

Reimagining the field of Media, War and Conflict in the age of information disorder

ICA pre-conference and 15 Year Anniversary celebration for *Media, War & Conflict*, 25 May 2023

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Presented in order of panels



JOURNALISTIC VALUES, FRAMES AND NARRATIVES DURING THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

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Journalistic values, frames and narratives during the Russia-Ukraine war

8am-9.30am: Panel 1

Soumin Seo & Sehee Keum (Sogang University), Enduring values in Russophone media: Analysis of coverage at Novaya Gazeta, Meduza, and IStories

Independent journalism in Russia has seen its spaces shrink in recent years, with mounting business and legal pressures alongside direct threats and attacks on media under the Putin regime. The Russian protest movement (2011-2013) and the Ukrainian war that began in 2014 further aggravated the precarity of the independent media. Increasingly, state propaganda apparatus portray the outlets as traitors to the motherland (Slavtcheva-Petkova, 2019). The resulting vacuum in independent journalism has been filled by an emerging coalition of alternative Russophone media (Voronova, Voronova & Yagodim, 2019). This research analyzes war coverage of three prominent outlets: Novaya Gazeta, Meduza, and IStories, in November 2022. The outlets use different linguistic devices and narrative strategies according to the class orientations of the key audience, with Novaya leaning more elitist, IStories more working class, and Meduza more cosmopolitan. However, the moral power of regular citizens emerges as a strong enduring value (Gans, 1979) in all three.

Journalistic values are enduring because the basic considerations underlining news judgement remain unchanged over time (Chang et al., 2012). The very notion of the moral power of regular citizens in Russian media can be traced back to Soviet-era journalism. Despite the significant differences in ideology, Soviet journalists saw their mission in the search for truth and justice (Roudakova, 2017), seeking to tell the stories of honest and conscientious citizens. This model,

however, struggled to reshape itself from a platform for political players into a genuine voice of citizens in the post-Soviet years (Oates, 2013). With our analysis of these three outlets, we argue that this transition is belatedly but finally taking place now with journalism that has reconnected with values such as the moral strength of citizens, using them as an anchor in their journalistic truth-telling.

Babak Bahador (George Washington University) & Ben O'Loughlin (Royal Holloway London), *Narrating peace in Ukraine-Russia: Peace journalism in international news reporting*

This paper seeks to understand how peace was framed during the first year of the Russia-Ukraine war by conducting news media content analysis regarding peace by the leading news sources of the combatant countries (Russia and Ukraine), Western countries that supported Ukraine (US, UK, France, Germany, and New Zealand) and a number of countries that took a more neutral position towards the war (India, South African and Malaysia). We analyse: how the framing of peace changed over the first year of the war, what factors and events contributed to these changes, and potential differences in these changes in each country. We see how journalists and the sources they cite situate these framings of peace with broader narratives about the international system, national identities, and specific issues. Finally, the paper examines the war's framing from a peace journalism angle, which seeks to reframe traditional war reporting by focusing on non-violence (vs violence), the voice of ordinary people (vs elites), truth (vs propaganda) and solutions (vs victory framing). It considers whether peace journalism can contribute towards finding common ground between the combatants and different actors observing the war or offer a different narrative altogether that could serve as common ground for resolving the conflict. We consider some of the potential pitfalls and limitations of peace journalism in covering such a highly contentious conflict marked by international aggression, war crimes, and disinformation.

Antal Wozniak (University of Liverpool) & Zixiu Liu (University of Nottingham Ningbo China), *Media coverage of the Ukraine war in democratic BRICS countries*

News coverage about the conflict in Ukraine since 2014 has been heavily influenced by countries' geopolitical interests and political-historic contexts (Boyd-Barret, 2017; Fengler et al., 2020; Norström, 2019; Nygren et al., 2018; Ojala & Pantti, 2017; Roman et al., 2017, Springer et al., 2022); a finding in line with studies about other instances of war coverage (e.g., Carruthers, 2011; Knightley, 2002; Robinson et al., 2010). All these studies, however, focus on media coverage from the Global North (Russia, Ukraine, Europe, USA).

We attempt to close this research gap by analysing mainstream news coverage in democratic countries of the Global South with close economic and/or military-strategic ties with Russia. We analyse media outlets from the three democratic members of the BRICS intergovernmental organisation: *Folha de Sao Paulo* and *O Globo* from Brazil; *The Telegraph* and *The Times of India* from India; and *Daily Sun* and *The Star* from South Africa.

We compare communications by each country's political elites (government & members of parliament) with news coverage in leading newspapers (print & online). We focus on key events

during the war: the invasion of Ukraine by Russia on 24/02/2022, the opening of the South-eastern front by the Russian military on 08/04/2022, and the start of Ukrainian counteroffensives on 06/09/2022.

Our completed analysis of political and media framing in India during February/March 2022 reveals a very strong domestication of the issue in the press. But it also shows that the reluctance by the Indian government to label the conflict a “war” or an “invasion” was not mirrored by Indian journalists. Our study contributes to our understanding of how news media beyond the Western (and Eastern European) world partake in the public sense-making of a war with far-reaching geopolitical and economic ramifications.

Sarah Oates (Maryland University), *Stranger Than Fiction: Russian Narratives to Justify Invading Ukraine*

The study of strategic narratives (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle) shows that states craft enduring, long-term accounts of how the world order should favor their national ambitions. While long-term Russian strategic narratives that focus on the West’s existential threat to the Motherland could provide justification for the invasion of Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin also chose to deploy new narratives that were more rooted in fantasy than history. In particular, Putin claimed that Ukraine was in under the sway of “neo-Nazis” and that the Russians and Ukrainians were one people. While it is difficult to assess how effective these newer narratives have been in Russia, they have found little traction globally. The use of fantastical narratives begs several questions about disinformation and war. Why did Putin choose to deploy these fantastical narratives? Does the disregard for reality signal a new epoch in Russian information warfare or even a general trend toward imaginary justifications for war?

As Putin articulated these ideas in speeches prior to the invasion, could analysts have taken notice of this shift and predicted that an irrational invasion would follow irrational public statements about Ukraine? If so, should we watch for this type of signaling in the future? While truth is often the first ‘casualty of war,’ there have been norms even within the ‘fog of war’ about the types of narratives that are spread. When Putin and Russia chose to break these norms and launch a genocidal attack on a peaceful neighboring state, should we have realized from the senseless messaging that senseless acts would follow? Will other countries follow in Russia’s fantastical footsteps – either to carry out irrational messaging or irrational invasions?

