Virtuous War: Mapping The Military-Industrial-media-entertainment Network

By James Der Derian

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In the Mojave Desert, off the shores of San Francisco Bay, in the hills of southern Germany, next door to Disneyworld and in the heart of Hollywood, the United States armed forces are preparing for the next war. They are fought by the military in the same manner as they are viewed by citizens, on real-time networks and by live-feed videos, on the PC and the TV, actually and virtually. Enabled by smart technologies yet constrained by political and humanitarian imperatives, a new form of high-tech, low-risk warfare is emerging, *Virtuous War* . In *Virtuous War* , James Der Derian takes the reader on a roadtrip through the future of war, where cyborg combat technologies, video games, TV news stories, Army training exercises, and Hollywood movies all blur and converge in a new military-industrial-media-entertainment network. He shows us a world in which CNN and Disney are as much a part of the battlefield as Lockheed Martin and the Pentagon, where Marine fire-teams train with the video game "Doom", and entertainment executives design Army wargames. All the while Der Derian offers tremendous insight on the questions that arise as the tail of technology wags the dog of war: Will killing become easier? Will peace become harder? Will war lose its place as the ultimate reality-check of international politics? The result is the first book to offer a "virtual theory" for the military strategies, philosophical questions, ethical issues, and political controversies surrounding the future of war and peace.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Just months after David Mamet's film Wag the Dog represented spin doctors manufacturing a virtual war to distract Americans from a potential presidential sex scandal, former President Clinton's foreign policy came to be viewed through that lens. This eye-opening, entertaining and sobering study of the increasing "virtualization" of American politics and of war in particular via media manipulation makes an important contribution to political, media and social studies. Picking up cultural theorist Walter Benjamin's 1939 concern about the social impact of a "new and incestuous relationship between mass politics and the mass means of reproduction," Derian explores a wide range of theories and their applications. Dashing from French postmodern theorists such as Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Jean Baudrillard and Michel Foucault and film theorists such as Siegfried Kracauer to such mainstream movies as Diehard, Red Dawn and Full Metal Jacket, Derian offers a sustained, complex investigation of how the "virtual" elements of our culture are quickly having an impact on our actual national policy and imagination. After discussing how famed "mud soldier" General Schwarzkopf was the first "cyberpunk general," using computer war games to plan U.S. troop motions (and how Iran's invasion of Kuwait had already been mapped out on a computer simulation purchased from a Washington, D.C., firm), he moves on to how the 1987 Wall Street crash was a result of "program trading," in which buying and selling was triggered automatically by software programs. No Luddite or isolationist, Derian simply encourages public awareness of how our perceptions of the world can be manipulated and altered, and of how such manipulation smoothes the way for catastrophes like Hiroshima and the Holocaust. (June)Forecast: This fascinating and important material will make a splash in academic circles, but Derian's theoretical approach and dense writing will put it beyond the reach of a general readership.

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