users to achieve a wide range of goals through networked software services (Chadwick, 2008). Two key features of the web 2.0 environments which have changed the political economy of content creation are its scalability, (i.e. adaptability to sudden changes or growth surges) and the increasing flexibility of online information distribution. Technological advancements made in online storage and distribution has also significantly reduced the costs associated with delivering information, while simultaneously increasing the market for diverse content. (Chadwick, 2008)

The second theme of web 2.0 E-Democracy is "collective intelligence." The main idea here is that among the distributed network of online content creators and contributors, amateurs utilizing simple online tools can produce information content that outperforms those produced by large scale professional authoritative sources. (Chadwick, 2008) Two primary examples of this are free and open source software projects and user generated content sites which demonstrate a nexus between political engagement and technological tools. (Chadwick, 2008) Wikipedia has become a frontline for political engagement in the United States with a wide-range of supporters of candidates, causes, movements and groups who engage in constant online politicking. (Chadwick, 2008) The relatively low cost of digital cameras and video recorders has resulted in the lives of US citizens and politicians being captured, uploaded, and archived online. (Faris & Etling, 2008) Online collective intelligence has permeated the US political arena resulting in an increase in transparency of electoral politics; due to the fact that politicians never know who is videoing them.

The third theme of web 2.0 E-Democracy is the importance of "data aggregation." The idea here is that the current era is characterized by the aggregation of huge amounts of data: those who can successfully manipulate and exploit its value will dominate. Informational value emerges from the confluence of user-distributed content and the ability of politicians to exploit it. An example of this would be the ease of connection to social networking sites. Social networking sites in the web 2.0 environment offer a multitude of opportunities for automated information gathering, sorting and targeting of citizens. During the early years of the Web not much confidence was given by American politicians as to the potentiality of internet campaigning (Stromer-Galley, 2000). The overall assumption was that the Web was too unregulated to be able to effectively control partisan political messages and there was no way to target specific demographics according to political preference. Web 2.0 social networking sites have made these issues manageable as increasing numbers of US citizens willingly furnish the most detailed information about their biases and preferences (Chadwick, 2008).

Chadwick's fourth theme of E-Democracy in the web 2.0 environment is the "perpetual experimentalism in the public domain." Chadwick uses this theme to metaphorically capture social and political behavior. Web 2.0 applications have been characterized by a large amount of public experimentalism as evidenced by the perpetual "beta" status of Flickr and Twitter. Flickr launched in 2004 and was one of the earliest Web 2.0 applications; it is an image and video hosting website. While Twitter launched in 2006 and is a free real-time micro-blogging and short messaging service (Wikipedia, 2008a). Technically speaking these two examples not only elucidate the requirements of building and testing scalable web applications on meager funding resources, but they also reflect a value shift away from tightly managed, centralized development

environments towards environments that encourage fluidity and collaboration between users and developers (Chadwick, 2008).

Chadwick's next two themes, "the creation of small scale forms of political engagement through consumerism" and "the propagation of political content across multiple applications" are highly technical and specialized, but both manifest important aspects of new politics in the web 2.0 environment. Web 2.0 environments are characterized by the ability aggregate and manipulate disparate data sources in pursuit of goals which may differ from those originally intended by the producers of the data. For example, in 2004 the US web watchdog They Rule.net provided American citizens a glimpse of some of the sycophantic relationships of the US corporate ruling class. (They Rule, 2008) The site used as its focus the boards of some of the most powerful US companies, many of whom share the same directors. They Rule.net gave American citizens an opportunity to create maps of the interlocking directories of the top companies in the US in an effort to expose the serpentine linkages between board members. (They Rule, 2008) Similarly, mobile internet devices like the cell phone and pocket digital cameras have gained importance due to the distinct user-generated content produced by image-bloggers which have directly affected political discourse (Chadwick, 2008).

