Chiara De Franco, **Media Power and the Transformation of War**, NewYork, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 232 pp., $74.65 (hardcover).

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Chiara De Franco's *Media Power and the Transformation of War* offers insights on power, power sources, and power relations as it analyzes the dynamics, actors, and actions in contemporary conflict and focuses on the mediatization role of the media and its importance in conflict reporting. The author refers to mediatization as the media's role in conflict toward intervention for peace. The book takes a pro-journalistic stand while crediting the media's power during war and conflict, in decision making, and in changing the nature of war and warfare. De Franco examines media power and effects during conflicts. Focusing precisely on the power of television, she argues that the function and characteristics of media power is transformative and can influence policies, decision making, and politics. *Media Power* supports previous literature on war and media as it notes the media's influence on public perception toward calling for political intervention in conflict. The book ventures beyond a discussion of the media's ability to influence governments and cause policy change, becoming more useful and strategic in how it illustrates the media's diplomacy in calling international communities and nongovernmental organizations to action in times of war.
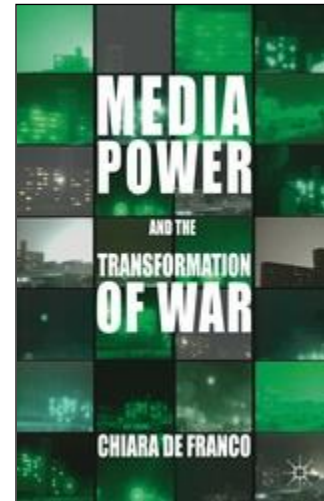
The book is divided into six parts and an introduction. The first part offers a general overview of media power and introduces two case studies: the Kosovo conflict and the Afghanistan war. Each of the book's next four parts addresses a form of media power—media power over the agenda, over the process, over the channel, and over the instruments—and analyzes how each type of media power is displayed in each of the two case studies. The book's strengths lie in how the discussions of these four kinds of media power dictate its structure and foundation and in how the author draws a connection between each type of media power and its effect. The last part of the book provides a conclusion in which De Franco summarizes the findings and offers suggestions for future studies. *Media Power* supports objective news reporting by the media as a channel of information in times of conflict. The book summarizes each chapter, drawing comparisons between the two case studies (from Parts 2 through 5) that may help readers to grasp the idea and theme of each chapter. The book's summary repeats the chapter content.

In consideration of a four-dimensional definition of media power, the book, as noted, focuses on the role of the media in Kosovo and in the Afghanistan war. These two conflicts are covered through the lens of different media markets and of unrelated types of conflict. The book juxtaposes the roles and coverage of CNN and Al-Jazeera. It argues for the power of the media in mediated warfare. In literature, great attention has centered on the media's [negative or positive] role through addition or subtraction in their reportage of conflict (e.g., Griffin, 2004). This refers to the media's framing of events. While this

holds true, as suggested by the book, the media also engages in influencing issues relating to policies and warfare. Often, the media are constructed as promoters of dominant political ideologies. For example, Bennett (1994) writes of the influence of the White House in shaping news, while Entman (2004) notes the control by more powerful actors to push ideas to the news, and afterward to the public. *Media Power*, on the other hand, examines the media's role in international relations and its influence in conflict resolution.

In discussing media power over the agenda, the book focuses on the role of the media toward agenda building by directing attention to salient issues on the international landscape. The media power over the process uses a real-time policy effect, with the media seeking to influence the timing of policy making by shaping audience perception toward action through timely news updates. The book discusses the use of emotional appeal by the media as a tool to call for action. By broadcasting gruesome pictures and news content, the media emphasizes the need to end a conflict and look for solutions by drawing attention to the effects of war. The media builds a sense of emergency through their reportage. In the case of the Afghanistan war, De Franco notes that Al-Jazeera used emotional appeal by providing an alternative narrative that positioned the United States as the instigator of the war. Al-Jazeera reported on the effects of the war from a Middle East perspective, showing the damages caused by American drones. Here, power over the agenda and power over the process are closely linked together. The author uses both to demonstrate how the media influences policies, with the former leading to the latter. De Franco underpins the importance of mainstream media and alternative media sources in different parts of the world. She narrates their activities, analyzing how they can be used to influence policies. *Media Power* addresses the proactive nature of Al-Jazeera after 9/11 by emphasizing the importance of its coverage in creating alternative narratives for the American audience. Al-Jazeera's news reports influenced U.S. decision makers on news reporting and media objectivity. The book notes that the reportage by Al-Jazeera changed the U.S. government's media management strategy leading to the embedding of reporters with U.S. forces in the field of battle. In reporting the Kosovo conflict, CNN, like Al-Jazeera, provided an alternative narrative. While U.S. politicians reported the conflict as a quest for independence, CNN reported it as a human rights violation issue. CNN's report was later adopted by U.S. politicians leading to intervention. The coverage style of Al-Jazeera, then, brought the news organization into the limelight and underscored the change of focus in Middle East reportage, from a Western media to a non-Western media. This is important in the discourse on structural imperialism.

Media power over the channel addresses the media's construction of arenas for direct and indirect interactions. Precisely, it draws attention to the diplomacy of the media—how they mediate between parties and exchange messages. Lastly, media power over the instrument considers how the media creates narratives and how they function as a system and an arena for semiotic war by integrating media strategies into the political and military strategies. Political actors lean on the media for publicity and as platforms to communicate with other political actors. Hence, the media platform brings various actors together. De Franco notes that tough questionings from media reporters to politicians during interviews puts politicians on the spot, possibly influencing decision making. This posits the media as actively exhibiting agency toward influencing policies.

Through triangulation *Media Power* combines the qualitative method of data collection with findings from television content analysis and semiotic method, as well as with interviews with key actors. The book provides knowledge of longitudinal research from news reports. Visual analysis, in addition to the methods used, may be necessary to visually and emotionally connect the reader to the events being analyzed, especially as both CNN and Al-Jazeera are television media. Moreover, television images may be gruesome and highly emotional, and De Franco focuses on portraying the power of the media in calling for action and change through the framing of suffering. Also, while the book's use of mediatization is toward peace journalism, a broader approach is possible; Hoskins and O'Loughlin's (2010) use of mediatization takes an expansive position by relating it to the media's influence on social and cultural institutions and its interaction mode over time.

Finally, social media has become a trending arena for citizen journalists and civil society groups. This book is quite fascinating in how De Franco builds on the works of founding scholars, such as Marshall McLuhan, Erving Goffman, and Joshua Meyrowitz. An intriguing part of the book is the author's interest in the works of McLuhan, drawing attention to the World Wide Web and the global village concept. *Media Power* shows the potential in applying the four-dimensional definition of power to the Internet and social media platforms together with the semiotic method used in analyzing television media. It may be productive to see how the framework fits into new media platforms. The book will be useful to journalists, students, academics, and individuals interested in history, foreign policy, political science, international relations, mass communication, and war and conflict studies.

References

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