

DIGITAL IMAGING AND PHOTOGRAPHY

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Cyberwar and Peace

Communication technologies are not always the benign force or indeed a neutral medium that software companies would like us to believe. The word cyberwar describes the use of technology in conflicts and espionage. We have witnessed the use of technology in conflicts like the two Gulf Wars and in the Balkans. Government agencies have generally lost control of the development of such technologies and so the private sector has stepped into its role. Such loss of control is viewed as a serious threat to the security of the nation state, the financial centres and military institutions.

We may think of war as being physical and throughout history we see in battles the use of conventional weapons: swords, guns and bombs. The programme argues that the conventions of warfare had not really changed between the times of Julius Caesar and the Battle of Waterloo. Mechanization of the military revolutionised war in the 20th Century radically changed the nature of conflict, yet today, it is not just the nuclear deterrent or new missile weapons systems that protect us from attack, but also the computer and its protection software. The attack comes from a hacker whose aim is to disrupt communication and information systems. This may seem the stuff of science fiction and thrillers (one thinks of films like Hackers or The Net, both from 1995), but these attacks are a regular occurrence. During the late nineties the conflicts in Kosova and Bosnia, America's military industrial complex and many universities (MIT was one victim) were hacked by the Serb secret service and Serbian students.

Recently, the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton delivered a speech on how the internet can spread freedom around the world. It has been seen as a response to Google's withdrawal from China due to alleged cyber attacks on human rights activists. Before Clinton made her speech, Robert Amsterdam, a lawyer specialising in cases against repressive governments, and Tom Watson MP, discussed how the internet is used by rogue governments on the Today programme, Radio 4. Tom Watson raised the problem in House of Commons.

Robert Amsterdam agreed with the idea of the web being used to "promote freedom" and supports Google's position. He also proposes that "we" should monitor the ways in which oppressive governments use the web to stifle debate and free expression and also notes how Western companies and multi nationals are complicit in supplying regimes with technical support. Tom Watson noted that the "Internet is a neutral tool that can be used for good and bad". Watson suggests that democracies should attempt to restrict

China and other totalitarian regimes access to communication technologies. While Twitter and Face Book has been used in Iran as technologies of opposition and change, we have also seen repressive regimes use the Internet as a technology of control to monitor dissent.

Sources:

Davies, Simon *Big Brother: Britain's web of surveillance and the new technological order* London: Pan, 1997

Donk, Wim van de (ed.), foreword by Peter Dahlgren *Cyberprotest: new media, citizens and social movements*, London New York: Routledge, 2004

Lyon, David, *Surveillance society: monitoring everyday life* Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001

McCaughey, Martha & Ayers Michael D. (ed.) *Cyberactivism: online activism in theory and practice*, New York London: Routledge, 2003

Meikle, G *Future active: media activism and the internet* New York London: Routledge, 2002

Web resources:

Robert Amsterdam, a lawyer specialising in cases against repressive governments, and Tom Watson MP, a prominent blogger who has tabled an Early Day Motion on the Google-China issue, discuss how the internet is used by rogue governments. Today: Thursday 21st January 0835:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_8471000/8471658.stm

BBC News: "China Blocking Google"
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/2231101.stm>

"Google censors itself for China":
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/4645596.stm>

"Web inventor warns of 'dark' net" By Jonathan Fildes:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/5009250.stm>

"Berners-Lee on the read/write web":
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/4132752.stm>
Listen to "Web inventor's future fears": 'The British developer of the world wide web says he is worried about the way it could be used to spread "misinformation".' Professor Sir Tim Berners-Lee spoke to Pallab Ghosh on BBC Radio 4's Today programme. 2 Nov 2006

"Defending online freedom" Guardian Online:
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/libertycentral/2010/jan/22/hi/>

lary-clinton-online-freedom#start-of-comments

Wired Online: "China Restores Google.com":
www.wired.com/news/politics/0,71121-0.html

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