

Digital media technology changes nature of war

September 21 2010

Dr. Sebastian Kaempf, from UQ's School of Political Science and International Studies, says he believes that digital new media technology has altered the nature of war.

According to Dr. Kaempf, the emergence of new digital media technology, such as the Internet, has fundamentally transformed the means through which contemporary [war](#) is being waged and war's visual representation.

"Contemporary war has a new frontline, one where war is no longer fought physically but virtually, where the actors involved on both sides have increasingly started to replace bombs and bullets with weapons in the form of bites and bandwidths," Dr. Kaempf said.

Dr. Kaempf's research investigates the changing landscape of war and the ethical implications of these changes. The research focuses on the "mediatisation" of the American "War on Terror", the first major conflict waged in today's digital new media age.

"The American 'War on Terror' saw an unprecedented diversification of media platforms, from traditional TV, print media, and radio to jihadist websites, blogs, YouTube videos and interactive social media networks," he said.

"These platforms have been used by the US military as well as Al-Qaeda, and the Taliban and Iraqi insurgents. In addition to that, powerful

new virtual actors have emerged, such as Wikileaks (an international organisation that publishes anonymous submissions and leaks of otherwise unavailable documents while preserving the anonymity of sources).

"So, what we're currently witnessing is the empowerment of individuals to become media producers who - through their global reach - have significantly challenged the previous monopoly of powerful states such as the US to control the media representation of their wars."

The research critically examines US media practices in Afghanistan and Iraq; the use of digital media by US adversaries in Iraq and Afghanistan; the difference in the coverage of these conflicts between CNN and Al Jazeera; and new forms of political resistance via digital new media platforms.

This research is currently conducted in two ways - firstly, and very conventionally, by reading and writing about these themes, and secondly, together with a Canadian film-maker and media studies expert, Professor Peter Mantello (Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University in Japan), Dr. Kaempf has started making a film documentary.

The researchers have interviewed various journalists who were embedded in Iraq and Afghanistan, policy makers in Washington, artists, bloggers, critical thinkers and academics.

"While this project is just at the beginning, it represents an effort to find new academic forms of reaching out to a wider public audience than remaining confined to journal articles which on average are read by three to four people," Dr. Kaempf said.

Provided by University of Queensland

Citation: Digital media technology changes nature of war (2010, September 21) retrieved 15 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-09-digital-media-technology-nature-war.html>

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