Göran Bolin & Per Ståhlberg (Södertörn University) *The Branded War: Understanding the Ukrainian Informational Order in the Face of Russian Aggression*

The Ukrainian informational strategies have received a lot of attention in the Western world since the full-scale invasion by Russia in February 2022. Memes, video clips, frontline reports, and governmental information are mixed, and the audience address varies between traditional fact-based reporting, over irony, mocking and internet ‘trolling’. In this paper we will, based on our research from the pre-Euromaidan times of 2013 and onwards, explain the specific constellation of agents involved, and how these were formed during the Euromaidan revolution 2013/2014 as an informal alliance between civil society organisations, commercial business and governmental

institutions. Rather than an organised network, it is in the Ukrainian case a number of loosely coupled nodes that are adaptive enough to become activated at certain moments in time. The mixture of engaged agents cooperating in semi-regulated forms, we argue, is also setting its mark of the more concerted efforts after February 2022, and the textual expressions they take. What can be seen in Ukraine after February 2022 is, for example, 'the first use of brand communication as part of a nation's war effort' Nadia Kaneva (2022). Indeed, the combination of video clips and smart web design speaks the persuasive language of advertising and PR – sometimes with a sombre tone to it, and sometimes with irony, schadenfreude, trolling, or other communicative styles and forms characteristic of social media communication.

In the paper we will explain the interrelations between the various Ukrainian agents and give examples of the various types of textual forms that they produce.



CONTESTING GLOBAL MEDIA PRACTICES IN CONSTRUCTING NARRATIVES AND IMAGES OF CONFLICT

MICHAEL GRIFFIN

War and Mythmaking: the Symbolic Imperative and Indexical Ideal

SAUMAVA MITRA LINDSAY PALMER & SOOMIN SEO

Decolonizing conflict journalism: Why (and how) empirical research matters

KENZIE BURCHELL

Towards a Digital Forensics of War Reporting

RICHARD STUPART & LILIE CHOULIARAKI

Humanitarian Images as Moral Objects

Contesting global media practices in constructing narratives and images of conflict

10am-11.30am: Panel 2

Michael Griffin (Macalester College), *War and Mythmaking: the Symbolic Imperative and Indexical Ideal*

Various forms of visual representation—paintings, prints, statuary, tapestries, architecture, coins, and other reliefs—have been used to lend legitimacy and authority to the conduct of war for millennia, but the incorporation of photographic imagery into mass media coverage in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century produced a new marriage of ostensibly direct technological recording and modern techniques of propaganda and media control. By the 1930s coverage of the Spanish Civil War in the newly emerged picture press introduced new standards and expectations for frontline visual coverage, and during the Second World War photojournalism, inextricably linked to the training and mobilization of thousands of military photographers and motion picture cameramen, became an institutionally entrenched part of wartime press coverage. In the 20th century, in virtually every part of the world, theaters of violent conflict became proving grounds for photojournalism, and war photographers were increasingly celebrated as the daring and heroic figures of a particular scopic regime; a regime which assumed the capacity of modern media technology to bring authentic and reliable views of distant events into the homes of media

consumers. Cameras could do the work, if only daring and intuitively observant people carried them into the midst of conflict and tripped the shutters at the right time.

The intention of this paper is to revisit these discussions in light of what we have learned about media representations of the war in Ukraine, and how those compare with previous analyses of visual representations of conflicts from Vietnam to Iraq. How have new media technologies, new platforms and increasingly digital delivery systems influenced visual reporting on the war in Ukraine? Have shifts in institutionalized news practices, the role of citizen witnessing, and delivery of and access to material via the web altered the emphases of visual representation in reporting on the war?

Kenzie Burchell (University of Toronto), *Towards a Digital Forensics of War Reporting*

How do we make responsible reporting practices visible when militarized media interventions change the very journalistic landscape in the course of a conflict? This unique research model – responsive to changing landscapes of war reporting practices and militarized media interventions – has mapped the hegemony of Anglo- American global news, the press’ weak autonomy from government (Bourdieu 1995, Zelizer 2017, Burchell 2022), the temporal and geographic realities of strategic narratives (Miskimmon et al, 2013) and fault lines of global media ecologies. The outcome: a methodological framework to engage the participatory role newsmakers in marshalling translocal audiences towards the designs of hybrid empires (Hutchings et al 2014, Hepp 2015, Roselle 2017, Tworek 2019). Recently completed mapping and data visualizations of this comparative study of war reporting by international agencies provide inferences from agency meta-data among diverse case types without forfeiting the benefits of slow, close, critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995) of select full text coverage: a marriage of practice-based sociology and digital humanities through constant comparative grounded theory and iterative design of rapid response research. This retrospective analysis of the underreported and differential coverage of international agencies (AFP, AP, Reuters, ITAR-TASS, RIA NOVOSTI) compares the newsworthy with the largely undocumented crises of the Syrian War: from journalist executions to Covid-19 outbreaks, from the global media events (Couldry and Hepp 2010) of foreign interventions to the denials and delayed confirmation of chemical weapons attacks.

Yet this forensics of war reporting necessitates a balance beyond datasets and qualitative coding schemes to ensure a critical and ethical forum where witnessing and spectatorship are considered beyond the event-orientation of news conventions. A public, participatory literacy must give voice and visibility to the lived temporalities of war precluded from the newscycle (Burchell and Fielding, 2023) alongside pedagogies of forensic and documentary media skills attuned to this new reality of reporting (Smith and Burchell 2022). Representative of how the everyday technology and permacrisis are together reordering geopolitical worldviews, the breadth of this research examines how the news media facilitates global, live, contested, hypermediated, heterarchic and perpetually imminent horizons of catastrophe, premediated to permit the reordering of worldviews through a strategic field of myopia and uncertainty.

Richard Stupart (University of Liverpool) & Lilie Chouliaraki (LSE), *Humanitarian images as moral objects*

What kind of an object is an image testifying to the suffering of another and what are the moral limits of its exchange? This chapter draws on controversies arising from the circulation of humanitarian imagery in 'commercial' digital contexts to propose an account of the humanitarian, witnessing text as a kind of 'moral object', whose rules of circulation may be circumscribed by expectations around its practical moral purpose. In particular, we consider the public outcry arising from images taken by photographers working for Médecins sans frontières being sold as commercial stock art and ask what this might tell us theoretically about the moral limits of markets for humanitarian media. We draw on Michael Sandel's argument for moral limits to market activity and Ariella Azoulay's account of humanitarian photography's social contract to comment on the production of the 'humanitarian' image and the tensions present in its movement from the context of its creation to more ethically ambivalent commercial contexts, such as the stock art site and the art gallery.

Saumava Mitra (Dublin City University), Lindsay Palmer (UW-Madison) & Soomin Seo (Sogang University), *Decolonizing conflict journalism: Why (and how) empirical research matters*

There is a discussion underway within journalism studies where earlier interventions on power dynamics of academic knowledge production (Park & Curran, 2000; Wasserman & de Beer, 2008) are being revisited by scholars from a Global South perspective (e.g. Mutsvairo et al., 2021). A recent critical intervention in this regard has been in research on fixers - locally based media workers working within international journalism - by Kotišová and Deuze (2022). Among other interventions, the authors have claimed that existing studies have tended to emphasize the otherness of fixers to reproduce the West and East as static entities and downplayed the importance of the hybrid agentic potential of these individuals (p. 1161-4).

