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How Photojournalism Shaped the Israeli-Arab Conflict

“Even my passive eyes transmute everything I look at to the pocked blacked and white of a war photo, how can I stop myself. It is dangerous to read newspapers...” (Atwood).

Susan Sontag, an intellectual celebrity, questions the effectiveness of photojournalism when used to attempt to change public opinion about specific global events. In her article on war photography featured in the *New Yorker*, Sontag writes, “a narrative seems likely to be more effective than an image.” However, as Margaret Atwood echoes in her poem, photographs and narratives are not mutually exclusive. Photojournalism, a subgroup of journalism, was thought to convey the barest of truths even though there was a cameraman constructing the narrative. Therefore, modern media, in which news and social media coincide, allows the press to instantly give the masses constructed narratives. The Middle East is a Mecca for the press. The constant strife and conflicts in the region make it so that many reporters and photographers flock to a country a few hundred square miles shy of the size of New Jersey in order to see what newsworthy story this country, known as Israel, is involved in. However, in a region flooded by conflict, controversies, and strong passions, one must wonder if anyone can remain neutral. Sontag questions whether images and by extension news narratives are effective in swaying public opinion about war. In this region, for both

sides, media is God. Therefore, the press played a crucial role in shaping the outcome of the 2006 Israel-Lebanon War and Israel's later policies in the 2008, 2012, and 2014 operations in Gaza.

The Media's influence on public opinion is tremendous. A study done by two graduate students, Leslie Rill and Corey Davis, at the University of Missouri, set out to test just that through the lens of the 2006 Lebanon-Israel war. They found that the "media tells readers and viewers how they should think and feel" (Rill and Davis 609). In their study they were able to demonstrate that the same story when phrased differently, effectively influences the subjects' perceptions of the situation. In their conclusion they state that:

"Analysis of open-ended data indicated that the research participants attributed qualities, ideas, and actions to Hezbollah and Israel consistent with the qualities, idea, and action attributed to Hezbollah and Israel in the news stories they read" (Rill and Davis 620).

This is precisely the issue of what US Army Colonel Michael Snyder calls a "hybrid war." A "hybrid war", according to Snyder, is one in which there is no sequential phases of combat. He uses the United States in Afghanistan as an example. He emphasizes that a "hybrid war" is based on the goal of the public's psychological effects through pictures of combat operations, specifically that an image of war draws strength from the suffering. This narrative of suffering is what people identify with and ultimately support. When presented with open-ended pictures and information, people will most closely view it through the lens of what they read in the news.

“Tonight's Network's News,
Broadcast's live, crisp, color pictures,
Brilliant tapestry scenes of billowing fires
Raging from smashed building's gaping holes
Spawning heavy acrid smoke
Engulfing frightened young mothers
Desperately clutching crying children
Stumbling, weaving, confused with panic
From the ruins of their once peaceful homes
The slick, silver F-18s glint the sun,
Adorned with pale blue stars of David
Armed with sleek, smart bombs
That release, and float noiselessly free,
Nose over and head to earth.
The faceless pilot, guides his death cruelly down
To coldly and wantonly kill innocent victims...
Fleeing, unwilling participants
Victims of a failed, political process
Innocent casualties of a mindless war” (Bennet).

Fig. 1 Below are two photographs taken by Adnan Hajj that were later proven to be doctored and removed from the Reuters website. Subsequently, all 920 photographs were removed from their database. The first image is a doctored image of an Israeli airstrike on Lebanon and the second is a doctored image of Beirut burning after the airstrike.



Source: Hajj, Adnan. 2006. Reuters Admits to More Image Manipulation. Web. 31 Jan. 2016. <<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3287774,00.html>>.

If people perceive situations based on what they see and read in the news, what were people seeing and reading in the news during the 2006 Israel-Lebanon war that

greatly affected its outcome? This is a source of great controversy and contention. Martin Kalb, an American journalist who holds monthly discussions at Harvard University on media ethics, wrote a report on the media being used as a weapon in the 2006 Israel-Lebanon War. Kalb argues that this war was the first really “live war”, utilizing computers, videophones, portable satellites, and other modern streaming devices in order to show everything in real time. “This new and awesome technology enabled journalists to bring the ugly reality of war to both belligerents (and others around the world), serving as a powerful influence on public opinion and governmental attitudes and actions” (Kalb 44). However, many of the stories and images shown were the product of what Kalb deemed a “closed society.” A closed society is one without free press, a society like Hezbollah’s Lebanon. Kalb argues that a closed society has the ability to control the images and messages it portrays to the world better than an open society because it limits what can be shown to journalists. Hezbollah was able to present a very specific narrative that did not involve its powerful supporters (Iran and Syria) or its army. Hezbollah dictated to reporters specifically when, who, and what they could take pictures of, by only letting them in on “guided tours” with strict instructions not to talk to anyone or take pictures of anyone without authorization (Snyder 53). If a reporter went off on his own they were cautioned not to take pictures of anyone with guns lest they want to face harsh repercussions. “Throughout the conflict, the rarest picture of all was that of a Hezbollah guerrilla. It was as if the war on the Hezbollah side was being fought by ghosts” (Kalb 54). This “closed society” effectively was able to manipulate news stories to make it look as if there was an advanced, ruthless military on one side and helpless army-less victims on the other.

“There is more than one kind of freedom, said Aunt Lydia. Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from. Don't underrate it” (Atwood).

The open society, on the other hand, has less freedom to manipulate narrative. The open society has the ability to “become the victim of its own openness” (Kalb 44). In the *Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, Lydia warns against just that. When there is too much freedom it lets people do whatever they want. Because there was free press, many Israeli military secrets and rumors were leaked through the news and cell phone conversations. This not only gave Hezbollah valuable information but also forced the Israeli government and military to change certain policies or issue appeals based on these rumors. Many reporters set up their cameras on the Israel-Lebanon border, and used their advanced cameras to broadcast in real time the movement of Israeli troops and tanks into Lebanon (Kalb 55). There was also the incident of the UNIFIL-United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon-, who were supposed to be impartial, reporting only Israeli troop movements and not Hezbollah's on its website for all to see. Hezbollah also was able to listen to and locate cell phone traffic (Johnson 113). All of these factors combined led to attacks on Israeli troops by Hezbollah guerilla fighters (Kalb 52). Essentially, there was too much “freedom to” and not enough “freedom from.”

In addition to the military blow Israel received from the media and advanced technology, Israel also experienced a decrease of support for the war after certain news articles appeared both among the Israeli public and the international diplomatic

community. On July 30, 2006 Israel launched an airstrike and destroyed a building in Qana, Lebanon. Around 28 people (the actual number reported in the news differed between 63 and 54(Kalb 47)) were killed during this attack, many of them children. This led the international community to believe that Israel was specifically targeting civilians (Johnson 70). The fact that Nassrallah openly embraced the criminal guerilla tactic of using civilians as human shields was rarely reported in these stories, and whenever civilian casualties occurred, Hezbollah would be sure to point it out to the reporters and at times exaggerate the number (Kalb 47). The loss of support for the war from abroad, specifically the United States, caused many Israelis to doubt whether they would win the war and if there was a purpose to continue it.

The Israeli attempts at portraying their side in the media were futile and lacked the strategic flair only a closed society could create. The strategy a society that does not have “freedom to” rather “freedom from.” Hezbollah hid amongst the civilian population often shooting missiles from houses or schools. This led to an increase of casualties among innocent civilians. Tzipi Livni, Israel’s foreign minister at the time was quoted in the New York Times trying to explain the unfortunate loss of innocent life, “When you go to sleep with a missile, you might find yourself waking up to another kind of missile” (Kalb 47). While the logic is sound, when portrayed next to civilian loss of life combined with the lack of images of guerilla fighters, this blunt argument causes people to question its validity.

