



COMPETING IN THE SOCIAL BATTLESPACE:
INFLUENCING THE THREE DOMAINS

BY

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APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.



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ABSTRACT

This study reveals the three domains all nations, organizations, and individuals use to produce theories and strategies in their pursuit to fulfill interests and the cyclical influence the Social Battlespace has on each of these domains. To see this, the author describes the three domains, the Physical, Cognitive, and Mechanical, and how they interact with one another. Next, this study shows that it is the dominant narrative within the Social Battlespace that mobilizes the domain elements into action to fulfill a narrative's cause. However, with the rise of cyber and its interconnecting platforms, such as the Internet, mobile communications, and social media, the way narratives compete within the Social Battlespace is changing. No longer are narratives created and maintained by those with power and with elite status; rather, cyber is now diffusing narrative power and control to ordinary people who now have technological access. This study analyzes these ideas by using historical examples from the Cold War to show the power of the Social Battlespace. A case study on the #BlackLivesMatter movement shows how the Social Battlespace is evolving the competition that is resident within this space. The implications of this study illustrate that hierarchal organizations, inherent in the U.S. government, will find it difficult to not only control a narrative in a cyber-influenced Social Battlespace, but to counter them, as well. These organizations must learn to diffuse their narrative control in order to compete in today's Social Battlespace. Failure to do so, will result in an inability to properly mobilize the three domains in their favor. Thus, a failure in strategy.

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INTRODUCTION

Theorists and strategists focus their ideas on coercively applying technologies, resources, people, organizations, and systems against an adversary in an attempt to affect an enemy's will, to change behavior, or sustain a status quo.¹ However, the shortfall in applying these one-dimensional ideas is that theories and strategies *only* focus on the use or employment of physical resources, technologies, and organizational systems; none suggest direct cognitive strategies. Additionally, strategists and theorists do not consider influencing competitive narratives that continuously occur within a Social Battlespace. To overcome this shortfall, one must take a step back and see that it is not the diplomatic, informational, military, or economic efforts that entities use to shape both international and military interactions. Rather, theorists and strategists must view such interactions in light of three domains: Physical, Mechanical, and Cognitive. They must consider developing direct Social Battlespace strategies to influence the three domains and their inherent elements. Only then can leaders produce effective theories and strategies to reach goals, protect interests, or guarantee security.

With this in mind, one must first recognize the three domains that nations, organizations, and individuals continuously manipulate to fulfill their interests. Next, it is important to understand that the three domains do not operate in isolation; rather, an effect in one domain influences the other two. It is within this integration of the three domains where ideologies, theories, and strategies reside. Theorists and strategists do not always recognize the three domains and their existence

¹ In airpower studies, Douhet, Trenchard, Mitchell, and even Warden felt that, if used properly, the airplane could impact the will of the people in such a way that they would force their national leaders to capitulate in war. To see this argument, see Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: The Evolution of British and American Ideas about Strategic Bombing, 1914-1945* (Princeton University Press, 2009).

in relation to one another; therefore, these leaders do not consider the impact these domains have on future strategies.

After presenting the three domains, this Thesis will reveal the Social Battlespace, what it is, and how this space mobilizes the three domains into action. The Social Battlespace is not a contemporary concept as it has always been present and influential in mobilizing the three domains and their elements into action to fulfill or acquire interests. After understanding the Social Battlespace and its influence over the three domains, it is important to recognize the evolution occurring within this social space due to technological and social developments. This battlespace is changing due to the advent of the Internet, smart technologies, interconnectivity, and universal access. To present this social and technological change, a case study over the *#BlackLivesMatter* movement will show how their competitive narrative quickly moved the elements within the three domains into action. The concluding body of this work evaluates the implications of this technological change and presents recommendations for a concerted effort to develop Social Battlespace strategies to counter the negative effects of hostile strategic narratives and harness the positive ones that can further national interests.

The ideas presented here that emphasize direct Social Battlespace strategies, do not prescribe ways or means to win future conflicts. Theorists and strategists in the past mistakenly proclaimed their ideas on war, international orders, technologies, and the systems produced by organizational structures as a panacea to stop or win future conflicts. However, no victory, failure, strength, or weakness originates from a single or distinct cause, although many have tried to find that singular cause. Instead, the purpose here is for theorists and strategists to realize they must think across three domains equally and produce winning social strategies in order to introduce effective ideas to further

the interests of nations, organizations, or individuals. Failure to adopt these ideas is a failure of strategy.



CHAPTER 1

THREE DOMAINS

*With many calculations one can win war, with
few one cannot.*

Sun Tzu

There are three domains where nations, organizations, and individuals consistently maneuver, balance, or control to gain and maintain interests. These are the Physical, Mechanical, and Cognitive domains (see *Figure 1 on page 6*). The Physical domain is self-explanatory and easiest to understand because of its three elements: blood, bombs, and butter. Blood represents the people or human resources required to field armies, work factories, or create technologies. It is both the people and the person. In his history on the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides chronicles King Archidamus' speech to Sparta on the disadvantages of attacking Athens.¹ In the end, King Archidamus fails to convince the people of Sparta to refrain from entering war with Athens. The point here, however, is that even in this earliest depiction in history, the importance of *blood*, represented by both the people (Sparta) and the person (the King), is recognized. Without the *blood*, there is no Sparta, there is no king, there is no war, and there is no history. Even in today's environment, with all its technological and intellectual advancements, the importance of the human resource cannot be understated and, as such, requires large investment.

Bombs, on the other hand, characterize the industrial and technological innovations that are used for purposes of creation, development, collaboration, maintenance, or destruction. Simply, these are merely the tools and machines to either enhance or, in some way,

¹ Robert B. Strassler, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War* (Simon and Schuster, 1998), Book 1:80-89.

automate human actions, wants, and needs. Finally, butter describes the interests entities must pursue, for whatever cause or reason. Every living or inanimate object resides in the Physical domain and it is where states and people prepare themselves the most to increase their sense of security and sense of power. It is in this domain where one can visualize a ground force meeting another ground force or an air conflict between two nations' air forces. In relation to cyber, it is the physical equipment, such as the servers, routers, and switches, as well as, the people who maintain them and the customers who use them.

The Mechanical domain inherently consists of three elements itself: systems, norms, and orders. The elements from the Physical and Cognitive domain create the Mechanical domain to increase their own abilities while pursuing interests. For example, the Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite, although a physical entity orbiting Earth, was produced from the ideas of people and organizations and provides raw data in the form of telemetry to a fighter pilot that he or she can use within their decision-making process. Likewise, Twitter, which requires physical servers to provide capabilities, is a system used to quickly share ideas and collaborate with others globally. Lastly, the United Nations is an organization made up of states, their militaries, and technologies, coupled with an ideology that proposes cooperation to produce international orders and norms. In these examples, cognitive ideas and physical objects combine to produce and enforce guidelines, processes, and standards form the Mechanical domain.