We agree that re-evaluating this body of research within the larger conversation on de-colonizing journalism studies needs diverse, critical inputs but we argue that existing research on conflict journalism can offer significant perspectives on de-colonizing journalism. For example, previous studies have discussed how local and foreign influences on locally-based journalists and fixers create their hybrid professional role perception as journalists and cultural interlocutors (Palmer, 2019; Mitra, 2020). Additionally, previous research has explored fixers' resourcefulness and agency in their work, rather than casting them as victims in every context (Murrell, 2019; Palmer, 2019; Blacksin, 2021).

Crucially, much of the aforementioned research is empirical in nature. This paper therefore argues that a priori theoretical stances is not the only way of adopting a Global South perspective in the study of locally-based media workers producing international journalism. Instead, we must expand the evidence base with more research from contexts outside Europe and North America, as well as include diverse forms of cross-cultural journalistic labor such as those undertaken in forced displacement conditions (Al-Ghazzi, 2020; Arafat, 2021) to test, and if needed recast, our theoretical premises.



RUSSIA'S WAR ON UKRAINE VIA SOCIAL MEDIA PARTICIPATION

OLGA BOICHAK & KATERYNA KASIANENKO

A War by Other Memes: the North Atlantic Fellas Organisation

FATIMA AZIZ & NOÉMIE OXLEY

Engaging with the war in Ukraine on TikTok. Studying imaginaries of contemporary conflicts

ØYVIND KALNES AND NINA MØLLERSTUEN BJØRGE

Young Ukrainian Women Conducting #ParticipativeWar on TikTok

MARLOES GEBOERS

Propaganda Videos and Counter-mobilization of Sound on WarTok

LINDSAY PALMER

"Instagramming" Press Freedom: Visual Discourses on Journalists' Safety in the 2022 Russia-Ukraine War

Russia's war on Ukraine via social media participation

12.30-2pm: Panel 3

Olga Boichak (University of Sydney) & Kateryna Kasianenko (QUT), *A War by Other Memes: the North Atlantic Fellas Organisation*

Memes, defined as “operational units of cultural transmission” (Wang & Wang, 2015), may be used to propagate ideas, beliefs, and identities through remixing, redistributing, and recontextualising them in multimodal forms. Yet, in media and communication scholarship, memes have been explored predominantly in their capacity to spread disinformation and propaganda (e.g., Donovan, Dreyfuss, and Friedberg, 2022, Singer & Brooking, 2018). This paper investigates the North Atlantic Fellas Organisation (#NAFO) – a vernacular online community engaged in debunking Russian propaganda about the war in Ukraine – to understand the potential for the use of playful memetic forms in combating disinformation.

#NAFO is a self-mobilised online community whose users are immediately recognizable for their Shiba Inu (‘fella’) avatars dressed up in human clothing and bearing various identity attributes. Fellas come from many countries and represent various demographics. #NAFO started out as a Twitter phenomenon following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and has up to 10,000 active #NAFO members, with 1.8k posts on Facebook and approximately 3.5k users on Discord and 5.7k on Reddit.

This presentation draws on a combination of ethnographic and computational methods, triangulating insights from 20 semi-structured interviews with large-scale network analysis of Twitter data. We ask: (1) What are the main drivers of the users’ involvement in #NAFO?, and (2) What are the main strategies used by #NAFO in refuting disinformation? We find that the medium is often the message: memes serve both as a means of user recruitment, as well as a weapon against harmful and misleading narratives about the war disseminated by powerful actors. Our research speaks to memes being a playful, yet increasingly powerful vernacular genre which can mobilise organic online communities in battles for epistemic authority.

Fatima Aziz & Noémie Oxley (American University of Paris), *Engaging with the war in Ukraine on TikTok. Studying imaginaries of contemporary conflicts*

Taking the invasion of Ukraine as a case study, this paper studies the impact of TikTok on the visual culture of contemporary warfare. Focusing on the invasion of Ukraine, it explores the reception of videos by TikTok users by questioning their experience of viewing war on an application designed initially for entertainment (Abiding, 2020). We apply a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach to social media phenomena, at the intersection between image theory, digital media studies and ethnographic research. Our study combines a textual analysis of videos with interviews of TikTok users (undergraduate and graduate international global communications students aged 19-26), and a theorization of the social media platform as a “technocultural actor” (Langlois, 2013).

TikTok offers a heterogeneous constellation of images of war, available at a global scale and catered to individual users, depending on its algorithm: music videos taken from civilians, military large-scale productions, raw accounts of civilians' and soldiers' experiences, virtual simulators excerpts or traditional news media reports. We examine how the multiplicity and diversity of these videos – endlessly streamed and shared through TikTok's specific design and network paradigm – shape and saturate imaginaries and the collective memory of war.

In this sense we do not focus on the way in which actors use social media platforms as battlefields of contemporary political and military struggle (Anden-Papadopoulos, 2014; Oxley, 2017; Ford, 2022). Rather, through our interviews we explore the ways publics engage or disengage with war videos on TikTok, stumble across or actively search for them, negotiate with its algorithm, and how viewing, discussion, and sharing contribute to the shaping of knowledge on the war in Ukraine. We study whether and how the reception of these images might give users political agency and the desire for change, while questioning the "effective radicality" (Watson, 2019) of these productions, given the complex and limiting nature of TikTok's content presentation, software governance and infrastructure design.

Øyvind Kalnes & Nina Møllerstuen Bjørge (Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences), *Young Ukrainian Women Conducting #ParticipativeWar on TikTok*

The media are a battleground for winning attention, sympathy and support in war. This study discusses the use and significance of digital media - specifically TikTok - during the war that began with the Russian attack on Ukraine in late February 2022. TikTok has been the fastest-growing social media channel and known for its young user base. Although associated with lifestyle and light entertainment, it has also become an important arena in the war.

Videos and images on the platform provide insights into the daily life and suffering of Ukrainians. Young people use TikTok to get information about the conflict, but also to comment on it or testify about their own experiences. When users act as commentators or witnesses taking a stand in the conflict, "participative war" occurs (Merrin, 2018). They reimagine how young citizens abroad encounter the experiences of the war in Ukraine. Naturally, disinformation and fake news also become part of this process.

The paper discusses how both political logic and media logic affect the access to and effect of TikTok as an arena. Political logic refers to how political actors - such as belligerent states and Big Tech - set the conditions for who is allowed into the debate, and the content they present. Media logic refers to how participants in the media channel understand and adapt to the distinctive expectations and affordances of the platform.