The loss of Lebanese civilian life was portrayed heavily in the news. However, news reports also failed to mention with equal ubiquity the loss of Israeli civilian life. The issue of disproportionality became tantamount as an argument for both sides. For

Hezbollah, the issue of disproportionality, and the argument featured in many news stories, had to do with the force in which Israel acted (Kalb 47). Their claim was that Israel destroyed Lebanese infrastructure, used great military force, and brutally killed civilians for the purpose of three soldiers. The war began when Hezbollah fighters kidnapped two Israeli soldiers, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, on the Lebanese border. Hamas captured the third soldier, Gilad Shalit, 3 weeks earlier in Gaza. The two incidents are mutually exclusive, but since they happened close in time are often grouped together by the media. The fact that Hezbollah did indeed begin the war by capturing these soldiers, failed to make it into most news reports. The Israeli claim of disproportionality stems from the argument that the media is biased and disproportionately issues more stories of Lebanese casualties and features the Israelis as the aggressor. Kalb reports in his findings that statistically speaking Al Jazeera, BBC, ABC, CNN, NBC, *The New York Times*, and *Washington Post* all featured more than half of their stories stating Israel as the aggressor. Fox was the only news station that viewed Hezbollah in a more negative light (Kalb 50-51). Tom Gross, a somewhat moderate British reporter, claims that according to the news reports, specifically the BBC, one would think that Beirut has been razed (Gross). The above poem by Curtis Bennet, a former US marine aviator turned author and poet, proves this narrative. However, aerial photos show that most of Beirut was left untouched. Doctored photos were also a big issue in this war (see fig.1). There were at least two documented cases of doctored photographs by Adnan Hajj, a freelancer for Reuters, in order to “heighten the drama of real events and perhaps deliberately to worsen Israel’s image on the world” (Kalb 57-58). Even though Reuters fired Hajj after they found out about the scandal the damage was

done. People already were told what to think and feel. This one sided narrative continued. In spite of the hundreds of BBC reports, you would not know that Israelis were taking refuge in bomb shelters for weeks from the Iranian and Syrian Katyusha rockets fired by Hezbollah aimed directly at civilians or of any of the Israeli civilian casualties resulting from these rockets (Gross 2). There are those who argue, “the effects of such perceived imbalance seem negligible, in the short and long term” (Silow-Carroll). However, this disproportionality in the news reports proved to have a tremendous effect on the outcome of this war as well as future operations.

As casualties rose towards the end of the 34-day summertime war, there were calls for a ceasefire. Israel’s main goal of overthrowing Hezbollah with backing from the United States seemed grim. Israel had no choice but to give into international pressure and enter into a ceasefire due to these combined effects: the media’s disproportionate portrayal of Israel as the aggressor and subsequent loss of support, international pressure, and criticism, the rumors leaked of military plans through media sources and cell phones which effectively foiled Israel’s military plans, Israel’s lack of a strategic unified narrative. In reality, neither Hezbollah nor Israel won this war; both sides just agreed to stop fighting. However, as is the case with other guerilla groups, Nasrallah and Hezbollah declared that they had had a “divine victory” (Kalb 48). Since Israel did not win, it is said that Israel lost, specifically that Israel lost the media war: the war of information, propaganda, and news. The Winograd commission was given the task of evaluating the 2006 campaign. Among the conclusions and findings reported, they found that Israel had no coherent plan (Johnson 82). In addition, they reported that Israel relied heavily on airstrikes and were not prepared for a ground invasion (Snyder 115). This contributed to

the issues Israel had coming up with a unified narrative like Hezbollah. Israel was not sure what its smaller scale goals were and how it was supposed to achieve them. Colonel Snyder calls this concept a “strategic narrative- a set of integrative policies and processes that tell the military’s story—to global audiences” (Snyder 113). This was a strategy that Israel lacked in 2006 and paid for in the war.

Israel learned some valuable lessons in regards to the importance of media and public image after the war. The Winograd Commission did not really touch upon the issue of public relations and diplomacy or simply *hasbarah* as it is known in Israel. What the report did mention was that the leaks of classified information, whether through cell phones or the media, led to great operational risks and put national security in jeopardy. This caused the Israelis to re-evaluate their approach to *hasbarah*. “Following the 2006 war, however, there was a near-universal awareness of the importance of the information battle” (Snyder 125). Israel lacked the proper resources in order to get across a strategic narrative. In order to fulfill this need, Israel set up a Directorate of National Information. The purpose of this Directorate is to have someone who deals with international diplomacy and government policies. It was to have someone who can give proper, unified, and diplomatic answers and explanations to the public through different media outlets. The Directorate was set up to eliminate the cold, blunt explanations like that of Livni’s that appeared in the *New York Times*. It is an attempt to close the gap between the information control in a “closed society” and the less regulated information in an “open society”.

“As soon as all the corrections which happened to be necessary in any particular number of The Times had been assembled and collated, that number would be reprinted, the original copy destroyed, and the corrected copy placed on the files in its stead. This process of continuous alteration was applied not only to newspapers, but to books, periodicals, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, films, sound-tracks, cartoons, photographs – to every kind of literature or documentation which might conceivably hold any political or ideological significance. Day by day and almost minute by minute the past was brought up to date. In this way every prediction made by the Party could be shown by documentary evidence to have been correct, nor was any item of news, or any expression of opinion, which conflicted with the needs of the moment, ever allowed to remain on record (Orwell 51).”

How far can an “open society” actually close this gap? These new innovations were put to the test in the 2008 Cast Lead Operation in Gaza. At the end of his article, Kalb poses a rather interesting question to which he gives an answer that seems rather amusing in retrospect. “Will Israel seek to change the ground rules for coverage of the next war? And even if the effort were made, could it succeed? In an open society, ground rules may be announced, but they are not likely to be observed or enforced” (Kalb 63). Kalb makes the assumption that an open democratic society cannot moderate the press. Doing so is what George Orwell would deem “doublethink,” or accepting two contradicting beliefs. However, what Kalb did not know when he wrote the article, was that about a year and a half later, Israel would attempt to do just that and succeed in

enforcing a press ban, at least for a while.

In 2008, Israel successfully closed off the Gaza border to all press under the guise of a “security risk.” Militarily, this was an effective plan. It helped Israel have a stronger “strategic narrative.” They were able to portray their message in a uniform and coherent way. The only information that the press had was the information told to them. This effectively let Israel concentrate on completing its goal without the international and national public pressure that was prevalent in 2006. Without all the pictures and “disproportionality” in the press, there was less room for criticism. “One way to avoid another Qana is, certainly, to keep reporters out” (Snyder 128). The ban lasted for 81 days. The press appealed to the Israeli Supreme court, who ordered the IDF to allow the press entry “unless the security situation changes drastically in such a way that the Erez crossing has to be closed completely for security reasons” (Horowitz 284). The rather immediate lifting of the ban after the Supreme Court issued its verdict makes it clear that while there was an operation occurring it was not considered a dire security risk. This emphasizes Israel’s other motive, its true motive of controlling the press. Also by confiscating soldiers’ cell phones, Israel was able to prevent the information leaks that in Lebanon dealt an embarrassingly devastating blow to the IDF. The tougher stance Israel took with the press in 2008 may have allowed the military to complete more of its goals and keep the morale up, but was the press-ban a “smart” move?

Can a democratic state ban freedom of the press, a basic western right, without criticism? Critics of Israel’s press ban look at it as a military filibuster, as a way to “buy time” (“Hasbara and Spin” 6-7). This “open society” in a way resorted to the Hezbollah tactic of spoon-feeding information to the press in an almost *big brother-esque* way in

order to attempt to achieve its goal. However, this in turn angered the press. They were bored and stuck watching the smoke from the border. Peter Lagerquist, a freelance journalist who was covering the operation, expressed in his article the waste of time and boredom the reporters felt. In his article, he juxtaposes the smoke in Gaza with gas stations, cyclists, and FedEx trucks in Israel. This is also an over-exaggeration of the truth. Israeli life was not this care free, utopia of sunny days and leisure as he describes. There were multiple *Qassam* rockets being fired everyday during the operation into Israel. There was destruction on both sides. This is not mentioned at all in the article. From reading this article, one must wonder how effective the ban was if its goal was to improve Israel's image in the media. An Italian correspondent, Lorenzo Cremonesei, felt that the ban gave rise to articles like Lagerquist's. "When the press finally did gain access, he explained, they were even more adversarial and in their mood for revenge looked for stories that undermined the Israeli's message" (Snyder 129). The press ban also gave Al-Jazeera, who generally favors Hamas, a monopoly on coverage within Gaza during the ban. This effectively made most of the eyewitness coverage within Gaza to have a bias. An open democratic society is held to a different, higher standard than a closed one. An open society is not expected to practice doublethink. Whether this double standard is justified does not affect the outcome. The attempt to control the media might have in fact backfired on Israel.

