

War Reporting in a Digital Age

Since the beginning of history, accounts of soldiers and citizens have provided insight into wartime life. Books, journals, and correspondence have been used to unravel the overlapping stories of the most important conflicts between history's major players. With the development of print newspapers and magazines, war correspondents have become essential to reporting from active conflict zones. As war has modernized and international geopolitics have become more complicated, the general public's reliance on journalists has increased.

The reignition of Russian aggression toward Ukraine—which has been an ongoing conflict for half a century—has had an undeniable connection to the digital age's impact on the evolution of wartime reporting. Media censorship of war and conflict in Eastern Europe is undeniable—particularly as a result of the Soviet Union's Iron Curtain, under which there was markedly less permitted media coverage of conflicts ensuing between The Soviet Union and the regions under its control. These restrictions resulted in a silencing of many streams of information—leaving many war stories to be told by citizens and the few reporters present. The current war on Ukraine is occurring during a digital age, wherein war correspondents have been able to cover events, not only through traditional media sources, but also social media platforms like Twitter and TikTok. As technology and society transform, reporting in Ukraine has evolved to allow reports from the front lines to reach a broader and more international audience than print publications might allow. Moreover, social media allows for the communication of breaking news and coverage in a quicker and more accessible manner, creating a steady and timely stream of information to educate people on a global scale, as well as inform those living through the conflict.

With images and videos being posted online by individuals on both sides of the conflict, the Russian aggression on Ukraine is an example of the way that social media will continue to transform wartime reporting. Social media is a powerful tool that allows the rapid and uncontrolled spread of both quality information and malicious misinformation. The accessibility of content from areas of conflict may improve transparency of life during times of war but may present new challenges due to the unfiltered and manipulatable nature of some internet content. Recognition of the threats that social media may pose as a means to disseminate disinformation highlights the importance of high-quality objectives in journalism.

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