The Cognitive domain is where actual decision-making takes place—where policy, objectives, ideas and, emotions reside. This domain consists of four elements: education, training, experience, and ignorance. This domain, once mobilized for a purpose, is unique because its elements directly influence and are influenced by actions occurring in the other two domains, sparking emotional and sometimes dramatic responses. For example, China, in 2014, began building artificial islands

in the South China Sea.² Of course, this required Physical elements to carry rock and concrete to the reefs and people to build them. At the same time, China created a logistical and military system, a function from the Mechanical domain, to support such an endeavor. From a cognitive perspective, however, China's long history, culture, identity, and increasing sense of power produced a decision to use and create physical and mechanical elements within the South China Sea. China's actions also produced a cognitive reaction on the world stage that created an emotional response that formed a decision from nations like the United States to mobilize.³

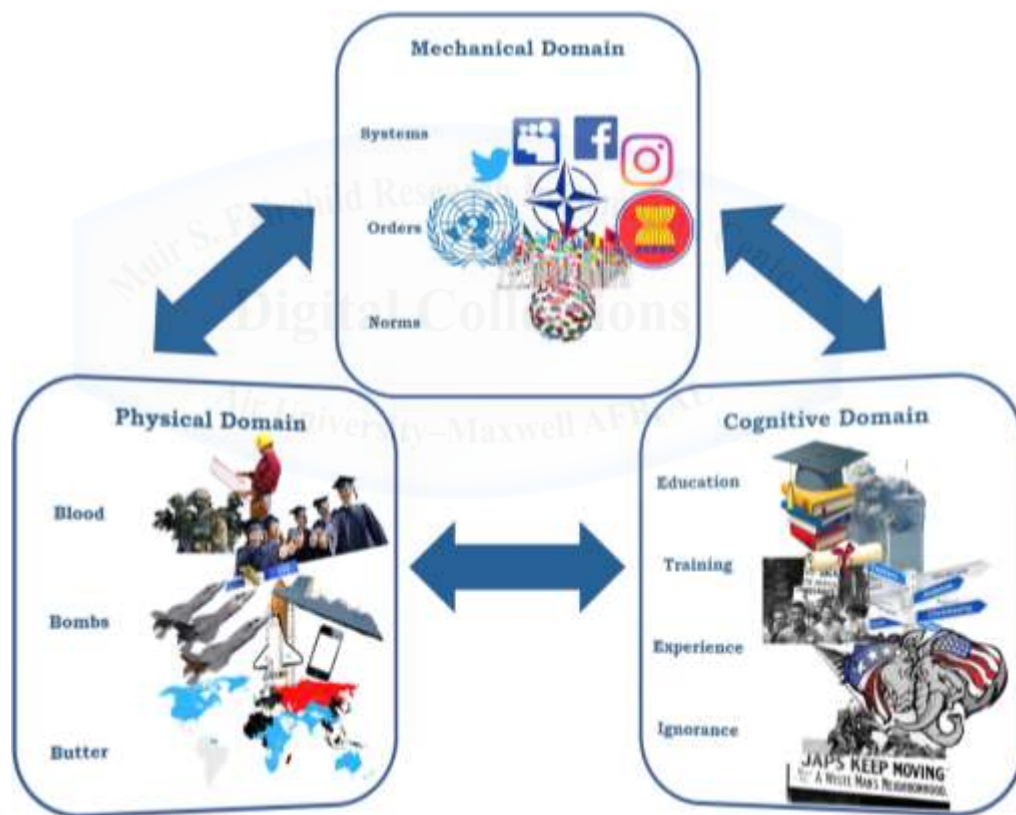


Figure 1: Three Domains

Source: Author's Original Work

² Trefor Moss, "China Begins Construction in Spratly Islands," *Wall Street Journal*, May 14, 2014, sec. World, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304908304579561123291666730>.

³ The United States, after the Second World War, painstakingly normalized an international world order that ensured their military dominance and their ability to project power in all regions. China's artificial islands threatens this perceived US dominance and the markets sought by other Asian nations.

Cyclical Influence

Actions and reactions by different entities taken in one domain immediately influence the other two because of their interconnectedness. For example, if China decided American presence in the South China Sea was unacceptable and began jamming the GPS constellation, this would be a choice made in the Cognitive domain to use the elements from the Physical and Mechanical domains to achieve an outcome. As a result, China's attack against the GPS constellation would impact America's precision, navigation, and timing capabilities within the South China Sea, an attack against America's Mechanical domain. The loss of such capabilities would affect America's use of Physical elements, such as its ships, aircraft, and forces within the region. If the United States could not overlook such an attack and decided to destroy Chinese information and communication nodes, a decision made in the Cognitive domain, then this may affect China's own command and control capabilities. The degraded command and control systems that assist in China's decision-making, which are mechanical domain assets, may conjure an emotion of further retaliation, a sentiment produced in the Cognitive domain. These processes can continue endlessly and can result in peace, escalation, or war.

To produce favorable outcomes, leaders must recognize the three domains and how strategists can shape the elements that continuously interact with one another within and among those domains to their advantage. Giulio Douhet and Robert Pape, for example, argued that the airplane, a Physical domain asset, is a coercive tool used to attack the will of the people, a Cognitive domain asset. In reality, each of these theorists had their own ideas on how to shatter an enemy's will to fight: Douhet thought a nation could use the airplane to punish an enemy's population through aerial bombing until they no longer had the will to

fight.⁴ Pape, on the other hand, later argued against this tactic and said the best way to break a nation's will is by denying (through an aerial attack) their ability to wage war.⁵ In either case, both called for the use of Physical and Mechanical domain assets in a way that would impact an enemy's Cognitive domain. The theories presented by Douhet and Pape overlook one important aspect. They do not consider, at least in their presentations, how the elements within the three domains mobilized to create an airplane that could coerce opponents and thereby gain security, territory, or other interests. That is, they did not discuss the impact of the Social Battlespace and its influence on the three domains.



⁴ Giulio Douhet, *Command of the Air* (Office of Air Force History, 1983), 98.

⁵ Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Cornell University Press, 1996), 17-18.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL BATTLESPACE

Population has notable influence in war.

Carl von Clausewitz

Ideas, too, matter in human affairs and can sometimes enter decisively into the balance of forces so as to define long-lasting and fundamental human patterns.

William Hardy McNeill

Developing strategies to advantageously compete within the Social Battlespace are of great importance to states, organizations, or individuals. These strategies are so important, in fact, that a lack of strategy within the Social Battlespace can result in an unrecoverable reduction or waste of precious elements identified within the three domains. This can lead states and people into competitions, like wars or business ventures, that are plagued with attrition or failure. All entities compete regardless of their intentions, regardless whether they seek isolation, dominance, or even cooperation. Additionally, the Social Battlespace does not belong to one domain; therefore, it does not fall within any single one of the three domains described earlier. Rather, the Social Battlespace permeates the three domains and constantly influences and is continuously influenced by the three domains and their elements (see *Figure 2 on page 10*).