The Goldstone Report, the commission sent to evaluate the Cast Lead Operation, is one of the most controversial reports Israel had ever received. The report accused Israel of gross human rights violations during the operation. In contrast, the Winograd commission refuted human rights accusations made during the war from Human Rights

Watch and Amnesty International. Israel attempted to discredit Goldstone and his report by claiming Richard Goldstone himself was a justice in South Africa's Apartheid government rendering him unable to make accusations about human rights (Horowitz 388). The report claimed that Israel targeted civilians and that Israel should have negotiated with Hamas, a recognized terrorist group that was founded on the principle of destroying Israel. Interestingly enough the report also criticizes Israel for the costly effort of notifying the civilian population before they bomb a building via phone calls and/or pamphlets or what is known as "roof-knocking" (Horowitz 352). This tactic was also criticized in an article in the *Weekly Standard* by Willy Stern of Vanderbilt law school for setting a dangerous precedent for other western nations. It seems that whatever precautions Israel took to prevent civilian casualties in Gaza was wrong. The report is also based fully on Palestinian testimony because Israelis refused to participate (Horowitz 358). However, since the international media in Gaza during the operation was also one sided, would the report have had different results if the press ban had not existed? Like Cremonesei said, the press was looking for revenge. This revenge could have contributed to the outcome of the Goldstone report, and with no real evidence to dispute what the Goldstone Report purported, many accept the Goldstone report as truth. With little evidence of what was actually going on in Gaza, there exists a kind of "open-ended" information, to which we assign the qualities that we know. What the public knows is from Al Jazeera and the previous war, in which Israel lost the information battle. Although from the Israeli side, Israel might have been able to complete more of its military goals, the press ban created open-ended information that lead to the public assigning previous negative perceptions of Israel.

“But what is freedom? Freedom from what? There is nothing to take a man's freedom away from him, save other men. To be free, a man must be free of his brothers. That is freedom. That and nothing else” (Rand 101).

There is an old saying that goes “truth is the first casualty of war.” With wars now reported in real time and the consumer’s everlasting need for entertainment and drama, one must look deep to find the truth. Media reports are filled with narratives and biases. These narratives effectively tell us what to think and how to react about certain situations. They have the power to affect the outcome of a war and government policies. A strategic narrative can be an effective tool for the military trying to portray its side to the public when the media will not speak for them, but that strategy becomes useless when the other side is silenced. This creates another bias. Both narratives need to exist in equal proportions. The most effective example of a strategic narrative was utilized in the last operation in Gaza: Pillar of Defense also dubbed “The Twitter War.” This is the next generation of strategic narratives. In this new outlet both sides can effectively portray their side sans traditional media. While the media and its bias are still present, the media is no longer God. Governments are now more in control of their own fates. Facebook, Twitter, and social media as a whole became a way to juxtapose both narratives through conversations of “status updates,” “tweets,” “hashtags” and “shares.” There is no open-ended information and one can decide for oneself what is the truth. This is almost like what Equality 7-1521 in *Anthem* describes as freedom. There exists this freedom from our brother, mass media. Today, because of this freedom, reporters do not have the same

impact that they did in the Israel Lebanon War and the Cast Lead Operation in changing opinions.

The use of social media began in Cast Lead in 2009. While the use was limited it is important to analyze the roots of the use of social media in wartime and how it affected the narrative. It all began in December 2008, when the IDF decided to create its own YouTube channel. However, this is still a means of creating a strategic narrative. The Youtube channel showed clips of airstrikes and surveillance, and it enhanced the narrative that the government wanted to portray (Ward). Hamas in response hired an Algerian journalist named Zouheir Alnajjar to create a clip of inside their rocket factory. Although, it seems as if this was not to push a certain narrative rather to prove to the Israelis that their enemy had destructive weapons as well. However, since social media is a way for what Will Ward calls the average laymen sitting behind a computer screen or “citizen journalist”, how active were these citizen journalists in 2009?

The answer is very limited. Facebook was the platform of choice and status updates were the weapon. There was a phenomenon called “donating your status,” where someone would choose to have their status updated automatically. On the Israeli side, this was called *Qassam* Count. *Qassam* count “would automatically display an up-to-the-minute tally of the rockets hitting southern Israel” (Ward). On the Palestinian side, this meant donating your status to the number of Palestinians dead and wounded. This was a passive way for Facebook users to show their support to whichever side they held allegiance. It was a step towards the *Anthem* freedom but was not quite there. The benefit of this type of tactic is that the donator’s status is updated many times a day automatically. Each time it is updated, that status jumps to the top of the News Feed of

the donator's friends. This has the potential to be very effective. It all depends on the circle of influence the donator has. However, those with a strong allegiance to either side do not have the potential to be convinced either way. It is the international community, people who do not have a strong conviction either way, who can be turned. This is also why the language of choice for these status updates was in English. However, the introduction to "citizen journalists" and governments on social media were not enough to change the fact that the press ban still backfired on Israel. "The Economist declared, despite devoting unparalleled attention to the media, Israel is losing the propaganda war" (Ward). Status donating was not an effective tactic as it was a passive way of trying to infiltrate the viewers to feel something for a number. As Equality 7-2521 knew, a number constantly flashed over and over to us on our News Feeds fails to stand out and does not prove to be persuasive. In order for social media to be effective in a world of instant gratification, we need quick posts written to be persuasive to short attention spans. We need a move away from big brother mass media with its controlling narratives that shape public opinion. Did the so-called "Twitter Wars" learn from the mistakes of the nascent social media activism present in 2009?

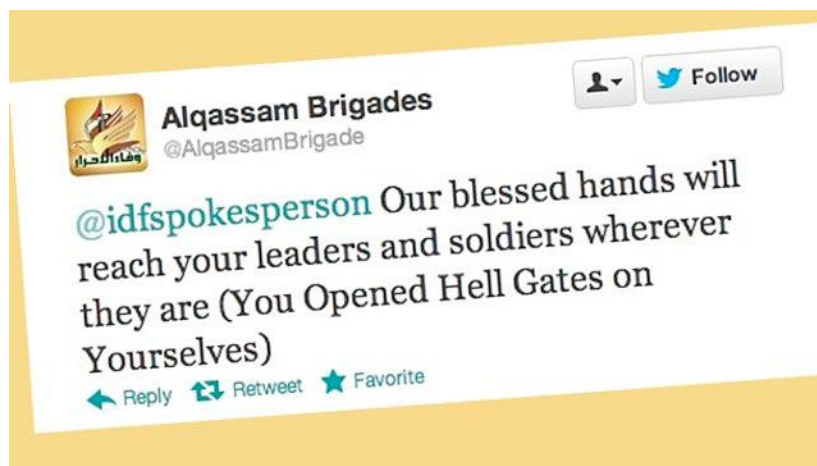
Fig. 2 The first tweet from the IDF Spokesperson is from 2012. An hour later, the "eliminated" poster of Ahmed Jabari, head of Hamas's military wing, was posted.





Source: Durant, Elyssa. "Israel Using Air Strikes, Tweets and YouTube in the Battle Against Hamas | CYBER ARMS." *DailyDDoSe*. N.p., 1 Aug. 2014. Web. 29 Feb. 2016.

Fig. 3 Hamas tweeted a response to the IDF killing of Ahmad Jabari



Source: "Operation Pillar of Defense: The First Social Media War." *College of Journalism*.

N.p., 16 Nov. 2012. Web. 29 Feb. 2016.