The final theme of politics in the web 2.0 environment is the advent of rich user experiences on political websites. This refers to the development of applications designed to run code (i.e. asynchronous Java, xml, or AJAX) inside of a web browser in ways that facilitate interactivity and the rapid retrieval, alteration and storage of data (Chadwick, 2006). The majority of successful web 2.0 applications store user generated content able to be modified by others. Also, many web 2.0 systems are deliberately designed to capture useful aggregated data from minimal user input. One of the areas where rich user experiences are most significant is the emergence of online videos via sites such as YouTube. YouTube has generated a huge user base both political and non-political utilizing a small screen Do-It-Yourself (DIY) format that has produced highly effective campaign videos independent of professional media production techniques (Cone, 2008). The rise of YouTube campaigning in the United States has been a watershed event for political candidates seeking to gain notoriety at the grassroots level at minimal cost per users (Cone, 2008). YouTube has become one of the most popular online applications, an essential tool for content distribution by politicians (Chadwick, 2008).

Each of these themes suggests devolution of power from the government to the citizenry as well as a paradigmatic shift toward the reformation of the traditional methods of US politicking.

Political Engagement in a Virtual Age

The increased use of the Internet in campaigning has transformed some of the foundational ways that politics has historically been conducted in the United States (Bimber & Davis, 2003). It has been has had increasing impact as a political tool since the 1992 US Presidential election when it was first used by the Clinton/Gore campaign. Although, there were no web browsers, the Clinton/Gore campaign utilized email, e-bulletin boards, and online discussion groups to disseminate information on the campaign (Wagner & Gainous, 2007). In fact, the discussion group "alt.politics.Clinton" received approximately eight hundred postings a day during the height of the 1992 campaign (Smith, 1994).

The Internet remained a relatively low resource campaign tool until 1996 when Bob Dole made history by being the first US political candidate to mention a campaign website at a presidential debate. Afterward, the Internet would play a larger role in national campaigns (Klotz, 2004). As a campaign medium, the Internet has presented a new form of interaction with the electorate and unlike television; there are virtually no unintended viewers for a campaign website. Television allows for the seepage of viewers who may not be receptive to the advertising message, whereas a campaign website will service only those who seek out the candidate (Klotz, 2004). Another advantage is the average visitor to a campaign website will stay for over eight minutes; which allows for the candidate to disseminate more information and convey positions on a number of issues, while at the same time permitting the visitor to self-select areas of interest from volunteering to fund-raising (Klotz, 2004).

Political candidates are using the Internet to bypass traditional campaign methods to reach voters and raise campaign funds. In the 2000 Republican presidential primaries, Senator John McCain repeatedly advertised his web presence and used the Internet to turn his surprise victory in New Hampshire into a fund-raising juggernaut by raising a then unprecedented $4 million over the Internet (Salant, 2000). By the time the Super Tuesday primaries rolled around, McCain had raised more than $10 million dollars, with about 40 percent of it gained on the Internet (Graf, 2007).

In the 2004 Democratic presidential primaries Vermont Governor Howard Dean successfully fueled his campaign by using the Internet for both the penetration of the campaign and in raising funds (Trippi, 2004). Dean organized a team of Internet activists to utilize the Internet for fund-raising, recruitment of activists and organizers and to produce local online "meet ups" where like-minded individuals could connect and become active with the campaign (Kahn & Kellner, 2005). Howard Dean's incorporation of the Internet into his overall campaign strategy was notable for two reasons: it showed that it could politically engage and generate enthusiasm amongst disparate demographics namely; youth (first-time voters) and middle class voters and it connected people with issues by articulating the struggles of the world (Kahn & Kellner, 2005). According to a 2004 Pew study (Rainie, Cornfield, & Horrigan, 2004), a large majority of Dean online partisans voted in the November presidential election; so by all accounts his online campaign was somewhat of a success even though he did not win the nomination. The "Howard Dean experiment" demonstrated that the Web was a viable and profitable medium for political campaigning.