Social vs. Battlespace

The term *Social Battlespace* conjures two different and conflicting images. On the one hand, the word *social* summons a perception of popularity, approval, or acceptance. Someone who is social, for instance, has a large network of friends or acquaintances recognized only by the

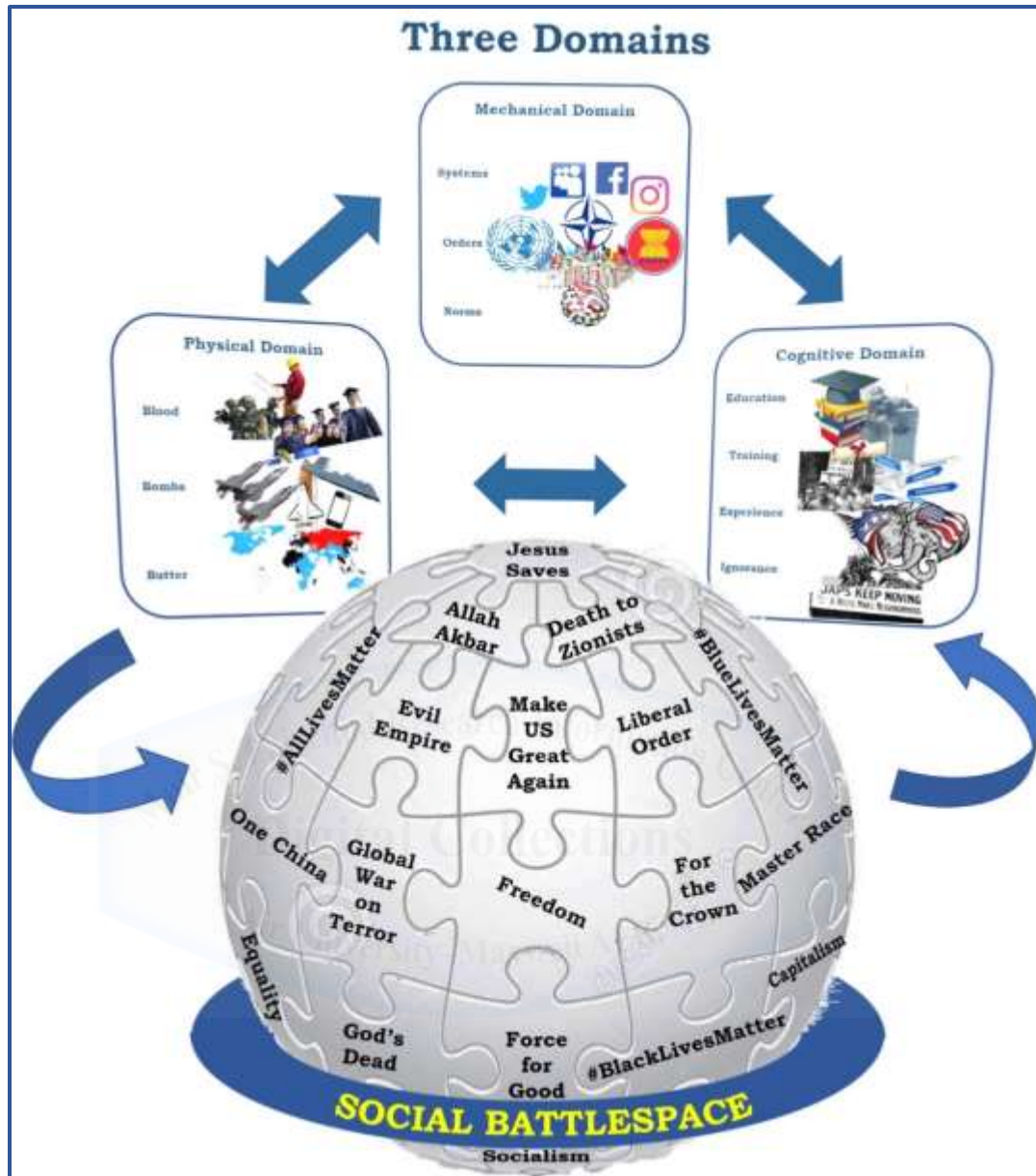


Figure 2: An Influence Cycle. The influence between the Social Battlespace and Three Domains.

Source: Author's Original Work.

relationships created due to similar values and experiences.¹ There is a type of compatibility or shared values between each of the objects that connect them, which are politically, professionally, or personally driven. Being social, therefore, has a positive connotation to it, one marked with

¹ Charles Kadushin, *Understanding Social Networks: Theories, Concepts, and Findings* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 14.

influence and power that drives people and resources together because of shared values or identities.

On the other hand, *battlespace* has an opposite and very much negative connotation. Joint Publication 3-0, “Joint Operations,” identifies the term battlespace as a region where contested actions occur in areas defined as land, maritime, air, and space. Additionally, the doctrine goes on to assert that there are other contested environments, or battlespaces, such as cyber, that can play a critical role in operations.² However, this definition exposes an assumption that there are identifiable interior and exterior lines that make up the battlespace where leaders can employ strategies and resources to either overwhelm or protect those lines. That there is some physical region or operating area that is currently being contested by a potential opponent.

The shortfall of this definition when describing *battlespace* is that it only focuses on Physical and Mechanical domain ideas, while overlooking the cognitive and social battlespaces. With cognitive and social battlespaces, regions, operating areas, and lines are not so easily distinguishable between friends and foes. Therefore, *battlespace* must be redefined and focused not on the area or region where conflict is being met. Rather, the conflict or competition itself must define the term battlespace. In a broad sense, then, a battlespace is an area where policy is determined by competition (whether through war, negotiations, or business ventures) amongst opposing entities using their three-domain elements.

It is under these two descriptions defined above that the Social Battlespace makes more sense. It is an area where one group who shares a form of beliefs competes with another group that holds on to an opposing belief and social structure. Competition, of course, can be seen

² Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations,” January 17, 2017, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_0.pdf, xvii.

positively, such as with the growth of an economy or serve as an incubator for new and innovative ideas.³ Conversely, competition can also have devastating consequences, as seen through wars, business failures, or corruption. Thus, as with all types of competitions, there are winners and losers. This product of having winners and losers defines the Social Battlespace.

A Competition of Narratives

The Social Battlespace, therefore, is a continuous competition of narratives where those who ascribe to a particular narrative work to ensure its dominance over other narratives. There is no winning because competition within this battlespace never ceases, it “is persistent, and without end.”⁴ Like politics, narratives are constant and are only as strong as the support they muster, nurture, and, hopefully, proliferate to wider accepting audiences. In its simplest description, “narratives reflect the values of movements and...are a collection of compelling stories that represent the cultures, history, and purpose of individuals, organizations, and nations.”⁵ It is in this representation that establishing a narrative and maintaining its dominance is vital to entities who wishes to succeed within the Social Battlespace.