After 2009, all was relatively quiet on Israel's southern border. There was an informal ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. A ceasefire with Hamas is not a ceasefire at all. Up until the official time set, Hamas would barrage Israel with rockets. They would try to get every last second of destruction it could before time is up. Israel would intercept these rockets with the Iron Dome in order to protect Israeli civilians. However, the fear of possibly breaking the already fragile promise of a ceasefire prevents Israel from responding properly. Inevitably the ceasefire came. The *Qassams* came more infrequently; however, they never really stopped. The next operation was always looming ominously in the air. It was a matter of time until the next big operation. Inevitably, the rockets on Israel increased. Although, many fail to acknowledge that it never stopped in the first place. These people claim that a change in Hamas regime renewed these attacks, and that these rockets came only "after years of respecting an unspoken agreement that it not fire into Israeli territory"(Ganor). However, from personal experience, these rockets never stopped just became more infrequent during the unofficial ceasefire. Many attribute Israel's killing of the head of Hamas military leadership, Ahmad Jabari, to have sparked Operation Pillar of Defense in 2012 (Ganor). This operation proved to be different than any other previous war due to the ubiquity of social media.

Visual images have great control over narratives especially on social media. Research conducted on Facebook, for example, found that posts with images, were more likely to invoke a reaction from fans (Belicove). Social media is interesting in that we

need to choose whether our sources are valid because they are coming from these “citizen journalists” and not necessarily a credible news site. A study conducted on Twitter found that people who had a profile image were more likely to be viewed as credible than those without pictures (Morris). This shows the impact that images on social media can have towards what we choose to believe as reliable. There is almost a false sense of trust with images. If all it takes is a profile picture in order for someone to trust someone else’s tweet, then it seems as if an image has all the control in the world, especially in a world of 140 characters. If we accept the adage “a picture is worth a thousand words,” and a thousand words, according to unitconversion.org, is worth 2000 characters, then images may effectively be the way around the 140 character limit. It may be the way for governments and people to get a strategic narrative across while appearing credible and appealing to our dwindling attention span.

These images played an important role on Twitter. Will Ward ended his 2009 article on social media in *Cast Lead* with a very interesting statement.

“On these sorts of questions [of evaluating the effects of the outcome of the war on the homefront and on strategic narratives], Arab and Israeli public opinion is more divided and individuals more persuadable. Let’s just hope no one tries debating these questions in 140 characters or less” (Ward).

It seems as if Will Ward’s admonishment was left unheeded as a few short years later as this is exactly what happened in 2012. Unlike in 2009, 2012 had seen an increase in popularity on Twitter. Whereas, Facebook and YouTube were the main mediums for *Cast Lead*, Twitter was added as a contender. Conversations through tweets and re-tweets were held through @IDFSpokesperson, the IDF, and @AlqassamBrigades, Hamas’s

military wing utilizing hashtags such as #PillarOfDefense, #IsraelUnderFire, #GazaUnderAttack, and #PrayForGaza.

A study was conducted analyzing the visual images present on Twitter in the 2012 Pillar of Defense operation in Gaza. This study examined the images tweeted by @IDFSpokesperson and @AlqassamBrigades. As more people are using social media to get news and they easily believe in the credibility of these posts, the effects of these images can have a huge impact. “Studies have shown that visual images have a significant influence on people’s perceptions of cultures and countries other than their own” (Seo 152). These posts were mainly for the international community and are therefore mostly in English. However, the IDF spokesperson page did have pages in French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, and Hebrew. These pages worked in parallel to the English site. Manuel Pruss, who ran the IDF Spokesperson Spanish social media accounts, said, “we all worked together but each language has its particular goals, of course” (Pruss). Both the IDF sites and Hamas posted graphic photos of death and destruction as well as illustrations pushing their strategic narrative in their target language to their target audience. These posts inevitably were tweeted and re-tweeted as well as used in more mainstream media reports (Peled). Larger news outlets are turning to Twitter to see what is trending on both sides. What exactly was being tweeted and re-tweeted in the 2012 Twitter war?

A study analyzed the total number of images tweeted by both sides. Hamas’s Alqassam brigades tweeted 171 images, while the IDF tweeted only 72. These images were broken down and split into themes: resistance, threats from the enemy, casualties of own civilians, casualties of own soldiers, destruction, unity, and humanity (Seo). Out of

the 171 images that Hamas tweeted, 72 of them fell under the category of casualties of own civilians. This was a very popular tactic that Hamas used. They posted, often times graphic, images of dead civilians, mostly children. This was in order to gain sympathy and shock value. In reality, the IDF made about 1500 bomb raids during those 8 days while trying to maintain strict margins of safety away from Palestinian centers. “Thanks to Israel’s restraint, there were fewer Palestinian deaths and injuries in this operation, compared to the previous one: according to Palestinian sources, 139 deaths, mostly of civilians; according to Israeli sources, 177 deaths, of whom approximately 120 were combatants” (Ganor). Whichever source you choose to believe, the images of dead children is jarring to see and can effect public opinion greatly. “The covert propaganda frame covered images that implicitly label the other side as an “evil”—for example, a Hamas photo showing a grieving parent in front of a baby killed during an Israeli bombing attack” (Seo). This is what is called a human-interest frame. It makes the viewer feel emotionally connected to the victim. This is an effective propaganda tool as it plays to one’s emotions.

If emotional images made up the majority of Hamas’s tweets, on the Israeli side, the majority of the images tweeted fell under the “resistance” category. “The resistance category covered images that convey defeating the other side or getting prepared for combating the other side” (Seo). This included the image of a headshot of Ahmed al-Jabari with the word “eliminated” going across the poster (see fig. 2). This was the event that sparked the 8-day operation. Hamas responded to the IDF not only with rocket fire but also with a tweet (see fig.3). It seems as if Israel used the resistance label in order to avoid being seen as the aggressor, as it so often was in previous operations. However, it

seems as if this first image of Ahmed Jabari was not such a good choice. “It invited criticism that Israel was *gameifying* the war” (Seo). Israel also tended to post more analytical propaganda as opposed to Hamas who would publish more emotional posts. “Most Israeli images focused on factual elements regarding damages Israel sustained during the confrontation as well as military capabilities of and threats from Hamas” (Seo). They presented a lot of info-graphics with data. However, was this factual approach more effective than Hamas’s emotional one?

“If you had contemplated the victim’s face
 And thought it through, you would have remembered your mother in the
 Gas chamber, you would have been freed from the reason for the rifle
 And you would have changed your mind: this is not the way
 to find one’s identity again” (Darwish).

“Success isn’t given, it is earned. On the track, on the field, in the gym. With
 blood, sweat and the occasional tear” (Nike).

Emotional images can be very powerful. Visual images, especially war images of suffering, have great power over the human mind. I personally had experience with this. After 2009, there was an informal ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. This “ceasefire” period encompassed most of my military service while stationed on the Gaza border. There were still *Qassams* and mortars fired at us. Hamas was still firing RPGs when it could and planting bombs on the border. They were conducting reconnaissance and

building their intricate network of underground tunnels. We did not do much to stop them unless there was a direct threat to our safety. This is a ceasefire with Hamas. This was routine. We knew it was almost a matter of time until the next big operation. However before that operation came, there is one gruesome image that has been ingrained in my mind since 2010.

I served in a field intelligence unit on the Gaza border. I manned the video surveillance and radar equipment. Gaza was my television. I had my specific area and I knew everything about it: the houses, the people, and the routine. It was my job to make sure everything looked normal or at least routine. If something was suspicious, I had to report it. If I saw something that was more dangerous, like a man approaching the fence with a gun, it was my job to navigate the forces to the point. Then, it was up to me to make sure this man was not a diversion by checking all the surrounding areas and possible vulnerable spots. I would also need to consult with other girls occupying the other cameras in order to make sure that something or someone was not in my camera's dead zone. Sometimes, we were also told to gather information on a certain house or area. This information came from intelligence and generally we were not told more than to just watch the house and pass on any and all information. My whole service involved looking through the lens of a camera. It revolved around images and videos.

I knew which houses belonged to Hamas. Actually, anyone who looked at Gaza could probably tell. There were these magnificent houses with pools and nice cars. This was how Hamas lived, while the majority of Gazans lived in shacks and shanty houses in complete poverty. The huge gap between wealthy and poor was very upsetting to see. Especially, when I knew and have seen with my own eyes millions of dollars of aid going

into Gaza. Unfortunately, most Gazans never see this aid as it goes straight into the pockets of Hamas operatives. Whenever we saw someone pull up in a Harley Davidson motorcycle or a Mercedes, we knew that was Hamas and it became immediately suspicious. It pained me to see Hamas exploit these people.

