

“Clearing Up the Fog in the Fifth Dimension: Regulating Cyber-warfare”

By Brian Orend

Abstract of Presentation:

Cyber-warfare is a truly cutting-edge topic in armed conflict. It can be defined, at least initially, as attempting to use the Internet, and related advanced computer technologies, to substantially harm the fundamental interests of a political community. And cyber-space has been referred to as “the fifth dimension of warfare,” after: land; water; air; and space. Yet, much confusion (or “fog”) surrounds cyber-warfare, both regarding its present realities and its future potential. How much damage can cyber-attacks actually do? Is it even appropriate to liken computer-based cyber-attacks to physical (“kinetic”) violence? Is “informational warfare”, as cyber-war is otherwise known, changing the very nature of political conflict in our time (indeed, for all time)? This presentation aspires to clear up some—but certainly not all—of this fog which surrounds the fifth dimension.

Commonly, cyber-warfare takes the form either of espionage, disinformation, or sabotage. The countries most frequently mentioned today, with reference to cyber-war technology, include: America; Britain; China; France; India; Israel; Pakistan; and Russia. In 2011, America, China, and Russia met to see if they could craft a treaty to regulate the outbreak and conduct of cyber-warfare, analogous to such other established laws of armed conflict as The Hague and Geneva Conventions. Alas, these talks fell apart amidst bitter mutual accusations. This is an unfortunate state of affairs that needs to be remedied: cyber-warfare, like any other form of armed conflict, ought to be brought under thoughtful regulation. This presentation will propose a set of principles, consistent with established law yet responsive to the new technology, which ought to guide any eventual (and inevitable) treaty designed to bring this “Wild, Wild West” under helpful, progressive, lawful control which serves the interests of all nations.

Brief Bio Info:

Brian Orend is the Director of International Studies, and a Professor of Philosophy, at the University of Waterloo in Canada. His Ph.D. is from Columbia University in New York City. He has taught at Columbia, Waterloo, and the University of Lund in Sweden. His research and speaking efforts concentrate on three areas: the ethics of war and peace (especially post-war reconstruction); human rights; and happiness. He is the author of six books, including two books used widely as required texts at colleges and universities around the world: *Human Rights: Concept and Context* (Broadview, 2002); and *The Morality of War* (Broadview, 2006). His most recent book is *Introduction to International Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2012). He has work experience outside of academe in both publishing and intellectual property law.

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