Creating Narratives

A narrative’s competitive purpose and goal within the Social Battlespace is to gain support for its particular ‘call-to-action.’

³ Owen Reid Cote, “The Politics of Innovative Military Doctrine: The U.S. Navy and Fleet Ballistic Missiles” (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, n.d.), http://edocs.nps.edu/AR/topic/theses/1996/Feb/96Feb_Cote_PhD.pdf, 383.

⁴ Timothy Cunningham, “Strategic Communication in the New Media Sphere” (DTIC Document, 2010), <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA530468>, 113.

⁵ Mary Crannell and Ben Sheppard, “Preparing to Lead with a Compelling Narrative: If You Don’t Frame the Narrative, Someone Else Will,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (2011), http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/auiimp/citations/gsa/2011_188542/189523.html, 11.

Furthermore, narratives take time and evolve as conditions change, which results in an influx or reflux of popular support. A competitive narrative, however, needs influence from the three-domain elements to identify its reason; why such a narrative is necessary to exist; and why it is so personal. That is, narratives must have emotion tied to them. People must not only *know* it is necessary to fight, stand, or give to a cause, they must emotionally feel it is necessary to do so and failing to act in fulfilling a narrative is neglecting some moral or ethical standard; that they are somehow failing their personal identity. “A rational narrative that does not have purchase on the emotional substance of what it seeks to describe cannot claim legitimacy.”⁶ If people cannot connect emotionally to a particular narrative, it will not gain the legitimate support required to become competitive within the Social Battlespace.

Aristotle, an ancient Greek philosopher, wrote in his work, *Rhetoric*, that narratives had to demonstrate their purpose in order to have enough character to influence their targeted audience. “Persuasion is clearly a sort of demonstration, since we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated.”⁷ Narratives do not necessarily need *truthful* facts, yet they still need evidence for nations, organizations, and individuals to point to; an idea expressed later in this analysis. However, Aristotle takes the idea of persuasion further by stating that *Ethos*, *Pathos*, and *Logos* are required to persuade.⁸ It is under these three ideas, applied within the competition

⁶ Emile Simpson, *War From the Ground Up: Twenty-First Century Combat as Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 197.

⁷ Aristotle, *The Works of Aristotle: Rhetorica*, by W. R. Roberts. *De Rhetorica Ad Alexandrum*, by E. S. Forster. *De Poetica*, by I. Bywater (Clarendon Press, 1924), xx.

⁸ Ülkü Demirdöğen, “The Roots of Research in (Political) Persuasion: Ethos, Pathos, Logos and the Yale Studies of Persuasive Communications” (Department of International Relations, İstanbul Kültür University), accessed March 6, 2017, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268257788_The_Roots_of_Research_in_political_Persuasion_Ethos_Pathos_Logos_and_the_Yale_Studies_of_Persuasive_Communications, 191. Tamar Mshvenieradze, “Logos Ethos and Pathos in Political Discourse,”

found in the Social Battlespace, where a narrative's character gains its legitimacy and support. With this in mind, the continuous competition within the Social Battlespace reveals five factors regarding competitive narratives.

The Five Factors of Social Narratives

Factor #1: Narratives Are Not New and Do Not End

The first factor of the Social Battlespace is that narratives, once created, do not stop, unlike operations or campaigns where there is an 'end' in mind. Rather, narratives come from earlier established ones that evolved over time. To reaffirm, narratives in the Social Battlespace do not end; they may receive less support contemporarily than they did in the past, but when narratives do gain momentum, they evolve to meet current contextual needs. Regardless, there is no conclusion to social narratives, especially dominant ones. However, there is an alarming assumption that narratives can and do end. From a military perspective, buzzwords like Information Operations (IO), Psychological Operations, and Strategic Communications convey a message that narratives can start and stop as easily as military campaigns can. Even military doctrine, as in Joint Publication 1-02 for example, defines IO as a Department of Defense function that integrates and coordinates system processes that support an overall campaign narrative.⁹ A social narrative, lasts longer than a campaign message or an associated operation and if organizations wish to gain the necessary support for

Theory and Practice in Language Studies; London 3, no. 11 (November 2013): 1939–45, 1940. Frank Fischer and Gerald J. Miller, *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics, and Methods* (CRC Press, 2006), 241. **Ethos** refers to the character the speaker wishes to present and the charisma and authority that lent to the speaker's credibility, helping to reinforce a message's reliability. **Pathos** looks to move the audience to his or her desirable emotional action. **Logos** is an appeal to reason by means of words; an argument made through rational appeal.

⁹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms: As Amended Through April 2010" (DIANE Publishing, 2011), http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/dictionary.pdf, 226.

their operation, their campaign narrative must align to the original dominant narrative.

On October 22, 1962, for example, President John F. Kennedy addressed the world, via radio and television, about the secretive Soviet nuclear missile buildup on the island of Cuba, only ninety miles from the United States' homeland. After expressing his shock and anger over the Soviet Union's clandestine actions and their destabilizing effect, he called for Soviet leader, Premier Nikita Khrushchev, to remove Soviet presence from the Western Hemisphere.¹⁰ At the end of his speech, President Kennedy stated

The cost of freedom is always high--and Americans have always paid it. And one path we shall never choose, and that is the path of surrender or submission. Our goal is not the victory of might, but the vindication of right—not peace at the expense of freedom, but both peace and freedom, here in this hemisphere, and, we hope, around the world. God willing, that goal will be achieved.¹¹

The implications of the Cuban Missile Crisis are still widely studied and continue to provoke discussions over brinkmanship and strategy. For this instance, however, what is revealing is even though President Kennedy was dealing with a new crisis, he harkened back to an old narrative and changed it to justify any future potential actions that may require movement within the three domains.

For another example, at the outset of the American Revolution, American Colonists, who felt oppressed by a British monarch who enacted unbearable taxes and laws, began spreading a narrative best described by Patrick Henry when he stated, “give me liberty, or give me

¹⁰ Ernest R. May and Philip Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 283.

¹¹ John Kennedy, “1962-10-22 Report on Soviet Arms Buildup in Cuba,” *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*, accessed April 6, 2017, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/sUVmCh-sB0moLfrBcaHaSg.aspx>.

death!”¹² Likewise, in an issue of the *Gentleman’s Magazine* published in 1775, Joseph Warren declared, “the persecution and tyranny of his cruel ministry we will not tamely submit — appealing to Heaven for the justice of our cause, we determine to die or be free.”¹³ There are many more examples that show an old narrative of freedom, peace, longsuffering, and justice, but the point here is that the narrative President Kennedy used to justify any future American actions was not new, but only one that evolved to meet his contextual needs.