To investigate in depth how TikTok's particular media logic has been applied, we provide a case study of five young Ukrainian women who have captured the attention and sympathy of broad international audiences via TikTok. How have they succeeded as witnesses, commentators and digital participants in the war? How are their narratives about the war and to what degree do they fit with the strategic narrative of the Ukrainian authorities?

Marloes Geboers (University of Amsterdam), *Propaganda Videos and Counter-mobilization of Sound on WarTok*

The affordances of social platforms are increasingly attuned to users viewing, creating, and disseminating content (Jenkins, 2015). Simultaneously, they allow users to partake in signaling in-group belonging. For example, studies have shown how users use music challenges on TikTok to signal their alignment and belonging to a particular movement or trend (Vizcaíno-Verdú & Abidin, 2022). However, this identity signaling has also become very common in participatory war propaganda practices (Boichak & Hoskins, 2022).

This article investigates how the performance of the ‘Z’ symbol, the visual ‘vehicle’ of symbolic power since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, materializes through identity performances on TikTok. This mark was quickly used in propaganda slogans online: “Za ceases wars” or “Za peace.” ‘Z tags’ are used to signal alignment with Russian propaganda, but they also co-occur with other layers of expression that are afforded by so-called ‘stickers’ (text-in-video), particular sounds or speech patterns, songs, and filters such as ‘green screen’ and ‘disco’. We developed methods that consider the communicative architecture of TikTok and that allow for investigating the relations between speech, songs, sound, filters, hashtags, and stickers. Using speech-to-text recognition, we visualize spoken discourses that create ‘templates’ for users to build on, replicate or (tactically) subvert discourses.

Our preliminary findings show ‘post-socialist nostalgia’ feeding into contemporary Russian propaganda. For example, the songs *Katusha* and *That Spring* tie together memetic streams of videos that tap into similar templates—or easily shareable master plots. We also identify instances of tactical activities where pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian users engage in the hijacking of target audiences via tactical uses of tags but also through deviant uses of emojis and sticker texts for propaganda purposes. As these authenticating narratives (Reddi et al., 2021) establish particular populist cultures, they also determine the normative boundaries that shape the mutual perception of both parties in conflict.

Lindsay Palmer (University of Wisconsin-Madison), *“Instagramming” Press Freedom: Visual Discourses on Journalists’ Safety in the 2022 Russia-Ukraine War*

When war and media scholars cite the work of press freedom groups like the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) or Reporters sans Frontières (RSF), they often simply quote these organizations’ data on journalists killed in the field (see, for instance, Cottle, Sambrook, and Mosdell 2016; Palmer 2018; Høiby and Ottosen 2019; Tejedor 2020). Very few communication scholars have critically analyzed the discursive strategies that these groups use to define what press freedom should look like, nor have they asked whether these organizations privilege any particular socio-political stance on the conflicts in which journalists are dying. These are crucial questions for war and media scholars to ask if we hope to avoid the ethnocentrism that plagues communication studies more broadly (Szpunar 2012; Chakravarty 2018; Kumar and Parameswaran 2018).

Though the New York-based CPJ and the Paris-based RSF have historically relied on text-heavy letters and news articles to construct distinctly Western discourses on press freedom (Palmer, forthcoming, 2024), these groups now also spread their messages visually—especially on image-oriented social media sites like Instagram. In a digital media environment that privileges the visual (Stöckl, Caple, and Pflaeging 2020), albeit in different ways across disparate contexts (Aiello and

Parry 2019), it is vital to determine whether these organizations' visual discourses on press freedom are also ethnocentric.

This paper therefore draws upon a qualitative visual discourse analysis of the CPJ and RSF's Instagram posts about the recent conflict in Ukraine. I will analyze 51 posts by RSF and 27 posts by the CPJ—each shared to Instagram between February and December of 2022—in hopes of answering the following research questions:

1. In what ways (if any) do these organizations visually communicate their own political stances on the current war in Ukraine?
2. How do these organizations define press freedom in their Instagram posts, and do these definitions privilege the experiences of journalists from certain geopolitical backgrounds over others?



SPECTRES OF TERROR, CONFLICT AND FUTURE DYSTOPIAS

ANDREA MILLER

On Cops, Computers, and Liberal Anxiety: Mediating Terror after January 6

PIOTR SZPUNAR

The archival time of terrorism

TANNER MIRRELES

"Dystopian Futurism": Militainment for Imagining Future War

BEVERLEY SOUTHCOTT

Conundrums in Aftermath Digital Photography

Spectres of terror, conflict and future dystopias

2.30-3.30pm: Panel 4

Andrea Miller (Penn State University), *On Cops, Computers, and Liberal Anxiety: Mediating Terror after January 6*

Through documentary footage, interviews, and other forms of visual media, the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol has framed much of its public hearings around the violence committed against US Capitol Police officers by January 6 rioters. In this rendering of January 6, illiberal violence enacted against the Capitol Police is tantamount to illiberal violence enacted against liberal democracy itself, a world-making order in which "police is civilization and civilization is police" (Wall 2020, 322). However, while the Select Committee has relied on cinematic spectacle and the evidentiary power of documentary media to assert the Capitol Police as metonym for liberal order (Kaplan 2017; Fallon 2019), US government agencies and cybersecurity experts have quietly and less spectacularly charted the extensive threats posed to police power through digital infrastructures and technologies on January 6. Whether the theft of former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's laptop or the possibility that rioters accessed staffers' log-in credentials, digital devices, networks, and data emerge from January 6 as uniquely vulnerable political objects and actors. In this presentation, I consider how digital infrastructures and technologies mediate and are themselves mediated by contemporary sensibilities of *terror* in the

wake of the January 6 riots. If the Select Committee proposes a metonymic relationship between police power and liberal democracy through the figure of the Capitol Police officer, this presentation draws from feminist studies of empire, militarism, and digital media to interrogate that logic as it extends into the realm of digital objects, infrastructures, and data. Specifically, I will inquire about how the racialized legacies of the US war on terror and its many specters of *illiberal threat* inform the imagined besiegement of *liberal technologies*—namely, the cop and the computer?

Piotr Szpunar (University at Albany, SUNY), *The archival time of terrorism*

Memory is integral to the phenomenon of terrorism. Citizens are reminded to “never forget.” Legacy media outlets, rethinking the ethics of reportage, have in recent years shifted their focus to commemorating victims rather than an assailant. Lone wolves pledge allegiance to a cause at the scene of the crime to be memorialized in online forums and propaganda. This paper examines a more fundamental dimension of this relationship: the determination of whether an act of violence is or is not an act of terrorism hinges on its characterization as an incidence or a mere incident, respectively. The former suggests a lineage, a repetition, and a promise of more. However much this determination depends on racialized notions of terrorism and their attendant premediation (Grusin, 2010), the media ecology in which this occurs has shifted greatly in the last decade. If, as Ford and Hoskins (2022) indicate, the mnemonic battles over the commemoration of violence now coincide with the immediate unfolding of the event—a shift from archival space to archival time *pace* Wolfgang Ernst (2017)—what are the epistemological repercussions of this shift for the category of terrorism? As memory shifts from the collective to the connective (Hoskins, 2011) and we, accompanied by a glut of archival data, are increasingly prompted and encouraged to make connections, how are we to distinguish between incidence and incident? What security formations and expansions does the inability to do so with any confidence usher in? I argue that this mnemonic shift is part of a reordering of political violence that can be made sense of by forefronting its phatic function (Szpunar, 2020). Rather, than serving to secure material gains directly, violence serves to maintain and deepen antipathies and allegiances through the complex temporalities (Chun, 2008; Stielger, 1998) of algorithmic circulation.

