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CONTEMPORARY ANTI-WAR MOBILIZATIONS Agonistic Engagement Within Social Movement Networks

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ABSTRACT

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Network Technologies and Anti-War Mobilization

New media technologies are proving an ideal tool for politically motivated groups such as those representing the contemporary anti-war movement to draw increased international attention and support. The Internet strengthens these groups by allowing them to reach a much larger pool of potential recruits, solicit funds and raise awareness all at low cost and high speed. Activist groups and their support networks can now develop and quickly and cheaply can form strategic alliances with one another in cyberspace. The Internet also allows fringe political/and more radical activist groups to reach their target audience when other outlets are denied them either by distance, expense or in many cases government censorship. This paper will discuss how and why social movements, including anti-war movements, use the new media technologies. Besides outlining their uses to such users, the paper will discuss the inherent qualities of the new communication technologies that make them suitable for such use. The paper will examine the above using as a framework Arquilla and Ronfeldt's concept of 'netwar' which describes 'netwar' as information-related conflict at a grand level between nations or societies, which may involve public diplomacy measures, propaganda and psychological campaigns, political and cultural subversion, deception of or interference with local media, infiltration of computer networks and databases, and efforts to promote dissident or opposition movements across computer network. Their thesis focuses on how the information revolution causes shifts in how societies may come into conflict and how they will wage war. The term 'Netwar' as coined by Arquilla and Ronfeldt draws more on the word 'network' rather than 'Net' as in Internet, connoting that the information revolution is as much about organizational prowess as it is about technological prowess, and that this revolution favors whoever masters the network form (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1995). The key defining characteristic of a netwar actor as described by Arquilla and Ronfeldt "consists of a web (or network) of dispersed, interconnected "nodes" (or activity centers)" (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1995). Following the theoretical framework set by Arquilla and Ronfeldt, it is the goal of this paper to understand how the networked structure of the Internet has attracted the mass migration of social movements such as anti-war protesters to the Internet, and how traditionally networked activist groups have been able adapt the information revolution to extend and deepen their links with each other and with their constituencies, and in many instances act as independent nodes of larger networks, pursuing a common ideological or strategic goal.