The Explosion of "Always On" Political Engagement

The tragedies of 9/11 had a galvanizing effect on US mobile communication consumption. Americans experienced the attacks on television, by reading the online news, and by e-mailing family and friends (Graff, 2007). High bandwidth cellular networks crashed within hours of the attacks, blocking telephone calls, but low bandwidth BlackBerry © networks remained up, which had a revolutionary effect on US mobile communications as governments and business rapidly deployed BlackBerrys to key staffers--US congressman and top White House officials were issued BlackBerrys within days of 9/11. This being just one example of the top down acquisition of a relatively new technology by the Executive level of US government and it was indirectly responsible for accelerating the pervasiveness of e-mail, instant communication, and the "always on" society (Graff, 2007). Text messaging via mobile phone has

become an important element of US election campaigning in 2008 with both parties compiling mobile contact information and utilizing it to reach potential voters (Graff, 2007).

Consider research conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press which found that throughout during the spring of the 2008 US presidential campaign season, a full 46 percent of all Americans used the Internet, e-mail, or phone text messaging for political purposes (Smith & Rainie, 2008). That was the percentage of those who received news and information about the campaign, used e-mail to discuss campaign matters, and used phone texting for the same purpose (Smith & Rainie, 2008). This statistic is up from 31 percent at the same point in time in the 2004 US presidential election and demonstrated that there was a larger population of Americans going online to obtain political news and information than at any time in the 2004 election (Rainie, Cornfield, & Horrigan, 2004). Further research found that although, text messaging had not equaled the Internet or email as a widespread political tool, 4 percent of all US adults surveyed reported sending and receiving text messages about the campaign or other political issues on a regular basis (Smith & Rainie, 2008). Other statistical findings concerning online political campaigning by the Pew Project included:

- 40% of all Americans (Internet user and non-Internet user alike) have gotten news and information about this year's campaign via the Internet.

- 23% of Americans say they receive e-mails urging them to support a candidate or discuss the campaign once a week or more.

- 19% of Americans go online once a week or more to do something related to campaign, and 6% go online to engage in politically on a daily basis.

- 10% of Americans use e-mail to contribute to the political debate with a similar frequency. (Smith & Rainie, 2008)

One of many watershed moments for Senator Barack Obama came when he announced his pick for vice-president via text message to anyone who was registered with the campaign. The announcement was given by the broadcast media and resulted in over 2.9 million text messages being sent (Cone, 2008).

The Internet as a "Disruptive Technology"

Richard Rogers, author of *Information Politics on the Web,* argues the Internet is a disruptive technology in which official versions of reality and policies to shape it by government are routinely shattered by citizen journalists and activists (Rogers, 2004). It is because of this capacity for disrupting the status quo and undermining the elite that is the key to re-democratizing American politics and media because it changes the nature of political participation and removes the barriers of information professionalization (Rogers, 2004). In the past, US citizens were expected to make monetary contributions and volunteer their time under the direction of professional campaign staffers and then leave until the next election. Political information was the province of professional journalists, pollsters, and commentators, who themselves were the property of giant media corporations. The Internet as forum for political engagement has demonstrably changed this reality in the United States. Michael Cornfield co-founder of the Institute for Politics, Democracy, and the Internet at George Washington University, described this as a loosening of the terms "activist" and "newsmaker":

"…[because of the Internet] the definition of activist might continue to loosen, to include people who do little more than what ten minutes a month at their computers enable them to do; parties and groups will devote more energy and creativity to aggregating these actions into 'Grassroots' power. The definition of 'newsmaker' and 'news' will also loosen, both because of what grassroots campaigners can do with the Internet, and what bloggers, web video-makers, and others with things to say to the public can do through the Internet to distribute their messages. These changes could herald a major reconfiguring of the most public aspects of the American political process." (Cornfield, 2002)

Cornfield wrote this before the beginning of the 2006 Congressional campaign, when his reference point was a 2002 midterm election study which found that political cyberspace was "populated mostly by tentative campaigners and wandering citizens" (Cornfield, 2002). The current Internet milieu now allows campaigns to send personalized electronic messages to voters that have an interest in the candidate. Online forums such as the Blogs and Twitter which facilitate direct interaction between the voter and the candidate had a transformative effect on traditional US politics.