Beverley Southcott (independent), *Conundrums in Aftermath Digital Photography*

This paper analyses alternative directions in Aftermath Conflict Photography on the problems and concerns of realistic and non-realistic digital photography.

It discusses different spatialities of digital photography created on devices such as the iPhone for easy distribution that may cause less vetting and control; however, this approach can open up newer vistas for discussion. I am particularly interested in identifying the after traces of conflict in photography that offer opportunities for regrowth and healing by creating ethical and empathetic visual references as part of the photographic design.

These discussions arise from two recent photographic series. Both series occurred by manually glitching the photograph of a blank LED screen. These pixelated glitched photographs with subtle visual ruptures serve as critical spatial counterpoints for considering the aftermath that lingers in abstract sensory spaces.

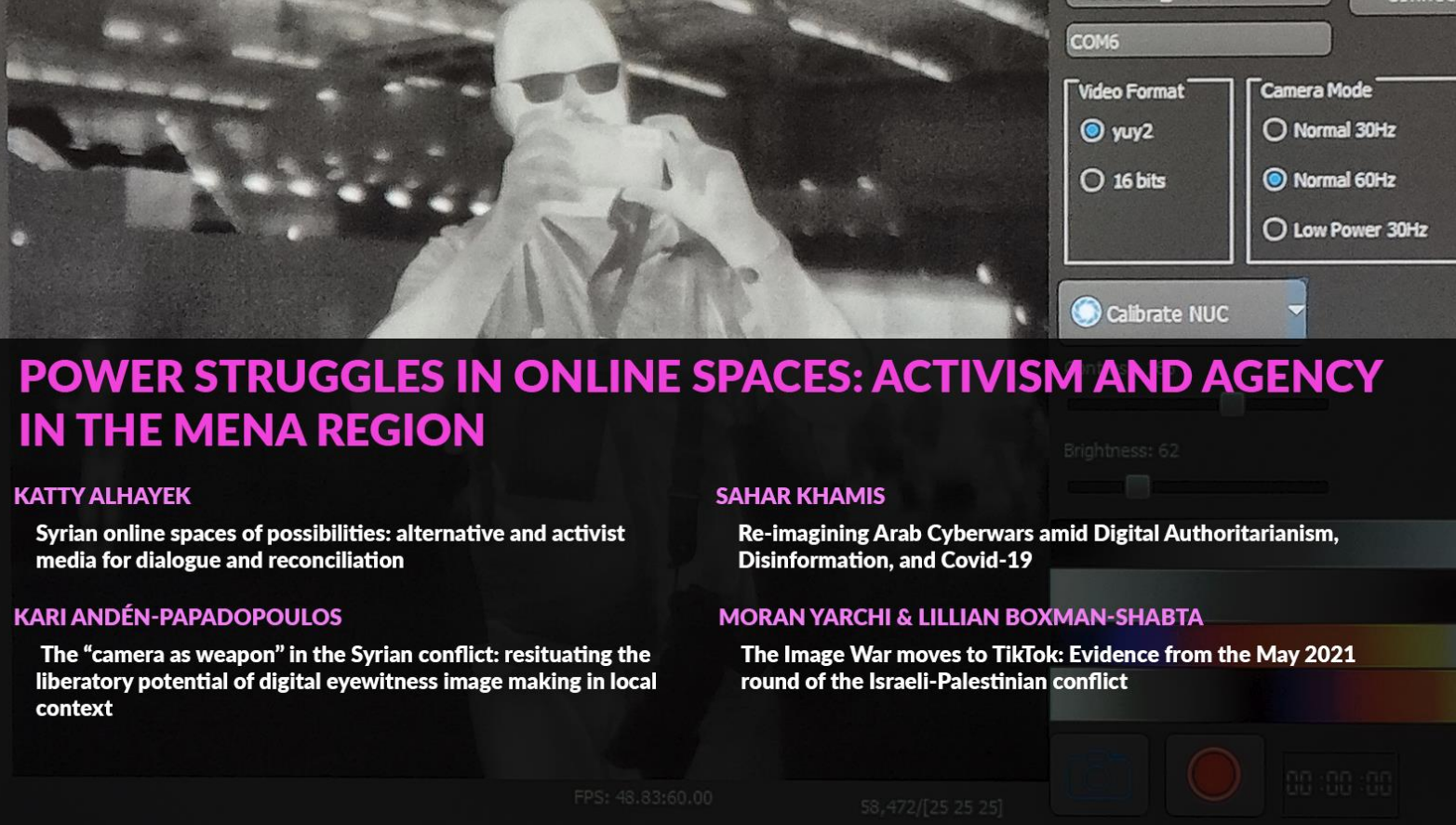
Starting with the *Conundrum – Place [in] Aftermath Photography* and concluding on the work in progress series: *Re[w]riting Aftermath Decision Points*.

The *Conundrum - Place[in] Aftermath Photography*, digital photographic series, reference ethical decision points for conciliatory and peaceful pathways within the plethora of conflict and aftermath photography. The mirrored ambiguous symbols serve as a halts or endpoints for considering whether to proceed with conflict or resolution. These mirrored spaces may allude to war-shaped characters or then again as symbols of reflection and peace.

The *Re[w]riting Aftermath Decision Points* series includes semi-obscured text that questions righteous narratives on existing photography to allow alternative thoughts for discussion on newer ethical pathways. In addition, these works describe other visual spaces and clues that reference alternative visions in aftermath conflict photography. It is not so much the type of broadcast photography; it is the intentions and motivations of the corporations that authorise the broadcasting of militarised conflict and aftermath imagery.