Factor #2: The Counternarrative:

The second factor is that for every narrative, regardless of its humble beginnings and motivations, there is at least one counternarrative ready to dislodge support from the original narrative, and rarely is there only one. Returning to the Cuban Missile Crisis and the diplomatic exchange between President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev, the Soviet Union turned America’s initial response on its head. In a private letter to Kennedy, Khrushchev praised the American President for his concern over Cuba and its people, but stated his country’s “purpose has been and is to help Cuba...to live peacefully and develop as its people desire.”¹⁴ Khrushchev went on to ask why the United States was so determined to deny Cuba’s rights to peace and self-defense. Why was the United States against a nation having the ability to protect its own sovereignty? Pointing to actions taken by the United States during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Khrushchev would then later say that

¹² Patrick Henry and Peter Jahns, *Give Me Liberty, Or Give Me Death* (CoolBeat Audiobooks, 2005), <http://www.isa-net.org/PatrickHenry.pdf>.

¹³ Joseph Warren, “Joseph Warren’s Patriot Account of April 1775 Fighting Reached Britain First,” *Dr. Joseph Warren*, accessed April 18, 2017, <http://www.drjosephwarren.com/2014/05/appealing-to-heaven-for-the-justice-of-our-cause-we-determine-to-die-or-be-free/>.

¹⁴ Nikita Khrushchev, “Cuban Missile Crisis - John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum,” October 26, 1962, <http://microsites.jfklibrary.org/cmc/oct26/>.

No matter how much imperialist reaction, headed by the United States, tries to stop or check the great revolutionary process of liberation of mankind, it is powerless to do so. People fighting for their freedom and independence are strong enough to defend their gains with the backing of all the forces of peace and socialism.¹⁵

The United States pushed a narrative of freedom, the pursuit of happiness, and equality for all. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union would take the same stance, but use America's capitalistic ideas to create a counternarrative to prove, in their case, communism was the utopian answer to humankind's desire for physical security and social well-being.

This can be disheartening to those seeking truth because both sides were shaping facts to benefit their own national narratives in order to gain international support. In some cases, it appeared, even blatant lies seemed to bring about success in creating and countering narratives. States, organizations, and individuals using fabricated truths to further their interests may seem accurate, but in reality, especially within the Social Battlespace, actions do speak louder than words, revealing a third factor.

Factor #3: There Are Always Some Facts

The third factor that affects narratives within the Social Battlespace is that some form of factual evidence, reality, and actions backs all narratives. It is important to note here that *truthful* evidence is not necessarily required; rather, to produce and/or counter a narrative entities need just *some* factual evidence. On May 3, 1963, Bill Hudson, an Associated Press photographer, published an iconic photo that would ultimately rally both national and international support for the

¹⁵ Khrushchev, "Cuban Missile Crisis," 1962.

furtherance of civil rights within the United States (see Figure 3).¹⁶ In this photo, a black teenager, standing stiffly with his arms to his side, is attacked by a Birmingham, Alabama, police dog while, simultaneously, being held in place by a white police officer. The photo depicted the racial tensions and the domestic mood between the American black community and a local government, led by mostly white officials.¹⁷

For President Kennedy, Bill Hudson's photo and the turmoil surrounding civil rights within the United States had strategic consequences and undermined the narrative he pursued to counter that of the Soviet Union's.¹⁸ When seeing the Hudson image, President Kennedy said, "What a disaster that picture is. That picture is not only in America, but all around the World."¹⁹ President Kennedy was right; leaders within the Soviet Union used American racism for their benefit as "an effective propaganda weapon" to influence emerging Third World nations away from the United States.²⁰ How could a



Figure 3: Police dog attacking protester, May 3, 1963, Birmingham, AL.

Source: Bill Hudson, Associated Press.

¹⁶ The Associated Press, "Bill Hudson, a Photojournalist During the Civil Rights Era, Dies at 77," *The New York Times*, June 26, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/27/us/27hudson.html>.

¹⁷ Matt Sedensky, "Bill Hudson, 77; Photographer's Images Spurred Support for Rights Movement," *The Washington Post*, June 27, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/26/AR2010062603950.html>.

¹⁸ Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2002), 93.

¹⁹ Martin A. Berger, *Seeing through Race: A Reinterpretation of Civil Rights Photography* (University of California Press, 2011), 58.

²⁰ Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 34.

nation like the United States, which professed equality and freedom throughout the entire world, say such things when they did not practice those same ideas domestically? Undoubtedly, the Hudson photo represents different things to different people and their causes; however, the way differing entities used this photo was not based on truth, but only their subjective facts.

It is a fact that in the Bill Hudson photo, a Birmingham police dog lunged at a black teenager during a civil rights march. It is also a fact that the police officer holding the dog was also holding the teen in the photo. These are the facts, but they do not reveal the truth. In truth, the teenager, high school student Walter Gadsden, was in attendance of a Birmingham civil rights march in 1963. However, he was not participating in the march, but was an observer.²¹ In fact, Walter Gadsden worked for his family's conservative local newspaper who opposed Martin Luther King's civil rights tactics, which included marches.²² The police officer in the photo, Dick Middleton, was actually trying to stop the dog from attacking Gadsden and had his hand on the young man to push him away. It was at that moment Bill Hudson took the photo.

Nations, organizations, and individuals during that time did not use truth, regarding Hudson's photo, to further their narratives; rather, they used facts and aligned those facts to meet the needs of their narratives. Additionally, these same entities did not and could not pull facts out of thin air and tie them to their narratives. Instead, they have to point to something. Nations, organizations, and individuals have to point to some form of facts in order to use them to support their

²¹ Dell Upton, *What Can and Can't Be Said: Race, Uplift, and Monument Building in the Contemporary South* (Yale University Press, 2015), 134.

²² Malcolm Gladwell, *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants* (Little, Brown, 2015), 137.

narratives. These shapeable facts, like those identified in Hudson's 1963 photo, give narratives the credibility it requires within one's rhetoric.²³

Factor #4: A Call to Action

Credibility to do what? The fourth factor regarding narratives within the Social Battlespace reveals a narrative's purpose; that is, narratives are a call to action. Again, from a Cold War perspective, both the United States and the Soviet Union were not using narratives to merely talk to and insult each other. Rather, these superpowers used narratives to gain domestic and international support to fulfill their mobilization efforts. For the United States, it was to remove Soviet missiles from Cuba. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People used Hudson's photo to provide credibility to a narrative to gain domestic support and further the cause of civil rights. The Soviet Union used their narrative to discredit the United States and their capitalistic ideology and to influence the global opinion that Communism was 'the way.' In either case, narratives mobilize the domain elements into action. Vote, march, fight, stand, support, submit, and give; these, and many others, are the verbs narratives use to achieve movement amongst the three domains and their elements.