Social Networking

The Ascent of a New Public Square

Political blogs are a fast growing part of the wider social phenomenon of Web 2.0. In the past six years, the political Blogosphere has grown exponentially, moving from an interesting curiosity to an enduring feature of the political landscape. Citizens and politicians are increasingly bypassing the traditional modes of political communication and are utilizing the Blogosphere as a way to participate and engage with others. Until the end of the 2002 presidential election season discussing news online meant one of two things: a mainstream news organization's website, like CNN.com, or a sensationalistic journalism site like the Drudge Report whose scuttlebutt reporting helped instigate the Clinton impeachment trial (Graff, 2007). For the first time, political blogs had begun to influence public opinion on a large scale. DailyKos, the Internet's most popular US political blog, was launched as well as TalkingPointsMemo.com, which was directly responsible for recording Senate majority leader Trent Lott's ill-fated comments regarding segregationist Strom Thurman's 1948 presidential bid (Graff, 2007). These nascent political blogs combined with the nation's floundering opinions regarding the Iraq war and the subsequent ineffectiveness of partisan politics helped radicalize the Blogosphere (Graff, 2007).

Political bloggers are now regularly featured in the mainstream media (Graf, 2006). Major political media organizations are now "blogging up," by asking their correspondents and editors to start political blogs and by hiring bloggers. The demographics of blogger and blog readers have also been categorized as being better educated, more diverse, and more urban than the American population as a whole (Smith & Rainie, 2008). Similarly, from a political standpoint, blog readers and authors have been statistically reported to be more politically involved and engaged with the political process online.

Research conducted in 2006 by the Institute for Policy and Democracy (IPDI) found early evidence which indicated blog readers' online activities translated into real-world political influence (Graf, 2006). The study further reported that over 69 percent blog readers were the opinion leaders within their immediate circle of friends, family, and co-workers (Graf, 2006). The political Blogosphere has added a level of transparency to the process of reporting that has had a transformative effect on how Americans access and consume political news. Through careful fact-checking, scathing critiques, and bi-partisan dialog average citizens as well as professional journalists have produced another layer of influence as they become political watchdogs for the electorate.

Consider Twitter Inc., Twitter© is an online tool that allows users to send instant messages and to socially network via short messages, known as 'micro-political blogs'. Twitter, allows users to submit 140 character posts or "tweets" online and has become a powerful tool for campaign reporting and mobilizing (Wikipedia, 2008a). Users can create response Twitter messages, called 'tweets', through their Twitter pages, Instant Messages, Facebook accounts, emails or text messages from their mobile phones (Wikipedia, 2008a). How Twitter is being used for political ends is constantly evolving. In late October 2008, Twitter launched a project called the Twitter Vote Report project: a real-time reporting system for tracking problems at the polling centers (Clark, 2008). As a nonpartisan project, Twitter Vote Report also generated support from rising media partners: National Public Radio (NPR) and Public Broadcast System (PBS). Public broadcasters used the US election as an opportunity to experiment with many different kinds of social media, and NPR staffers have collaborated directly on Twitter Vote Report development (Clark, 2008). The Twitter Vote Report offered a convenient way to aggregate and efficiently organize polling data, so that it could be analyzed and widely distributed in real-time (Clark, 2008). Twitter has been proven to be amazingly adept at two things: politically engaging the average citizen and empowering its users to participate as citizen journalists. After broadcasting the highly successful live Twitters during the 2008 US presidential debate, Twitter co-founder Biz Stone said in a press release that "the new pace of democracy is real-time" (Kennedy, 2008).

It should be noted that Twitter is not a large and disorganized focus group. Twitter is a one-to-one and one-to many communications powerhouse available to anyone with a cell phone. It is a link to real-time constituent consciousness and it is marketed as a technology that directly taps into this collective consciousness. The Twitter Vote Report is a clear example of Chadwick's third theme regarding data aggregation and it functioned as another step in the evolution of online political participation.

Facebook Phenomenon

The Internet has emerged as an important forum for political participation through social networking and online video sites, such as Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube. Facebook has become a significant locus for political argumentation and organization. The Ron Paul 2008 campaign was the first presidential hopeful to utilize Facebook networking in their political campaign (Frazee, 2008). Despite the campaign's insufficient funding resources necessary for successful campaign, campaign coordinators found that Facebook aided in their ability to attract and organize younger voters (Frazee, 2008). Similarly, Howard Dean's 2004 presidential campaign utilized online "Meet ups" to promote their fifty state campaign strategy and which resulted in extraordinary monetary gains.