One time, I was so upset that I asked my commander about it. I asked her why all these people living in such gruesome conditions did not resist. She said it was very simple. A mother, who has no money and just wants to feed her children, does not care about politics. All she wants is food for her children. Hamas has many branches. They have a political wing, the Alqassam brigade is their military branch, and they also have a social services wing. If she complies with Hamas, with whom she may or may not agree with, and sends her kids to Hamas groups and schools, Hamas will take care of her family. The children will in turn be educated with a Hamas ideology. If those children, who have been indoctrinated by this ideology, want to take care of their family and make sure they live a bit better, they will become a militant. If they are killed or wounded, their family will receive a larger stipend from Hamas. Unfortunately, in order to survive in Gaza, they must support Hamas. It becomes a vicious cycle.

I witnessed the cycle first hand. It was a cool weekday morning, and everything was routine. All of a sudden, there were two men running towards the fence carrying Kalashnikovs or AK47s. They began to shoot at our soldiers. I was not on the camera at that moment, but I was on duty. I needed to assist the girl watching the camera and call to inform the higher command of what was happening. These men kept approaching and began to fire at us. We also operated a weapon from our surveillance room called a “see and shoot.” It was stationed next to our cameras and had a camera on it itself. You were

able to see the target on the camera and operate it using a joystick, eerily like a video game. I was on the phone and received authorization to use it; however, it was too late. The men already jumped the fence into Israeli territory and began shooting at our forces. It was too dangerous for us to use this as we could put our own soldiers in danger. The soldiers received authorization to fire back at them. They began shooting. There is a rule in the Israeli army about shooting. First, you are supposed to yell at someone to stop, but when they are already trying to kill you this is useless. Then, you are supposed to neutralize them, not kill them. You shoot their knees, arms, and only as a last resort shoot to kill. Unfortunately, these men did not stop shooting and were ultimately killed. I did not see the last part of this ordeal, as I was busy listening and reporting the details to higher command. However, I would see some images a bit later, images that have stayed with me to this day.

A couple of hours later, one of the infantry soldier officers came into our room to thank us for a job well done. He came in with blood on his uniform and a chunk of something that looked like a piece of brain stuck on his pocket. He did not seem to notice or mind as he just got back from the field and was coming down from an adrenaline rush. As he was thanking us, he pulled out a camera. He wanted to show us the pictures from the event that had occurred. Innocently and naively, I looked at the camera not prepared for what I was about to see. It was the men from earlier that day. However, they were not men, they were boys. They were 15-year-old boys! They were not in the same frame together either. One boy was lying there with his head missing. Apparently, it was blown off and was lying a few feet away from his body. This, I thought while becoming a bit queasy, explained the officer's pocket. The other was also laying a few feet away his

body a crumpled mess on the ground. The one thing they had in common, I noticed, were their shoes. They were both wearing Nike sneakers. This is what got me: the two 15-year-old boys who decided to take Kalashnikovs one day with their Nike sneakers and shoot at a very sophisticated army. This is ultimately a death sentence.

This image is forever ingrained in my mind. It made me wonder. What could have motivated these boys to do such a thing? They were children! I remembered what my commander said about Hamas and I was angry. We learned later that no one officially took responsibility, meaning that neither Hamas nor any other organization sent these boys. However, I blame Hamas. I blame the conditions under which they let their people live, indoctrination they teach their children, and the way they reward the martyrs' families. How else would boys with Nike sneakers decide one day to go out on a suicide mission? I guess the Nike advertisement about achieving success with blood did not go unheeded.

This image has affected me immensely. I understand the power of images especially war time images. These were the types of photographs, albeit a little less gruesome, that Hamas was putting out on social media during the operations. How can you not have sympathy for them? Like Mahmoud Darwish, the renowned Palestinian poet says, maybe we would have more sympathy if we saw these men for what they actually were: 15-year-old boys with Nike sneakers. However, how does that make things any easier or clearer? Do we just let these boys shoot, wound, and kill us because they are boys? I wish it were as simple as Darwish professes it to be. Unfortunately, these images are not accompanied by a back-story that explains what happened. For example, if I did not know what happened before these 2 boys were killed and I just saw the photograph of

the bodies accompanied with a caption that Israel killed them. I, too, would be angry at Israel. Especially, if I was a member of the international community who did not really understand the complicated politics that exists here. I probably would also argue that Israel is the aggressor and should “contemplate the victims face.” However, because I am able to zoom out and see the whole picture, I can see that Hamas is the real aggressor and the Gazan people are her victims. Images of wounded or dead children can be very powerful. It does not matter if you see the whole picture or just a fragment of it. The image will affect you because it plays to your emotions. This is an effective propaganda tool, especially when you are able to connect with the victims, when they are wearing Nike sneakers, like you do, or your brother, or your mother. These images stay with you. They affect you.

"A great deal of intelligence can be invested in ignorance when the need for illusion is deep" (Saul Bellow)

In Pillar of Defense, Israel tried very hard to do what it had failed in all the previous wars. In 2006, Israel did not have a strong strategy in regards to media. It can be argued that they did not have a strategy whatsoever. In 2008, Israel attempted to close off an open society, which ultimately backfired. In 2012, there was another media shift. Israel turned to social media to attempt to shape what the world was seeing. However, Hamas's emotional images were definitely more powerful than Israel's resistance based ones.

Reminiscent of the Adnan Hajj scandal in 2006, some of these emotional images were proven to be false.

“During Israel's Operation Pillar of Defense, the Al Qassam Brigades tweeted a photo of a weeping man with bloodstained pants standing in a hospital waiting room holding what appeared to be the lifeless body of a young boy. Within hours it was discovered this photo was actually taken in Syria months earlier. The photo was removed, but Hamas has continued to be dogged by accusations that it manipulates images” (Kerr).

It is much easier in the world of Google images search to check credibility of photographs. However, Hamas does not necessarily care about the credibility of their photographs. They need to create an illusion. On social media, images can go viral quickly. Once you have seen the image, the damage has been done. This is the essence of propaganda. It does not necessarily matter if your post or tweet is factual. All it takes is for someone to believe it is even for a second, and these propagandist illusions can become quite powerful.

Hamas was not the only one resorting to questionable means to spread its propaganda. Israel set up a “war room” at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzilya. Paid university student manned this “war room.” They took to social media to tweet and post (Kerr). Israel was criticized because they paid their activists, and that the students did not have to reveal that they were working for the government. The argument was that the purpose of this was to “foster impressions of support from the general public, as well as a sense of nationalism” (Kerr). However, I personally know a few people who participated in this “war room.” They got paid minimally, but they wanted to make a difference.

These are university students after all who cannot necessarily give up free time for free. Many of them were already tweeting and posting from their own personal accounts. Therefore, the argument that it created a false sense of support is flawed. Israel was not deceiving herself or the international community to create an illusion of support. There was support. This initiative unified and guided students who were utilizing social media in their own personal sphere in order to make a more cohesive narrative. However, was it cohesive enough?

When analyzing the posts and data from Twitter, it seems if Hamas once again won the (social) media war. However, Israel does not necessarily see it like that. Israel enlisted Sacha Dratwa, the IDF director of “new media” to help with “branding” of their social media (Shamah). Dratwa truly believes that Israel did a better job this time around. “I really believe we prevented a repeat of the Goldstone Report (which accused Israel of deliberately targeting civilians in the wake of Operation Cast Lead), because a lot more people understand us now” (Shamah). He also claims that Israel beat Hamas in *hasbara* due to the fact that foreign media asked more questions about Twitter than bombings in Gaza. However, this is not necessarily a victory for Israel.

The social media war is a new frontier and therefore caught the attention of the press. The dwindling power of conventional news sites causes them to ask questions about social media. It does not necessarily mean that Israel is victorious, and Israel is wrong in believing so. They might be doing better on the social media front. However, in order to determine who actually won, you must look at the international community and not at the news sites.

