**Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies**

**A Proposal to Create**

**Institute for Cyberspace Studies**

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**Introduction**

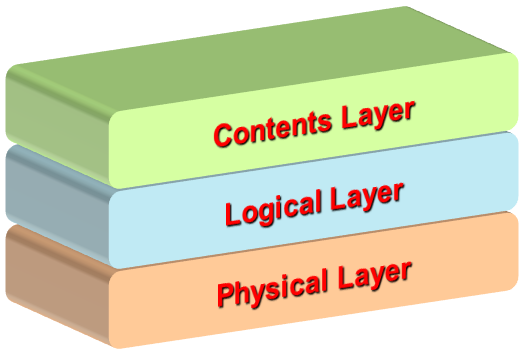
The rapid change in the global economy towards science and knowledge, along with the massive development which the information and communication technologies (ICT) sector has undergone, have resulted in creating a root change in the composition of modern communities and the fundamental elements that form them. Moreover, because of modern social communication networks, like the Facebook and the Twitter, communication and interaction between individuals as well as institutions became the basic element that build and control today’s life. Those technologies have, of course, provided developing countries with actual opportunities to cope with modern civilization and overcome the traditional phases which they would have undergone in order to develop their communities. As can be seen, although individuals in developing countries have been able to adopt latest technologies and used them to improve their own life, however governments in these countries are still lagging behind in coping with the individuals to better utilize the ICT in order to improve their daily life. Moreover, individuals living in the developing countries have recently managed to use the hidden power of ICT by revolutionizing against their governments in some countries and created political instabilities in other countries.

Because of the advancements in ICT which had cultural, social, political, and economical impacts on communities, new problems and conflicts have started to rise in different developing countries, which made them in a serious situations that affect their future existence as nations and stable communities. For instance, traditional terrorism which has been knows for ages to be within very limited boundaries because of the collaboration between the governments in different countries and the availability of appropriate tools to suppress it, has transferred since the last decade into a very dangerous phenomenon that threaten the security of the whole world, mainly because terrorist are depending on advanced technologies to plan and implement their attacks.

The purpose of this proposal is to present a strategic project to create an institute within BCSIES specialized in the research and study of the Cyberspace. The proposed center is expected to help in identifying key areas that can be investigated and studied in order to help overcoming some of the problems related to ICT and Cyberspace.

**Cyberspace Infrastructure in the Arab World**

During the past decades, some countries within the Arab World have put different efforts to improve its ICT infrastructure to suit their national development plans, especially in projects related to the eGovernment. However, those efforts remain insufficient when compared to those put in the developed countries.



**Fig. 1: General Structure of the Internet**

Most of the Arab countries have focused their national development strategies within the ICT sector on utilizing, even partially, on the third layer of the internet structure, which is the contents. This can be clearly seen in the number of web pages on the net related to Arab institutions. Moreover, recent statistics showed that most of the research activities carried out in the Arab World have concentrated on this same layer by using latest programs and packages to design state-of-the-art webpages, without any actual efforts to study and develop the first and second layers of the structure.

**Proposed Project**

If the time didn’t pass then it is for sure at its end for the Arab countries to think seriously to invest in ICT and Cyberspace as industries as strategic choice that is directly connected to the national security and the political stability of the countries. This of course can be achieved by laying national strategies to develop this dynamic sector, that start by performing capacity building projects in collaboration with international organizations to develop national expertise, and ending with projects related to manufacturing products that provide solutions to all issues related to the three layers of the structure. Specially those related to security of digital information.

Based on the above, this proposal can be considered as the first step towards enhancing the regional Cyberspace environment through the creation of the Institute for Cyberspace Studies within the BCSIES at the Kingdom of Bahrain. The overall objectives of the proposed institute are:

1. Prepare the national Cyberspace environment by supporting it with real projects in collaboration with governmental organizations,
2. Develop the digital community locally and regionally,
3. Contributing in reducing the digital gap in the Cyberspace, and
4. Collaborate with the local and regional private sector to develop the ICT and Cyberspace Industry.