During the American Revolution, Thomas Paine declared to his fighting nation that "we fight not to enslave, but to set a country free, and to make room upon the earth for honest men to live in."²⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr. proclaimed in his famous "I Have a Dream" speech that

...now is the time to rise from the dark and
desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path
of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our

²³ This point is not to undermine the fact that racial inequalities did exist in the United States, which involved police dogs, firehoses, lynchings, and many more atrocities. These things did take place during that time and President Kennedy was appalled by them. From a strategic perspective, these incidents resonated with President Kennedy because these racial inequalities might as well be as the Soviets interpreted them.

²⁴ Thomas Paine, *The American Crisis* (J. Watson, 1835), 47.

nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.²⁵

Narratives of injustice, narratives of inequality, and narratives in general are calls to action and they give life and reason to the elements of the three domains. Without the emotional appeals that narratives produce, there is no movement within the three domains.

Factor #5: A Cycle of Influence

The fifth and final factor regarding the Social Battlespace is its impact on the three domains, how domain strategies are formed due to influential narratives and resulting perceptions, and how those domain strategies influence the Social Battlespace. Simply put, the narratives that continuously compete with one another inside the Social Battlespace directly affect the elements within the Physical, Mechanical, and Cognitive domains. This competition is evident when analyzing the actions taken by the United States and Soviet Union during the Cold War. Now having the luxury of arm-chair-quarterbacking the principal actors during that time, one can observe the Social Battlespace and its influence on the three domains.²⁶

After the Second World War, two narratives dominated the Social Battlespace during the Cold War from 1946 to 1991. For the United States, it was spreading democracy and freedom around the world and containing communism.²⁷ The enemy to this idea, of course, was the

²⁵ Martin Luther King Jr., "Avalon Project - I Have a Dream by Martin Luther King, Jr; August 28, 1963," accessed April 18, 2017, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/mlk01.asp, 2.

²⁶ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 202-203.

²⁷ David Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film* (Routledge, 2013), 30, 95, and 132. In this book, the author discusses that the narrative in the Cold War affected American cinema so much that much of the storylines in feature films reflected the fear the United States had of the Soviet Union. That, through struggle, the United States would deliver all those who were oppressed under Communism and its leader, the Soviet Union.

Soviet Union who posed a threat to a capitalist liberal international order, a Western-built system in the Mechanical domain, which American officials wished to create, nurture, and expand throughout the world.²⁸ Under this expansion, the United States increased their trade and security agreements that ultimately safeguard their acquisition and pursuit of *butter*.

The Soviets, on the other hand, looked at possible American and Western expansion, especially within their perceived region of influence, as a threat to their security interests. Joseph Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union, regarded controlling Eastern Europe and the Balkans as a strategic necessity to ensure there was a security buffer against the West. With this buffer, he also wanted to impose Moscow's influence, as well as a Soviet-inspired social order and norms.²⁹ Soon, the wartime allies proliferated their respective narratives so much that they would cause the fears of the people to mushroom, ultimately affecting all the elements within the three domains.

Thirty-five years later, prominent individuals, such as President Ronald Reagan, continued the Cold War narrative and asserted rhetoric that played on the fears of the people to move them into action. In one example, President Reagan compared the Soviet Union to an 'evil empire,' a reference to the *Star Wars* franchise that was popular during that time.³⁰ Such rhetoric and fear trickled down to institutions like that of the United States Army who "began advertising for recruits on TV by displaying spacy weaponry and extolling the pleasures of being 'out there' in search of 'the bad guys.'"³¹ American public schools from the Truman

²⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 4.

²⁹ Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2009), 21.

³⁰ Ronald Reagan, "Voices of Democracy | Reagan, 'Evil Empire,' Speech Text," *Voices of Democracy*, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/reagan-evil-empire-speech-text/>.

³¹ Tom Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation* (Univ of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 270.

Administration to the Kennedy Administration exercised ‘Duck and Cover’ drills where students practiced darting under their desks in response to a potential Soviet nuclear attack.³² Fear of nuclear war with the Soviets even entered the private homes of citizens who felt they had to build fallout shelters or risk not surviving a nuclear holocaust.³³ The narratives that were competing within the Social Battlespace were in fact influencing the *Cognitive Domain* and its elements.

However, social narratives also influenced and mobilized *Physical Domain* elements into action during the Cold War. In response to the Soviet threat and the fear surrounding it, the United States developed a greater nuclear arsenal. General Curtis LeMay had one purpose when he led the newly established Strategic Air Command: to be ready to fight Soviet aggression with an offensive nuclear attack.³⁴ Furthermore, the investments in *blood*, *bombs*, and *butter* were so extensive during the Cold War that military goods and services rose to 6.7% of America’s gross national product after the Second World War.³⁵ This monetary investment helped increase American military forces and expand intellectual communities (*blood*) who aided in building military technologies; technologies like the Defense Support Program, jet propulsion, rocketry, and the Global Positioning System (*bombs*), all in pursuit of securing American interests (*butter*).

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was also mobilizing its *Cognitive* and *Physical* domain elements with their own competing

³² Tracy C. Davis, *Stages of Emergency: Cold War Nuclear Civil Defense* (Duke University Press, 2007), 107.

Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (Basic Books, 2008), 99-101. During the Cold War, the United States, under direction of the Federal Civil Defense Agency, pushed the “Grandma’s Pantry” campaign where American citizens were persuaded to prepare for the worst; that is, nuclear war with the Soviet Union. In this program, it was supposed to be a soothing memory on how ‘grandma’ was always prepared and fully stocked with goods to keep the house fed.

³⁴ Phillip S. Meilinger, *Bomber: The Formation and Early Years of Strategic Air Command* (Air University Press, Air Force Research Institute, 2012), 127.

³⁵ Michael Edelstein, “What Price Cold War? Military Spending and Private Investment in the US, 1946–1979,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 14, no. 4 (1990): 421–437, 421.

narratives. In response to the Western threat, the Soviet Union led an alliance called the Warsaw Pact as a counter to the North American Treaty Organization (NATO), both Mechanical domain organizations.³⁶ Like that of NATO, the Soviet Union wanted to have their own influence where they could create, nurture, and spread a system of norms and orders throughout their own region by establishing satellite nations, which they did whenever the Red Army established firm control post-1945.³⁷

For both nations, the Social Battlespace and the narratives that competed for dominance within this space constantly influenced all three domains. Likewise, element changes amongst the three domains created new narratives or evolved existing ones, adding to the social competition. After President Ronald Reagan entered office, for example, he approved and resumed the development of the B-1 Bomber, a program the previous administration cancelled.³⁸ Additionally, President Reagan resurrected the Trident program, an undersea long-range missile system, that called for the United States industry to produce one submarine per year.³⁹ As a result, fear ensued within the Soviet military complex and a new narrative evolved from the domain actions taken by the United States. No longer was the Soviet Union, in this case, trying to gain superiority over the United States; rather, their new narrative declared a need to ward off a possible nuclear attack posed by the new American bombers and its strategic submarines.

As this new narrative dominated the Soviet Social Battlespace, it, mobilized the elements across all three domains to act. The Soviet

³⁶ Wojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne, *A Cardboard Castle?: An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991* (Central European University Press, 2005), 4-5.

