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Proliferation not democratization: open-source intelligence and the war in Ukraine

Russia's war in Ukraine has brought unprecedented attention to open-source intelligence (OSINT) researchers who collect and analyse publicly available information on conflict zones and security threats. Some observers believe easy access to online information has "democratised" intelligence. The investigative group Bellingcat even claims to be an "intelligence agency for the people". While the digital revolution has turned many smartphone-equipped individuals into sensors, it did not turn everyone into a professional intelligence collector and analyst. The ubiquity of digital tools enables small groups of skilled and well-resourced individuals to leverage open-source data and information (OSINF) and produce outputs that are comparable to finished government intelligence. Barriers to entry in the field of professional intelligence remain high. The rise of OSINT is not about democratization but proliferation of intelligence capabilities.

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Security Studies (Van Puyvelde) and War Studies (Ford)

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No

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