

Cyber war might never happen: researcher

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Cyber war, long considered by many experts within the defence establishment to be a significant threat, if not an ongoing one, may never take place according to Dr. Thomas Rid of King's College London.

In a paper published in *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Dr. Thomas Rid, from the Department of War Studies, argues that cyber [warfare](#) has never taken place, nor is it currently doing so and it is unlikely to take place in the future.

Dr. Rid said: "The threat intuitively makes sense: Almost everybody has an iPhone, an email address and a Facebook account. We feel vulnerable to cyber attack every day. Cyberwar seems the logical next step.

"Cyber warfare is of increasing concern to governments around the world, with many nations developing defensive – and reportedly offensive - capabilities."

Recent events, such as a highly sophisticated computer worm known as Stuxnet, which was reported to have damaged the Iranian nuclear enrichment program, have fuelled speculation that cyber warfare is imminent. There have also been alleged acts of cyber warfare originating from Russia aimed at Estonia and Georgia.

However, Dr. Rid states that to constitute cyber warfare an action must be a potentially lethal, instrumental and political act of force, conducted through the use of software. Yet no single cyber attack has ever been classed as such and no act alone has ever constituted an act of war.

Dr. Rid concludes: "Politically motivated cyber attacks are simply a more sophisticated version of activities that have always occurred within warfare: sabotage, espionage and subversion."

Dr. Rid specialises in cyber security and conflict, irregular conflict and counterterrorism. He is currently researching how armies use social media and is working on a project on the subject of cyber security.

More information: 'Cyber War Will Not Take Place' is published in *The Journal of Strategic Studies*. An advance copy of the paper can be viewed at [www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10 ... 01402390.2011.608939](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01402390.2011.608939)

Provided by King's College London

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