³⁷ Stanley Sandler, *The Korean War: No Victors, No Vanquished* (University Press of Kentucky, n.d.), 23.

³⁸ David Hoffman, *The Dead Hand: The Untold Story of the Cold War Arms Race and Its Dangerous Legacy* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2009), 33.

³⁹ Norman Polmar and Kenneth J. Moore, *Cold War Submarines: The Design and Construction of U.S. and Soviet Submarines* (Potomac Books, Inc., 2004), 189-190.

Union's answer to the new threat posed by the United States was to increase their air defense system by \$100 billion, a Physical and Mechanical domain solution, geared towards thwarting the B-1's capabilities.⁴⁰ To meet the challenge posed by an American submarine, the Soviets answered by threatening to build their own strategic submarine called the *Tayfun*, which posed additional economic costs.⁴¹ The Soviets fear-based-narrative, one that evolved from an earlier narrative that dreaded a capitalist encirclement, placed high importance on other military expenditures to stay on par with the United States, a huge economic burden to maintain.⁴² Moreover, such actions moved senior leaders within the Soviet Union and the United States to increase their diplomatic engagements in an effort to distill each other's military developments. What this shows is that there is a cyclical influence between the Social Battlespace and the elements within the three domains. A dominant narrative will influence how different states shape the three-domain elements, while, at the same time, the accumulative perceptions of those domain alterations give rise to evolving narratives that demand attention.

The Social Battlespace is not new. Narratives within this space always rely on *Ethos*, *Pathos*, and *Logos* to gain support and legitimacy in order to remain competitive. Likewise, narratives within the Social Battlespace always influence and mobilize the three-domain elements into action to create systems, norms, technologies, armies, and wars. On the other hand, as entities mobilize their narrative-inspired elements into action, opposing groups react as well. Ultimately, these reactions cause narratives to evolve, weaken, or strengthen. One can see narratives competing in the Social Battlespace during the Cold War between the

⁴⁰ Christopher Coker, *US Military Power in the 1980s* (Springer, 1983), 39.

⁴¹ Polmar and Moore, *Cold War Submarines*.

⁴² Deborah Welch Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust: U.S.-Soviet Relations During the Cold War* (Cornell University Press, 2000), 157.

United States and the Soviet Union where narratives developed over time and evolved through struggle, disenfranchisement, cultural clashes, and fear. This is why it is so hard to argue a case for decisiveness, in peace or war, because the narratives that marshal the three-domain elements do so as a result of conditions spread across a long scale of time. This is not new.

The Social Battlespace, however, is changing and no longer requires only elites or influential classes of people to produce and dictate narratives. Rather, the rise of technologies, such as the Internet, social media, and smart technologies, are increasing the amount of competition within the Social Battlespace. What is important and who gets to speak is changing. The next section will discuss this diffusion of narrative power, revealing possible shortfalls in strategy, who is capitalizing on this change, and those left behind.



CHAPTER 3

AN EVOLVING SPACE

*Wars of opinion, like national wars, they enlist
the worst passions, and become vindictive,
cruel, and terrible.*

Antoine-Henri Jomini

*Moral factors are the spirit that permeates war
as a whole...does not yield to academic
wisdom...cannot be classified or counted...has
to be seen and felt.*

Carl von Clausewitz

The Social Battlespace is evolving—again. In one regard, narratives continue to compete with one another under the influences from *Ethos*, *Pathos*, and *Logos*, to mobilize the three domains and their elements into action while, simultaneously, those actionable elements influence the Social Battlespace. Paradoxically, the evolving three-domain elements are not only affecting current narratives within the Social Battlespace, but are also increasing the number of competing narratives within this space and redefining who produces them. Contemporary narratives, therefore, are likened to that of a *Royal Rumble*, where an explosion of narratives simultaneously compete, easily causing confusion on which narrative is right or wrong; fact or fiction.¹

It is easy to blame technology for this seeming influx in narratives. People are connecting via the Internet and are sharing their ideas, information, and emotions—their narratives—across a variety of cyber platforms. Contemporarily, everyone, who has the technological ability

¹ Angie Peterson Kaelberer, *The Fabulous, Freaky, Unusual History of Pro Wrestling* (Capstone, 2010), 20. The term *Royal Rumble* was popularized by the World Wrestling Federation where they had twenty to thirty wrestlers simultaneously fight one another to compete in the world wrestling championship. It created chaos on the mat.

and access, has a voice. In other words, access to the Social Battlespace is dramatically changing because new cyber technologies, like the Internet, social media, and smart technologies, have diffused the power to create and maintain narratives. No longer does controlling the narrative belong to states, large organizations, institutions, or influential members of society, but now insubstantial groups and individuals have the power to rapidly create, disseminate, and maintain narratives globally. This section explores this constant evolution in narrative control, what this current evolution is creating within the Social Battlespace, and what this means to future leaders who have to develop favorable strategies.

Evolution – Nothing New

As the elements within the three domains evolve, mature, and expand, so do the ways those elements interact and influence one another, thus, changing how narratives compete within the Social Battlespace. As discussed by Aristotle earlier, *Ethos*, or that authority and credibility, is partly required for a narrative to stick. Therefore, narratives must come from a place of power, right? Theologians can easily point to a deity as their narrative source. *Ethos*, on the other hand, can come from other sources, like states, as well. American patriots, for example, pushed and pulled their interests with an understanding “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”² This narrative greatly influences the American people (*Physical*) and their identity (*Cognitive*), so much so, that to ensure this narrative transcends future generations and ideas, the American people created and pledged allegiance to a system (*Mechanical*) by stating

² “Declaration of Independence: A Transcription,” November 1, 2015, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.³

No doubt, many states can point to a form of nationalism, pride, history, culture, national constitution, and common ideas to develop a narrative to explain their pursuit of gaining and maintaining *butter*.

In this sense, then, narratives came from a position of power; a position of authority; a position that required a form of credibility that was eventually filtered down to the masses. Narratives, therefore, came in a hierarchal structure where those who had the power, knowledge, and influence somehow informed the people what that narrative means to them, their country, and futures. How these narratives reached the masses changed as well. The Bible shows God used stone tablets and people to spread His narrative, while people used letters, scribes, and books to inform the masses of the *right* narratives to internalize and follow. However, as new *bombs* developed within the Physical and Mechanical domains, the ability to influence and spread narratives began to expand dramatically.

Bombs like the telegraph, radio, newspaper, and television began to exert their influence on the masses, allowing those who had national and elite power to reach communities and people like never before.⁴ Due to these new technologies, however, the Social Battlespace began to evolve and diffuse some of that power in creating narratives. No longer were narratives spoken solely from God, dictators, or Presidents; rather, organizations, communities, and diverse groups began to compete in the

³ "The Constitution of the United States: A Transcription," November 4, 2015, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>.