Tanner Mirrlees (Ontario Tech University), *“Dystopian Futurism”: Militainment for Imagining Future War*

From the the post-WWII era to our time, numerous futurists have helped militaries forecast and scenario plan for future wars. Today, the US Department of Defense (DoD) is a key source of “dystopian futurism”, or, future war doctrines, blueprints, and templates that are “extremely pessimistic” and “spectacularly bleak” (Carr 2010, 16, 19). This presentation examines the role that “militainment” (or, military-themed entertainment that is made by media corporations with assistance from military publicity offices) plays in the DoD’s imagination and eventual waging of future wars. After contextualizing the US’s military-corporate futurism industry, identifying the characteristics of the DoD’s genre of dystopian futurism, and foregrounding the DoD’s new partnership with science fiction (sci-fi) writer, the presentation identifies and illustrates eight salient ways that the DoD uses militainment to sustain a dystopian future warfare imaginary. It I argue that militainment helps the DoD: 1) imagine future threats to national security; 2) imagine future enemies; 3) imagine how future warfare will be fought; 4) imagine futuristic weapons systems and R&D projects; 5) imagine future soldier identities; 6) enlist personnel for future warfare; 7) train the imagination of personnel in preparation for future warfare; and, 8) move the civilian imagination toward future warfare. For the foreseeable future, the likely outcome of the US military-entertainment complex’s militainment will be more conflict and war, both real and imagined. Yet, the globalization of American militainment may inspire or agitate other countries to make anti-American militainment. Having recognized the potency of the US military-entertainment complex to get non-American publics to identify with the US’s dystopian future warfare imaginary, the military and media elites of non-US countries such as China and Russia may build up or reinforce their existing military-entertainment complexes and deploy homegrown militainment against the US’s. As a consequence of the countries once targeted by American militainment becoming national militainment powers in their own right, the prospect of more inter-state conflict and war will increase and the chance for world peace will diminish.



POWER STRUGGLES IN ONLINE SPACES: ACTIVISM AND AGENCY IN THE MENA REGION

KATTY ALHAYEK

Syrian online spaces of possibilities: alternative and activist media for dialogue and reconciliation

KARI ANDÉN-PAPADOPOULOS

The “camera as weapon” in the Syrian conflict: resituating the liberatory potential of digital eyewitness image making in local context

SAHAR KHAMIS

Re-imagining Arab Cyberwars amid Digital Authoritarianism, Disinformation, and Covid-19

MORAN YARCHI & LILLIAN BOXMAN-SHABTA

The Image War moves to TikTok: Evidence from the May 2021 round of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Power struggles in online spaces: Activism and agency in the MENA region

3.45-4.45pm: Panel 5

Katty Alhayek (Toronto Metropolitan University), Syrian online spaces of possibilities: alternative and activist media for dialogue and reconciliation

In this paper, I draw on the interdisciplinary work of Bourdieu (1991), Ortner (2006), and Gibson-Graham (2006), to analyze and theorize successful Syrian small-scale, grassroots media initiatives that promote counter-sectarian narratives and more inclusive discourse in displaced and war-affected communities. I call these initiatives “online spaces of possibilities,” and define them as fields of cultural production that offers a culture of possibilities embedded in the actual online and offline media practices of journalists and media activists who navigate capitalist technological structures and violent cultural environments to produce positive affects of affinities and connections in war and displacement context. I engage with three main concepts “field” by Bourdieu, “practice” by Ortner and “affect” by Gibson-Graham. I use “practice” and “affect” to assist me to move beyond the limitations of “field” and the Bourdieusian theorization of the small-scale production by showing how Syrian journalists and media activists negotiate the constraining structures of media and technology industries and try to facilitate spaces of possibilities. The paper is based on 83 online and offline interviews, supported by online and offline ethnography, and document analysis. I review four successful case studies of Syrian “online spaces of possibilities”:

Enab Baladi (Local Grapes), Radio Rozana, ARTA FM, and Radio Souriat (Syrian Women's Radio). At the end, I identify four main strategies of transformative possibilities that helped the case studies of Syrian "online spaces of possibilities" to achieve success and sustainability and thus to produce content that challenges official narratives of war and peace.

Kari Andén-Papadopoulos (Stockholm University), The "camera as weapon" in the Syrian conflict: resituating the liberatory potential of digital eyewitness image making in local context

This paper continues recent scholarly efforts to rethink the notion of "the camera as weapon" in the age of new digital media technologies and practices (e.g., Leschnik 2022; Nath 2019; Smith & Watson 2022). Discussions around the power and limitations of citizen and activist camera-mediated practices of speaking truth to power are proliferating in light of today's digital media environment and the weaponization of visual information as a strategic tool of state governmentality, control, and surveillance. Yet the concept of "camera as weapon" tends to be understood as figurative trope in these discussions, which rather revolve around the mobilization and mediation of *images* – by states, militaries, and human rights and activist groups alike – as a tool in the new information battlefield on social media. The assumption is that the camera's role within on-the-ground conflict dynamics is merely instrumental – a conduit of communication that enables eyewitnesses and involved parties to transmit images to incite people outside the conflict to act. Particularly, proliferating practices and discourses of "mediated forensics" (Smith & Watson 2022) propagate a detached instrumental view of eyewitness images as "raw materials", "data points" or "open-source content" that are fair game to collect and use without permission by institutions largely situated in the Global North. Focusing on Syria, my paper makes a case for taking literally the notion of "the camera as weapon", and in so doing reinstating the embodied agency and aspirations of the people often risking their lives to record and upload eyewitness images. Based on in-depth interviews with 15 anti-regime Syrian video activists, I demonstrate that in addition to speaking truth to power, the liberatory potential of digital cameras in violent political conflict lies in the ways that they create opportunities for political actors to create and reshape fields of action and imagination in locally contested social and political fields.

Sahar Khamis (University of Maryland), Re-imagining Arab Cyberwars amid Digital Authoritarianism, Disinformation, and Covid-19

When the Arab Spring erupted in 2011, the hopes for political reform and democratization (Lynch 2012; 2016) were coupled with trust in the democratizing potentials of new media in terms of paving the way for revolutionary transitions, widening the margin of freedom of expression, and acting as catalysts and amplifiers for political change (Khamis and Vaughn 2011; El Tantawy and Wiest 2011).

However, after more than a decade since the eruption of these uprisings an entirely different reality is witnessed in the Arab region. The detours and backlashes in post-Arab Spring countries were paralleled with relentless efforts by authoritarian regimes to jump on the bandwagon of "cyberactivism" (Howard 2011) to build their digital capacities, control the mediated narratives, and counter dissent, through a plethora of sophisticated techniques. This signaled a shift from the

utopian phase of “techno-euphoria” to a new phase of “digital authoritarianism,” which has been surging in the Arab world recently (Jones 2022; Khamis 2020).

This paper tackles the multiple threats of this new phase of “cyberwars” between Arab authoritarian regimes and their opponents in this volatile region which signals a shift in the role of social media from serving as tools for liberation to becoming tools for repression (Brumfield 2019). It illustrates how these authoritarian tendencies worsened significantly amid the Covid-19 pandemic, with Arab governments cracking down harder on all opposition, including online dissent, under the mantle of fighting misinformation and disinformation (Khamis and Al-Jaber 2022).

The paper provides examples from some Arab countries, including Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, illustrating the governments’ utilization of digital techniques, including hacking, blocking, trolling, and online shaming to halt their opponents’ online activities and silence their voices, both at home and in the diaspora.