According to a blog post article that analyzes a report done by Ben-Gurion University, “the IDF's attempts were no match for those of Twitter-savvy Hamas representatives” (Clark). The report also found that the IDF’s tweets were more often attacked than Hamas’s tweets. They suggest that this might be due to the fact that the IDF did not engage people on Twitter. The report also blames the resistance type posts that the IDF used like the one of Ahmad Jabari (see fig.2). The IDF also did not use hashtags in a uniform and consistent way. This made it more difficult to track the IDF’s posts. All these factors together created an in-cohesive narrative.

Even though Israel definitely tried very hard in the 2012 operation to improve its image in the international community and they may claim that they came out victorious, Hamas still did a better job. Improvement is not the equivalent to victory. Israel is “investing in ignorance” if they believe it to be so. “Of course, as the death toll rose and images of yet more Palestinian civilian casualties were published on Twitter, this campaign appeared futile” (Clark). Israel’s info-graphics and resistance inspired tweets were no match for Hamas’s emotional tweets.

The Egyptian brokered ceasefire went into effect on 21 November 2012. Hamas took this to mean an all over victory. The Al Qassam Brigade tweeted, “#Israel's army has raised the White Flag in front of Hamas's armed wing” (Kerr). After the ceasefire, Hamas still continued to fire rockets into Israel (Keinon). Israel let Hamas know on a blog post that a ceasefire does not mean they were victorious in the war. “The IDF is determined to continue targeting sites that are used to carry out terror attacks against Israel and its citizens” (Kerr). Hamas may have won over world sympathy through social

media; however, they did not have a strategic victory. The fighting and the social media posts would only continue, and another full-blown operation emerged in 2014.

“They couldn't beat him in the battle room, and knew it – so instead they would attack him where it was safe, where he was not a giant but just a little boy” (Card 187).

Operation Protective Edge was launched on 8 July 2014 immediately after the IDF Operation Brother's Keeper. Operation Brother's Keeper was launched in order to find 3 kidnapped Israeli teens and their kidnappers. Prime Minister of Israel Bibi Netanyahu claimed the kidnappers were Hamas operatives; however, Hamas denied any responsibility. Israel and the IDF went searching for the kidnappers and arrested many Hamas operatives. Hamas responded with over 40 rockets fired towards Israel. This is what sparked Protective Edge.

Operation Protective Edge had two goals: to restore the quiet to southern Israel and to destroy Hamas's intricate tunnel network. The operation began with air strikes and eventually led to a ground invasion. This operation led to another surge of tweets on Twitter and posts on social media. According to a study published in the journal *Information, Communication, and Society*, “the conditions under which Operation Protective Edge took place were significantly different from those of previous operations in at least one important parameter: that of communications” (Siapera et al). The article claims that this operation was different because the media streams were more complex and dynamic. There were more types of media streams that flowed back and forth

between one another. This created a new ecosystem for media and news. While this statement is correct, the authors fails to acknowledge the important role that Twitter played in the previous operation in Gaza. While the content posted in Pillar of Defense was different and the users more limited, Twitter was still present as a contender and was influential. However in Protective Edge, Twitter became more prominent and citizen journalists more prevalent.

The article analyzed the data and grouped it under different criteria. One of these criteria was the “self reported descriptions by those (Twitter) screen-name” (Siapera et al). They sorted the user names into religious beliefs, sex, and occupation. The screen names were also sorted by location as well as language. The main user groups tended to be males and were students and journalists. People who identified as Muslims were the most active. English followed by Spanish made up the majority of the poster’s languages. The posts were coming predominately from the United States, United Kingdom, Indonesia, and Venezuela. It is important to note that some of the user names were “bots.” These bots aggregate information from different sites and post automatically. They have the potential to spread information quickly and to different audiences. This is why bots can be very useful when it comes to propaganda. However, what were both these bots and humans posting?

The hashtags used can give a clue to what type of content was posted. The dominant hashtags used were #Gaza, #GazaUnderAttack, #Israel, #Palestine, #Hamis, and #FreePalestine (Sapiera et al). It seems from this the majority of the tweets were pro-Palestinians. It is also important to mention the re-tweets. Re-tweets show what other people were sharing with their sphere of friends. In essence, re-tweeting shows who and

how many support the original content. The most popular re-tweets had hashtags of #Gaza, #GazaUnderAttack, #Palestine, #Israel, #PrayforGaza, and #FreePalestine. “An analysis of the text shows that a large proportion of the re-tweets contain information related to the rocket attacks on Gaza” (Sapiera et al). Additionally, the top 3 most used keywords include children, killing, and rockets. This shows a majority of pro-Palestinian posts in this conflict. Why is this so?

The article overall blames Israel for this. They claim that “Israel has sought to restrict the Internet access of Palestinians through the restrictions of landlines, mobile, and Internet infrastructures,” and the claim there is this “Intifada 3.0 (Sapiera et al). This Intifada 3.0 refers to “the growing Palestinians resistance on and about the internet.” On the battlefield Israel cannot be beat; however, on social media Israel becomes a “little boy.” The claim is that Palestinians resort to social media more than Israelis so that they can show their side and combat their lack of a voice in the media. However, this argument is flawed for a few reasons. First, in regards to the claim that Israel restricts the Internet of Palestinians, if this were true then there would not be such a wide influx of Palestinians posting on social media. The inverse would be true, as they would not have proper access. Additionally, while up until recently Israel did not as of yet allow the usage of Palestinian companies in the West Bank to use 3G, Palestinians in these areas had access to smartphones, and 3G Internet access through Israeli companies (Lynfield, Dvorin). Whether Israel was wrong in denying Palestinians companies from accessing 3G is up for debate. However, the access was still there for those who needed it and chose to take advantage of it. Second, this specific article says itself that the majority of posts and posters were from the United States, United Kingdom, Indonesia, and Venezuela. The

posters were not predominately from the West Bank or Gaza. Therefore, the claim that there are more Palestinians resorting to social media in order to gain a voice is flawed. The article seems to contradict its own claims.

This is not the only time this article contradicts itself. The article goes into detail about the IDF (@IDFSpokesperson) and Hamas (@AlQassamBrigades). The information on the Alqassam brigades is difficult to analyze and assess as their official Twitter account was suspended. Most likely due to the fact that Twitter has a very clear and strong community standards. The United States and the international body has officially declared Hamas a terrorist organization, and a Twitter account made by a recognized terrorist groups goes against those standards. It is interesting; however, that Twitter only chose until this operation to suspend the account. After the suspension, Alqassam brigades operated under a few different accounts. For the purposes of the article, the authors focused on two: @Qassam_English and @qassamsms.

Both the IDF and Hamas used text in their posts. However, like in the last war, the IDF also tweeted more pictures, info graphics, and videos. This type of content tended to get re-tweeted more often. "Communications emerging from the IDF were much more likely to be re-tweeted than those coming from Alqassam" (Sapiera et al). However, this conclusion is inherently flawed. The authors themselves state that the Alqassam brigade's main account was closed, and that they only focused on two of their many other accounts. This could be why the " IDF's tweets were more in volume, has more resonance, and were more influential" (Sapiera et al). While the authors do acknowledge that Hamas could not add much to the debate because Twitter suspended the account, they still draw the conclusions that the IDF's posts were stronger. They were

not necessarily stronger; there just was not much to compare them to. If the IDF did not have strong posts, Al Qassam Brigades' account was suspended, and the majority of tweets were not coming from Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, where were all these pro-Palestinian posts coming from?

“It's an awful lot to take in, this elaborate plan in which I was a piece, just as I was meant to be a piece in the Hunger Games. Used without consent, without knowledge.” (Collins).

While students and journalists together made up a large percentage of the tweeters, citizen journalists played a much larger roll in this operation than any of the previous ones. Farah Baker known by her Twitter username @Farah_Gazan shared her experiences using the hashtag #GazaUnderAttack (Siapera et al). She gained 70,000 followers in 3 days and was the 13th most mentioned user. She gained a lot of notice and was interviewed by many news sites. This was the first war that the citizen journalist played a large part in mainstream media.