Consider the 2008 Pew report which found that nearly 10 percent of people under age 30 reported signing up as a "friend" of one of the candidates on their campaign website (Smith & Rainie, 2008). Senator Barack Obama became the most popular politician on Facebook when he registered over 800,000 people (Stirland, 2008). Subsequently, Obama's campaign support in the virtual world has led to over 30,000 events organized to support his candidacy (Stirland, 2008). Senator Obama exploited the organizing power of the web more effectively than any prior national candidate; effectively surmounted party favorite Hillary Clinton and become the first black president. With an extraordinary Internet-driven donor base of 1.5 million people, Obama has been the first Internet candidate to achieve mainstream success (Rosenberg, 2008).

From the very beginning, Senator Obama's online campaign strategy was to be able to stimulate electoral participation from a pool of unregistered voters and to further promote voter participation during the electoral season. Senator Obama's campaign experimented with a number of web apps on the Internet to accomplish this goal: Obama campaign cell phone ringtones, text message updates, e-mails from the campaign manager, networks of online friends, and by utilizing wikis (online collaborative software) to coordinate and engage potential voters. Obama's campaign organizers even created the VoteforChange.com website, a web application that registered users to vote and then precisely organized the polling data (Merz, 2008). Due to the large amount of disinformation online Senator Obama's campaign also found it necessary to run various counter-viral email campaigns to combat anonymous e-mail smears that questioned his ethnicity, religious affiliation and patriotism (Merz, 2008).

YouTube, Inc.

YouTube, Inc., Google's popular user-generated online video-sharing service, has transformed online politicking into a national phenomenon. YouTube has immense impact on US voters through political ads created by supporters but not affiliated nor approved by political campaigns. YouTube has become the world's network of records where people go to see breaking news and upload their own "I-reports"; it has emerged as an instrument of "checks and balances" for the American electorate.

For example, consider Video Your Vote. Video Your Vote was a joint project between PBS and YouTube that encouraged citizens across the US to document their own personal experiences at the voting booth by filming and then uploading the video onto YouTube. The effort was just one of many examples of citizen journalists utilizing Web 2.0 and 'crowdsourcing' tools to monitor the voting practices -- and problems -- from an on-the-ground perspective. 'Crowdsourcing' is when individuals gather via the Internet to create something and share knowledge and experiences (McKinnon, 2008).

The objective of the project for the groups that are monitoring US political campaigns was to help create a more transparent voting process (McKinnon, 2008). In addition to encouraging participants to use their own cameras to video their vote, PBS distributed hundreds of Flip cams which had been donated to YouTube's local affiliates, which then redistributed them to people on their way to the polling centers. This in effect created a vast network of citizen journalists that fed content directly to PBS for newsgathering footage. YouTube also launched a *Choice08* section featuring political clips of the presidential race from serious campaign messages to parodies of the candidates while at the same time, partnering with CNN to host the

presidential debates comprised of videoed and viewer-submitted questions (Kahn & Kellner, 2005). Websites and YouTube videos enable people to connect much faster to the political issues at stake and provide a virtual library of recorded videos literally placing politics at individuals' fingertips.

Internet vs. Campaign Finance Reform

The impact of online campaigning on political fund-raising has become increasingly significant and has allowed candidates to utilize funds to which they have not had access to prior to the Internet by successfully circumventing partisan campaign finance laws (Wikipedia, 2008c). Campaign finance reform is the common term for the political effort in the United States to change the involvement of money in politics, primarily in political campaigns. Prior to 2002 US presidential campaign season "soft money donations" was a monetary largesse for presidential candidates seeking to fund their campaigns outside of "hard money" donations that are regulated by the Federal Election Commission (FEC). "Soft money" are funds spent by organizations that are not contributed directly to candidate campaigns or political parties, and which do not "expressly advocate" the election or defeat of a candidate (Wikipedia, 2008c).