Moran Yarchi (Reichman University) & Lillian Boxman-Shabtai (Hebrew University),
The Image War moves to TikTok: Evidence from the May 2021 round of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The increasing mediatization of war makes battles over public image evermore prominent. Individual citizens, no longer mediated by traditional gatekeepers, engage in activism, public diplomacy, and citizen-journalism, communicating their opinions and experiences of war directly to the public. TikTok, a highly visual social media platform engineered around mimesis and replication was used extensively by Palestinians and Israelis to mobilize international support during the 2021 Israel-Palestinian war. This paper examines appeals that Israeli and Palestinian TikTok users made to international audiences by comparing 318 posts sampled from two rhetorically equivalent hashtags: #israelunderattack and #gazaunderattack. A content analysis examined the arguments and rhetorical strategies used by TikTokers. It found that each side emphasized different themes (e.g., victimization on the Israeli side, personal narratives on the Palestinian side). Although pro-Israeli users were more strategic than Palestinians in their use of the platform’s features (e.g., expanding reach by cross-referencing Palestinian hashtags), a multi-variate analysis of engagement found that pro-Palestinian activists were more successful in creating engagement, controlling for the higher number of fans of the pro-Palestinian accounts. To further understand the complex and subtle meaning structures encoded into the sampled posts, a subsample of the 50 posts eliciting most engagement within each hashtag will be probed qualitatively. A first study to compare public diplomacy efforts on TikTok across parties, this paper will contribute to knowledge about the ways citizens bear witness from warzones, use platform affordance for storytelling, and engage with the international community.



POSTER SESSION

LIZ HALLGREN

The role of the protagonist in Western war journalism: a comparative analysis of Ukraine and Syria

MARIE MIGEON

From memorialization to 'beautification': women, murals and street in Belfast

LOUISA ESTHER MUGABO

Towards a conceptualisation of exile journalism: the changing practice, norms, and values of exiled journalists from Eritrea and Burundi

ALEXANDRA PAVLIUC

Wartime, Gender, and Social Media: Political Communication before and during Russia's Full-scale Invasion of Ukraine

KATIE PENTNEY

Government Disinformation in Times of War and Crisis: A Violation of International Human Rights Law?

KATY THORNTON

Warscapes, image making and performance; How young combatants use digital visual media during war.

ALEXA VACHON

Counter-Visualities in Migration: A collaborative exploration of conflict and exile

Poster Session

1.30-12 noon

Liz Hallgren (University of Pennsylvania), *The role of the protagonist in Western war journalism: a comparative analysis of Ukraine and Syria*

The decades-long conflict in Syria and recently renewed conflict in Ukraine are characterized as fraternal twins in Western news; coverage has likened Russia's tactics in Syria to those in Ukraine, identified similarities between the dictatorships of Assad and Putin, and emphasized the crises' proximity to Europe as the most imminent threat to Western stability since WWII. However, while Western news coverage has treated the two crises similarly, Western diplomatic and military policy has not, perhaps most evident in approaches to Ukrainian versus Syrian refugees. I argue that we can start to make sense of these divergent policy approaches by identifying where otherwise similar media coverage of Ukraine and Syria differs. A comparative critical discourse analysis of Western news coverage of the two conflicts reveals the presence of a strong protagonist plot in Ukraine coverage, highlighting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in countless feature stories, and an absence of a counterpart to this narrative in Syria coverage. Feature news emerges as a meaningful site of inquiry for understanding racial, ethnic, and religious double standards in Western policy treatment of the two crises. While scholars of journalism and performance have long argued that news is a form of storytelling, I add that Western feature news coverage of President Zelensky reveals a news system more deeply entrenched in the project of mythmaking than previously understood. Drawing on a familiar hero narrative, profile pieces of Zelensky offer news consumers

a closeness to the war in Ukraine by tapping into norms of masculinity and whiteness that undergird Western values. Without making causal claims regarding the role of the news in war outcomes, this analysis sees the protagonist narrative differentiating otherwise similar coverage of the two conflicts not as a fluke but as a red flag raising questions about the ethics of feature news in war journalism.

Marie Migeon (University of Basel), *From memorialization to ‘beautification’: women, murals and street in Belfast*

In situations of peace and conflict, women are rarely represented as actors in the conflict. Literature has pointed out that, when they are portrayed, they are overwhelmingly shown along two lines, denying them their agency: either as caring victims/peacemakers/mothers, or as violent mothers/monsters/whores (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007; Åhäll, 2012). This research has mostly focused on mediatic visual representations, but research on murals and street art has also shown a lack of visibility of women in visual narratives around peace and conflict (Rolston, 2018).

My research focuses on Belfast, where murals and street art have permanently put the conflict on the streets. Traditionally, and especially from the 1980s onward, mural painting has been used by different communities to claim spaces and lay a particular narrative and memory of the conflict into public space. Usually, these representations tend to invisibilize women and rarely show them in active and political roles. In the past decade, however, street artists have been taking up walls in the city centre, putting forward new narratives of Belfast, of the conflict and of peace. This street art is framed, both by painters and by political actors, as a way to bring beauty into the city, erasing the scars of the conflict. Based on visual analysis of these murals and interviews conducted with women in Belfast, my research looks into the way representation of women on the wall has evolved over the past four decades. I specifically look at the way women’s bodies have been accepted (or rejected), and used – including by women themselves – to broadcast narratives about the conflict and the peace process. My work particularly highlights the difficulties for women to make themselves visible and bring in new narratives and histories in a particularly tense mediatic landscape.

Louisa Esther Mugabo (University College Cork), *Towards a conceptualisation of exile journalism: the changing practice, norms, and values of exiled journalists from Eritrea and Burundi*

In times of globally deteriorating press freedom and raising numbers of attacks on the press, an increasing number of journalists have to flee. Exile journalism has become a modern, global trend. Yet, the author argues that the little existing research mostly compares the phenomenon to western, normative theories of journalism, which do not acknowledge the different rationale that exile brings upon journalists when fleeing from but still reporting on conflict and war.

Thus, this poster shows the work in progress towards a new approach to understanding exile journalism by foregrounding the real-life experiences of marginalised journalists exiled from Eritrea and Burundi. It presents the findings from seven in-depth interviews with journalists working from exile in two different settings: (a) an Eritrean radio station in Paris, which acts as a link between the people of Eritrea and the world while the country has been isolated for the last 20+ years; (b)

journalists from Burundi exiled in Brussels, where they produce WhatsApp radio programmes for their home audience in the aftermath of a blackout in 2015, which triggered exile for three-quarters of Burundi's journalists (first to Rwanda, since 2021 further to Europe). Based on these interviews, the author identifies how the organisational structures, journalistic conventions, norms, and values change in exile.