There are a few explanations as to the why this was the first war to have these citizen journalists play such an active role. Social media has become the great equalizer in regards to people's voices being heard. Many claim that the emergence of social media has sparked an influx of posts from people whose voices have been silenced. As in previous Israeli-Arab wars, there are many claims on both sides of the disproportionality in traditional media. On the Palestinian side, there is this argument that citizen journalists have taken to social media in order to remedy the disproportionality in traditional media.

However, there is also the claim that these citizen journalists were not citizen journalists at all, but either paid or persuaded by their prospective governments to take to the media (Kerr, Lapkin). On the Israeli side, there were paid university students operating from a room in the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya. However, there were also many people who took to social media posting pictures and videos of living in bomb shelters, air raid sirens, and the iron dome intercepting *Qassams* in order to show how life was in Israel during that time. As mentioned before, in Gaza, there were people like Farah Baker. However, the authenticity of these citizen journalists has been questioned.

A report by the NGO, MEMRI (the Middle East Media Research Institute), found an instructional video from the Hamas Interior Ministry. This video “issued guidelines to Gaza social media users on how they should report events, advising them to depict all casualties as “innocent civilians and not to show evidence of rockets fired from population centers” (Ben Solomon). The video also instructed social media activists on how to speak to westerners. It said you must use “political, rational, and persuasive discourse,” and to talk about the dead and wounded instead of calling them martyrs. Hamas wanted to exploit its civilians through social media in order to gain world support. Hamas uses its civilian as pawns in this “elaborate plan.” It is unclear whether Farah Baker was one of these pawns. It is not known whether she specifically was influenced or persuaded by her government’s mission. However, judging from her posts, it does abide by the guidelines set forth by Hamas. This is not the only way that Hamas exploits its civilians.

During the operation, Israel captured and released a Hamas pamphlet that explained how civilians could be used to fight the IDF forces. The manual goes into

detail about how far the IDF will go to limit civilian casualties (Lapkin, “Israel’s Protection and Hamas’ Exploitation of Civilians in Operation Protective Edge”). Hamas has been criticized for using civilians as human shields. This is for a few reasons: in order to decrease their chances of IDF retaliation and in order to gain local and world support if they do. The pamphlet details this. “The destruction of civilian homes: This increases the hatred of citizens towards the attackers [the IDF] and increases their gathering [support] around the city defenders [i.e. Hamas]” (Lapkin). Although this point has been contested by some, it is important to note in addition to the fact that I have seen this with my own eyes and the very detailed documentation by the military on this point, Operation Protective Edge was one of the first times that this was proven. The UN inquiry into an IDF bombing one of their schools during “Operation Protective Edge confirmed Israel’s charges that Hamas used those facilities to store weapons and launch attacks against Israel” (“UN Report Confirms Hamas Stored and Fired Weapons from UN Schools”). When the IDF bombed those specific schools, the buildings were empty. If the building was occupied, the IDF has a policy to release pamphlets telling civilians to leave before they bomb an area in which they know that civilians are present. However, Hamas prevents them from leaving for the exact reasons they state in the captured pamphlets. They want civilian deaths. They use their civilians as pawns “without their consent or knowledge.”

Overall Hamas does a decent job of portraying the image that they want in the media. Most of the posts and re-tweets during this operation were pro-Palestinian. In this operation, like in the last, civilian deaths are no match over textual posts and infographics. Hamas is very good at manipulating both its own citizens and world opinion.

A cease-fire, brokered once again by Egypt, went into effect on the 16 August 2014. Israel claimed it had eliminated around 32 tunnels and succeeded in their mission of eliminating the tunnel threat and restoring quiet. Hamas, yet again, proclaimed victory because the IDF retreated. There were 66 IDF soldiers, 6 Israeli civilians, and 1 Thai civilian killed on the Israeli side. In Gaza, the exact number of casualties varies, but it stands around 2000. Israel estimates that about half were militants, and another 20 percent could not be identified as either militant or civilian (Laub and Alhlou, The State of Israel). Hamas claims that around 70% were civilians. It is impossible to say who is correct. However, given the information that Hamas has put forth in both their pamphlets and guidelines to their civilians, it seems that the number the Israeli government put out is probably closer to the truth. However, "Israel is being denounced by the United States, the United Nations, and other European countries for its Gaza operation and the resulting civilian casualties" (Lapkin). As much as Israel tried to explain their side through conventional media channels and social media, it was not effective. The fact that Hamas uses civilians as human shields, manipulates and uses its civilians in order to gain local and world sympathy is ignored. All the world sees is a disproportionate number and emotional pictures of dead civilians. After seeing this, there is not much Israel can do to improve its image. Although they try and may gain a few sympathizers, Israel can never win this media war against Hamas.

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Israel is not getting better at the information war even though they are trying harder and changing their tactics. Pre-2nd Israeli-Lebanon war, information was open, and not controlled. There was no strategic narrative in place. After the war, Israel changed their approach. They issued a press ban and made an open society a closed one. This backfired on Israel. The next two operations were defined by the introduction of social media. Israel tried to remedy its past mistakes and have a more unified strategic narrative. However, Hamas was able to do it better. Why is this so? Is it just the emotional images that Hamas portrayed in their posts and tweets or is there more to it?

Anti-Semitism goes back thousands of years. Anti-Zionism or anti-Israel is the politically correct term for being anti-Semitic. Israel and Judaism goes hand in hand. Israel is the Jewish State after all. No Jewish wedding ceremony is complete without the breaking of the glass and the recitation of the following Psalm: “If I forget thee Jerusalem, Let my right hand forget its cunning.” Separating Judaism from Israel is like cutting off a person’s dominant hand. Israel is a vital part in the Jewish identity. The conflation of Israel and Judaism becomes apparent in the way the world views Israel. “ According to the Working definition of Anti-Semitism, anti-Semitism can be manifested by ‘holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel’ ” (Jikeli). Whenever there is criticism of Israel, it is inevitably taken out on the Jews, even those who do not live in Israel. This can be clearly seen through the recent attacks on France’s Jewish community in the name of Palestine. For example, there was an incident during Protective edge where Pro-Palestinian protestors threw Molotov cocktails at a synagogue Paris (Winer). Additionally, if you look at lists of headlines from Europe in the media it becomes apparent that the world does not separate Jews and Israel. These are just some of the headlines: “Neo Nazis, Islamists Declare ‘You Jews are Beasts’ During Protest of Israeli Operation” in Frankfurt; “Firebombs Fail to Ignite at Toulouse Jewish Center”; “Madrid Jews Vow Legal Action against Author Who Justified Expulsions”; “Jewish Museums in Norway closed for fear of Attacks”; “Well-Known Italian Philosopher: ‘I’d Like to the Shoot Those Bastard Zionists’” (Weinthal). The list goes on. Additionally when looking at “Arab anti-Israel discourse, the terms Jews and Israelis are very often synonymous” (Yakira). If being anti-Zionist were not the same as being anti-Semitic, then why would anyone even think to attack Jews who do not live in Israel, are

not Israeli, and are proud citizens of their home country?

One interesting feature it seems of anti-Zionism is the fact that it tries to delegitimize the state of Israel, whether through claims of an apartheid state, an imperialist one, or equating Israel with Nazi Germany. These above trends are summed up in Elhanan Yakira's book *Resurgent Anti-Semitism*.

“Many people oppose, for example, the occupation and annexation of Tibet by China. But no one is against China as such or calls for its demise, not only because China is too big and too powerful, but also because it does not make any sense to think about it, or any other existing state, in these terms” (Yakira).

The fact that there have been over 60 UN human rights resolutions on Israel is preposterous and unsubstantiated. The council has passed more resolutions on Israel than any other country combined. The actions of Hamas, an internationally recognized terrorist group, have only been alluded to. Countries and organizations who have committed worse human rights violations such as North Korea, Syria, Boko Haram, Isis, etc. barely get a mention. While Israel, a country that values human rights and tries to do things right, is criticized. Israel admits when it makes a mistake. Alan Dershowitz, a prominent scholar and lawyer, brings up this very point in his book *The Case for Israel*.

“It is fair to say that although Israeli actions in combating terrorism have been far from perfect, Israel has been in greater compliance with the rule of law than any other country facing comparable dangers” (Dershowitz).