In 2002, Republicans successfully lobbied Congress to have a campaign finance reform bill enacted that would limit the amount of "soft money donations" a presidential candidate could accept. The bill, entitled the McCain-Feingold bill for campaign finance reform, was passed into legislation in 2002 (Wikipedia, 2008b). In past elections, Democrats were the primary beneficiaries of "soft money" donations and were expected to be the most affected by this legislation. For years, the Democrats had solicited large donations from corporations and the rich to build the party. Now the only way to raise money was to attract small donors, a task Democrats had never done well. Republicans in particular have relied heavily on "hard money" donations which are regulated by the Federal Election Commission (FEC) (Wikipedia, 2008b). The legislation eliminated all "soft money" donations to the national party committees, but it also doubled the contribution limit of "hard money," from $1,000 to $2,000 per election cycle (Wikipedia, 2008b).

When My.BarackObama.com launched at the start of the campaign, it established itself by utilizing a social networking model and combined it with a suite of fund-raising tools. This strategy accomplished two things: it lowered the barriers to entry by making their site as user-friendly as possible and it raised the expectation of what it meant to be a supporter (Green, 2008). The My.BarackObama.com site was scaled to such a degree that it resulted in the creation of an army of more than a million donors and fund-raisers. Through the funding of small donors Obama's fund-raising machine effectively transformed the contours of US politics. While his rivals continued to depend on large donations, Barack Obama gained an increasing amount of small donations, until they eventually surpassed the large donations altogether (Green, 2008).

In contrast to Senator Obama's campaign, Republican presidential nominee John McCain raised only $90.5 million during the same 2007 and 2008 period; and just over a third of his donations came from the $200-and-under crowd (Rosenberg, 2008). Another forty-two percent of it came through contributions at the maximum $2,000 level. For Obama, just under a quarter of his donations came from $2,000-level donations (Rosenberg, 2008). Obama's campaign spent significant resources on physical offices in battleground states. But those efforts often followed

the informal infrastructure that his supporters had built ahead of time through networking on My.BarackObama.com and by coordinating offline campaign activities for their candidate (Rosenberg, 2008).

Barack Obama's record fund-raising enabled him to out-spend Republican rival John McCain's campaign through traditional television ads in key battleground states, as well as develop the offline physical infrastructure needed to organize volunteers (Rosenberg, 2008). Most importantly however, the success of the Obamachine's fund-raising allowed his campaign to decline public financing monies and circumvent spending limits, making him the first major-party candidate since the US system of campaign finance was created to reject taxpayer's money for the presidential election (Center for Responsive Politics, 2009).

Conclusion

The Obamachine actualized the seven concepts described by Chadwick as being important for e-democracy. The Obamachine first and foremost established the internet as its political platform. Then through careful tracking and analysis of the "collective intelligence" of the electorate and the ways in which they utilized the internet the Obamachine was able to specifically tailor their campaign messages to precisely target potential voters. The Obamachine revolutionized the key elements of a modern US political campaign through the combination of multi-platforms of online communication with traditional campaign methods. His campaign was not concerned with any one particular hardware or software web app to deliver its campaign messages and often experimented with a variety of online platforms. The multiplatform success of Obama's campaign was evidenced by the number of innovations he initiated to engage potential voters—MyBarackObama.com, VoteforChange.com, YouTube, Wikipedia, emails, text messages—all of which were web apps that were previously untested for the purpose of political campaigning. Through this propagation of political content, the Obamachine provided rich online user experiences for their potential voters and stimulated electoral participation from a pool of unregistered voters. Lastly, the Obamachine's fund-raising strategies politically engaged small money donors (previously considered unimportant to a political campaign) and produced a money-making juggernaut which netted well-over 700 million US dollars (Center for Responsive Politics, 2009).

Senator Barack Obama's presidential campaign successfully demonstrated that the internet can enable Americans to have more creative involvement with the political process to the benefit of their overall political engagement. The results were an overwhelming victory for Obama as the new President of the United States.

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