These two case studies form part of a PhD project that conceptualises exile journalism through a South-South comparison of East African and Latin American (Nicaragua, Venezuela) cases. The project and this poster show that exile triggers a normative realignment and practical changes in conflict journalism that can be embedded in larger frameworks of exile, journalism theory, and regional contexts. It applies methods of comparative journalism and grounded theory and engages with decolonial approaches to media studies.

Alexandra Pavliuc (Oxford Internet Institute, Uni of Oxford), Wartime, Gender, and Social Media: Political Communication before and during Russia's Full-scale Invasion of Ukraine

This study analyzes political communication on Twitter and Facebook before and during the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 along gender lines, quantifying what women and men politicians say to whom, where, and how they say it. Using a novel mixed-methods approach of structural topic modelling and social network analysis that goes beyond traditional content analysis, an original database of Ukrainian politicians' socio-demographic attributes was created, gathering variables on gender, political prominence, and political party lean.

Overall, gendered differences were found in politicians' communication topic and interaction styles. Women politicians were found to discuss war-related topics more optimistically than men and publish more calls for support from the West. While there was no evidence of pacifist views by women, or any calls for compromise, women referenced military and aggressive terms less often than their male counterparts who were more likely to overtly call Russia the aggressor on social media and discuss the military and sanctions (Aharoni, 2017; Tessler et al., 1999). While Ukrainian politicians continued to update their constituents directly on Facebook, English-language tweeting on Twitter increased by 58% after full-scale war began in 2022. Between the Pre-wartime and Wartime periods, women politicians' proportion of Twitter use increased from 10% to 49%, and English language tweeting increased from 21% to 79%, showing that the war did drive more women politicians to actively communicate with their networks. This finding matches previous research on gendered interaction strategies during election cycles, where women were found to be more conversational and interactive on social media than men (Meeks, 2016). While many politicians use social media to disseminate key messages of Ukrainian bravery and the need for Western support, their styles are not consistently aligned with current theories of gendered communication during conflicts.

Katie Pentney (University of Oxford), *Government Disinformation in Times of War and Crisis: A Violation of International Human Rights Law?*

In times of war and crisis, it is imperative that governments provide accurate, reliable and trustworthy information. This is the case for two reasons. First, it is in such times that states' information monopoly remains strong(est), meaning that the public's ability to hold governments to account is dependent upon governments' provision of said information. Second, as recent events have made clear, disinformation about war and conflict situations proliferates with ease and haste, particularly in the online environment, creating a charged information ecosystem both within and across borders. To mitigate the real-world effects of this information ecosystem, states should be a safe port of call in the (disinformation) storm: they must provide information that is accurate, reliable and trustworthy, and in so doing, challenge pervasive (false) narratives. But what happens when governments fail to provide truthful information and instead knowingly deceive the public? Are there mechanisms to hold them to account?

This paper examines one possible avenue that has been underexplored: international human rights law, in particular the right to freedom of expression. I argue that where governments knowingly and intentionally *disinform* the public about war and conflict situations, they may violate the public's right to be (properly) informed, as enshrined in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The article proceeds in three parts. Part I sets the scene by exploring states' information monopoly in the particular context of war and conflict. Part II provides examples of governments' misbehaviour during such periods – from the Bush administration's claims about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, to the Putin regime's allegations about Ukraine, and beyond. Part III analyses how the international human rights framework could be used to hold governments to account where they deceive their populations to undermine public discourse, stifle dissent, or justify (in)action.

Katy Thornton (King's College London), *Warscapes, image making and performance; How young combatants use digital visual media during war.*

To produce imagery of war is to tell a story of such, one in which the narrator was historically often the photojournalist. However, the growth of digital media cultures has allowed a new storyteller to emerge and yet we must consider if they tell the same stories or create new ones. In his work on what he coined the 'Visual Labour in West Africa's Mano River War', anthropologist and photographer Danny Hoffman (2011 p.949) argues that the civil wars in West Africa should be understood as a conflict in which the ubiquitous presence of digital media was crucial. This was a war structured by the 'economy of attention' and the realities of constantly being available to be seen were crucial to understanding the spectacular performance of violence in this conflict. Young men in Sierra Leone were aware of the global nature of the media and the images it produced (Hoffman 2005b;2011). Yet, they were not the ones capturing the visuals, nor did they distribute the images. To be seen, to be part of the story, required the involvement of others.

Digital cultures have developed, and the networked images (Nierder 2018) associated with them allow young people in conflict to both create and distribute images (for the impact of technologies on the production and dissemination of visual images see Gervais 2020). They are now able to create their own opportunities to be seen by a global audience, not just in a journalistic manner.

Ukrainian soldiers such as Alex Hook, are using Instagram, TikTok and Twitter to tell their own stories from the battlefield. While the use of digital visual media and social media networks in war is not new, as shown by Hoffman, what we are witnessing is a change in the kind of storytelling taking place, one which now includes emojis and slang (see Dishy 2017 for an example). This paper explores not only the changes which have occurred in how young combatants use digital visual media, but also how the narratives and myths of war are both challenged and reinforced through this new storytelling.

Alexa Vachon (Toronto Metropolitan University), *Counter-Visualities in Migration: A collaborative exploration of conflict and exile*

This collaborative *research-creation* project explores and contextualizes the experiences of one woman, Masoumeh Mohammadi, living in exile. Through long-form interviews and participatory visual research methods, Masoumeh and I worked together to create a multimedia project and hand-crafted book about, and during, a moment of conflict induced transition and displacement. Combining theory, interview excerpts, reflexive writing, video, photographs, and craft, the final output is an exploration of the gendered domestic experience of conflict; the ‘mundanity’ of women’s labour behind the front lines; aesthetic interpretations of war; and ethical cross-cultural research. The work questions constructed conflict narratives by adopting the living counter-archive to challenge hierarchical structures of artistic and scholarly research in war and conflict studies.

I first met Masoumeh in Kabul, Afghanistan in 2019 where she coached a local women’s soccer team. We stayed in touch but our conversations changed dramatically when the Taliban took over in 2021. In the immediate aftermath, we lost contact as she worked to get her players out of the country, eventually evacuating with her family to neighbouring Pakistan. It’s in that context that Masoumeh and I embarked on an exploration of her experiences in exile, focusing on the themes of soccer, family, domesticity, and labour, but also agency, feminism, invasion, and war. Using participatory methods, we visually explored Masoumeh’s experience of displacement to add to the discourse in migration studies, conflict studies, and visual sociology.

Embracing research-creation’s framework as a *polydisciplinary* (Loveless 2019) decolonizing practice rooted in queer and feminist perspectives (Springgay 2022) that embodies alternative forms of knowledge generation, this work challenges hegemonic Euro-American perspectives that ‘other’ those in research, perceiving them as ‘subjects’ that serve dominant cultural interests, rather than participants with agency.

This collaborative presentation incorporates the alternative methods of the research itself, embodying ‘knowing by making’ in a reflexive multimedia piece.