Israel, like every other nation, is not perfect, but it is country that values human rights and attempts to better itself. These human rights resolutions are unwarranted. What other country warns civilians and their own military targets through pamphlets, phone, calls,

and texts before they attack? It is costly and makes no sense militarily. Israel makes huge strides to limit civilian casualties. Meanwhile, organizations like Hamas use civilians as human shields and targets civilian populations. The UN will not acknowledge this violation until Hamas are caught red-handed, like in Protective Edge, but also will only issue a brief statement of condemnation against the “group or groups responsible for this flagrant violation of the inviolability of its premises under international law” (UNRWA). Not only is this lack of condemnation of Hamas hypocritical and inexcusable but it also reveals the council’s clear anti-Semitic agenda of delegitimizing the state of Israel. This in itself creates a narrative for the media to emulate.

In this instance, the council failed to condemn Hamas and went on to denounce Israel. Pierre Krähenbüh, the UNRWA commissioner-general, said that he “condemn[s] in the strongest possible terms the serious violation of international law by Israel forces...This is an affront to all of us, a source of universal shame. Today the world stands disgraced” (Raghavan et al). The disproportionality in these statements is great. Hamas’s actions are only alluded to, while Israel’s are a “source of universal shame.” As stated previously, Israel takes many measures in order to avoid civilian casualties. The high number of civilian casualties in Gaza can be blamed on Hamas’s use of civilians as human shields as well as their manipulation of facts and numbers. Ethics in war is a very complicated subject. No one wins in war. There are mistakes made, people are killed. The Palestinians suffer and while they may have legitimate claims, Israel does not warrant these strong words from the international community. “ In Israel’s case—arguably only in Israel’s case—charges of criminalization often lead to the denial of the country’s basic legitimacy in the sense of denying it its right to exist” (Yakira). Whilst critiquing Israel or

any country for that matter is legitimate, the criticism Israel receives goes beyond a mere criticism. It is an attempt rooted in hatred to vilify and delegitimize Israel.

When speaking of war ethics in Israel, an interesting research paper comes up called *Controlled Occupation: The Rarity of Military Rape in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. In it, the author Tal Nitsan, a doctoral student at Hebrew University wanted to study why there have been no rapes of Palestinian women committed by IDF soldiers. The claim was that every other army in the world rapes its victims. Why does the IDF not rape Palestinian women? Nitsan says, “it can be seen that the lack of military rape merely strengthens the ethnic boundaries and clarifies inter-ethnic differences” (Nitsan). The paper goes on to say, “the rejection of, just like the use of, intentional military rape can serve to reinforce group boundaries” (Nitsan). Nitsan is basically saying that Israel is racist for not raping Palestinian women. She claims that Israel dehumanizes Palestinians to such an extent that Palestinian women are no more than mere animals in the eyes of an IDF soldier! The conclusion was not that maybe IDF soldiers hold themselves to a higher moral standard, but that they dehumanize Palestinians! It is such a baseless claim, a catch 22, and a damned if you do, damned if you don’t scenario. This thesis has received awards. Many argue that since this thesis came out of an Israeli university and was written in part by a Jew, that it cannot be anti-Semitic. However, there are many Israeli groups and NGOS like B’Tselem and Breaking the Silence that have been criticized as being biased against the government (Rosenblatt). Israel is a modern democracy and cannot control these anti-Semitic, anti-Israel voices. This is just an example that has been referenced in the media, contributing to the demonizing image of Israel no matter what it does. The fact that this paper, much like the UN, comes from a seemingly legitimate

source only enhances claims against Israel that leads to its de-legitimization. The only way to explain these paradoxical arguments that have become accepted in academia is anti-Semitism.

Additionally, the claims that Israel is racist and is an apartheid state have become a part of the topos of the Israel-Arab debate. Israel has its problems. Like every other country, Israel struggles with its minority populations whether that be the Ethiopian Jewish community, the Arab one, or any other population. Israel tries to correct it. There are affirmative action programs in place. If you go now to Hebrew University's or Tel Aviv University's campus, you will not go three steps without hearing a group of students conversing in Arabic. I served in the IDF with Druze soldiers, Bedouin soldiers, and Muslim Israeli Arabs. The claims that Israel is an apartheid state are unfounded. Again the only explanation is this deep-rooted anti-Semitism.

Moreover, movements like BDS ultimately hurt Palestinians more than they hurt Israelis. Yet BDS will not even acknowledge this. This is because of this type of hatred. For example, Soda Stream employed hundreds of Palestinians workers in its factory in the West Bank. Daniel Birnbaum gave them health benefits, transportation, and a good salary, something that is difficult to find in that area. Pressure from BDS forced Birnbaum to move his factory to Israel proper. Many Palestinians, who were the sole breadwinners for their large families, lost their jobs and health benefits. Only a handful was able to secure visas to keep working in the new factory (Birnbaum still employs many Bedouin Israeli Arabs). Soda Stream is expanding, business is good, but what happened to the Palestinians who worked for him? Omar Barghouti, a founding member of BDS is now getting his PHD from Tel Aviv University. This is completely

hypocritical to the movement. People choose to follow it because of anti-Semitism. Abraham H. Foxman, the National Director of the Anti-Defamation League said, “We are talking here about hate, not mere criticism. The BDS movement at its very core is anti-Semitic” (Foxman). If they really cared and wanted to help the Palestinian people rather than try to hurt Israel, they would have advocated for more factories like Soda stream to be built. However, they care more about hating Israel and the Jews than the plight of the Palestinian people.

In Gaza, the media fails to mention that there is another entire border with Egypt. Israel gives tons of aid to Gaza including free electricity, which inevitably Hamas uses against them (Kontrovich). There is no aid that goes through the Egyptian border crossing. It all comes through Israel. While an indicative fence separates the Gaza-Israel border, the Egyptians have built a steel wall. Egypt even redirected their sewage pipes to flood the Hamas tunnels (Al-Mughrabi). However, There are no calls of human rights violations or to end an Egyptian blockade, and it is barely reported in the media? Why? The same reason other more horrible atrocities are committed in the world (i.e. Boko Haram, Isis, etc.) and not mentioned with as much frequency and fervor: Because it is not the Jewish state.

“Let them see that their words can cut you, and you’ll never be free of the mockery. If they want to give you a name, take it, make it your own. Then they can’t hurt you with it anymore” (Martin).

This deep-rooted anti-Semitism is why Israel can never win the media war. Although the social media war allows both sides to get their voices heard in what appears to be equal footings, Hamas has the upper hand. Hamas uses pictures that play to people's emotions; emotions that are already felt and are looking for validation. College campuses both in the US and abroad are filled with calls for BDS. The UN is hyper-focused on Israel. The world is just waiting to condemn Israel. After each operation Israel tried tirelessly to improve their image in the media. After the first Lebanon war, where the press had free range in Israel, the press turned on them. Israel suffered blows both militarily and through the media. When the press was not limited and Israel had no real control over what was printed, the press tended to criticize Israel. The fact that Israel lacked a unified strategic narrative did not help. Israel tried to remedy this in the next war in Gaza with a press ban. This, too, backfired on Israel, as an "open society" cannot limit freedom of the press without criticism. In the next wars, social media emerged as a contender. However, Israel's info-graphics were no match for Hamas's images of dead civilians.

Although, the press and media did play a crucial role in shaping the outcome of the wars and Israel's future policies both in media and military strategy, world opinion remained overall unchanged. It seems as if no matter what Israel tries, world opinion will never be in their favor. People do not want to hear what Israel does to limit civilian casualties. When they see the pictures from Hamas, it does not seem as if Israel is doing that much. Israel has tried to explain the type of organization they are up against; however, both anti-Semitism and emotional images prevents people from seeing this. There is no way to solve Israel's media problem. Maybe they should take the name they

are given “and make it their own.” Israel knows who it is and what it does. Why should world opinion matter? Maybe if Israel stops caring so much then, “they won’t be able to hurt them with it anymore”? The truth is it does not matter how much better Israel can get at the social media war. There is a deep-rooted, unadulterated, illogical hatred that goes back thousands of years, and that is impossible to change. It might be better to stop trying to combat what is written and maybe this will set Israel “free from the mockery.”

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