⁴ Charles Arthur Siepmann, *Radio, Television and Society* (Oxford University Press, 1950), 130 and 205-206.

Social Battlespace as well. During the Vietnam War, for instance, journalists tried to translate battles into reportable stories so they could print them in newspapers or report them on television.⁵ However, there was a clash of narratives not felt before because the information being reported by national leaders was not matching the narrative reported by imbedded journalists. For example, journalists reported that the American military lost the 1968 Tet Offensive. This report was counter to the narrative the President, the military establishment, and even those on the ground circulated, which incidents like this had a profound and negative effect on American society.⁶ Soon, narratives once spoken by biased national leaders and elites were now being pushed by journalists with their own competing agendas. As a result, public mistrust plagued both the United States Government and the media because of the growing narrative competition occurring in the Social Battlespace.

As seen earlier, *bombs*, like television and radio, transformed how entities pushed their narratives to the masses. Like the example of Vietnam or that of the Cold War, narratives still required a powerful and elite *Ethos*, or someone or some organization, with the credibility and authority to talk and have the respect for people to hear them. However, the Social Battlespace continues to evolve. In one example, there is a narrative, albeit an old one, which declares that expansion, connection, and trade, produces riches, knowledge, or security. Early American settlers embraced this narrative, as did later American generations with their ideas of Manifest Destiny, Alfred T. Mahan with his concern for sea power, British imperialism, Hitler's European expansion, Japan's pursuit for power, and the list can go on and on. This old narrative, igniting the three-domain elements to evolve and expand, produced *bombs* to enable new types of connections. This is where one can see the Social

⁵ Michael J. Arlen, *Living-Room War* (Syracuse University Press, 1997), 109.

⁶ Sam C. Sarkesian, "Soldiers, Scholars, and the Media," *Parameters* 17, no. 3 (1987): 77, 66-67.

Battlespace changing today, with the creation of a new *bomb* called the internet and its cyber effect.

Cyber – A Definition

Cyber is the interweb of connections between the Physical, Mechanical, and Cognitive domain elements to share ideas and information, fulfill personal needs, form communities, and to mobilize.⁷ Not only does this interweb of connections give people the ability to share, fulfill, and form, but it now enables one to extend one's perception of self, their emotions, sense of belonging, systems, norms, and security. Life happens in cyber where people communicate, feel, exchange, and compete. In essence, cyber allows multiple connections, whether through information systems, space assets, or mobile technologies, that give human behavior the "density" it requires for safety and social support.⁸

There is a misconception that cyber is only a place where people go to share information. This limited definition may originate from the ARPANet, the predecessor to what the Internet is today, where connections from computers and their infrastructure allowed people to share information.⁹ In reality, this description is inadequate because cyber means more than the transfer of information or the connection of one computer system to another.¹⁰ Today, the internet is only one aspect

⁷ "To fulfill personal needs" comes from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs where a person needs to fulfill the following: Physiological, Safety, Love and Belonging, Esteem, and Self-Actualization. Cyber touches and can satisfy each of these areas.

⁸ Charles Kadushin, *Understanding Social Networks: Theories, Concepts, and Findings* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 205. Kadushin defines *density* as "a large number of connections between members of a network."

⁹ Alex Roland and Philip Shiman, *Strategic Computing: DARPA and the Quest for Machine Intelligence, 1983-1993* (MIT Press, 2002), 19. From the time the ARPANet took off till about the late 1990s, the Internet was about sharing information and connecting networks. However, after the introduction of blogs in 1997 and later Social Media in 2003, the Internet was beginning to transition from primarily sharing information to an entity that is a part of cyber.

¹⁰ John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy* (Rand Corporation, 2001), 6.

of cyber, as is mobile communications, smart technologies, social media, live streaming, and space. Cyber is more than the Physical domain elements of people who want the information (*blood*), the technologies that transfer such information (*bombs*), and the information itself (*butter*). Cyber transcends all three domains. Not only have a Physical presence, but cyber creates systems, norms, and orders, a function from the Mechanical domain.¹¹ Furthermore, cyber simultaneously touches all four elements of the Cognitive domain, which can expand knowledge, play on emotions, or even unite like-minded people who are otherwise geographically disconnected. By understanding cyber, then, one can begin comprehending the evolution occurring within the contemporary Social Battlespace.

Cyber's Influence in the Social Evolution

As defined earlier, the Social Battlespace is where narratives continuously compete for support and dominance; this concept remains unchanged. What is changing, however, is access to the Social Battlespace and the ability for people, who were otherwise incapable of reaching large audiences, to use cyber as a platform to shape this space.¹² No longer does the power of creating and maintaining narratives belong to elites, the powerful, or even the influential. All people, regardless of their differences, are able to participate in the Social Battlespace like never before due to new technologies. This diffusion of power to create and maintain a narrative is possible only through cyber because it is a highly-decentralized network that has no top, no center,

¹¹ From a Mechanical domain perspective, cyber transformed norms within society. No longer is it considered taboo to give up some privacy rights in order to stay connected within cyber; people share their locations, what they eat, what makes them sad and happy. People's secrets are now in cyber. It is acceptable for companies like Google and Amazon to learn customer behavior in the form of Big Data. These are norms pushed by cyber.

¹² Paul Hodkinson, *Media, Culture and Society: An Introduction* (SAGE, 2016), 28.

and no bottom; rather, it is a mesh of networks.¹³ This spider web of nodes pushes and pulls emotional narratives around its meshed networks where individuals actively participate to either support or counter narratives within the Social Battlespace.

This decentralized diffusion of narrative power that cyber creates within the Social Battlespace challenges hierarchal organizations, such as state-level agencies that support defense, economics, and policy, where messages normally flow from top to bottom. Even large commercial organizations are learning that cyber is turning society into a participatory culture where ordinary people now have a say.¹⁴ On the other hand, groups who decentralize their organizational structures to mirror that of cyber's interweb of connections find it easier to access and proliferate their narrative within the Social Battlespace. Nicole Matejic, author of *Social Media: Rules of Engagement* and a Social Media Advisor to NATO, states that the terror group, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), has capitalized on cyber effects and realized that in the Social Battlespace "everyone is armed with the same weapons of modern warfare and the ability to exert influence in audience segments that are precisely targeted." Even more poignant, she goes on to state that

Wars are no longer fought within the geographical confines. You might be firing rockets in Iraq, but firing tweets at Europe may actually have more impact because rockets have a defined maximum range; tweets do not. Tweets land in people's offices, lounge rooms and by virtue of the smartphones we carry around, information warfare is occurring in our pockets and handbags.¹⁵

¹³ C. H. Gray and A. J. Gordo, "Social Media in Conflict: Comparing Military and Social-Movement Technocultures," *Cultural Politics an International Journal* 10, no. 3 (January 1, 2014): 251–61, doi:10.1215/17432197-2795645, 258.

¹⁴ Christian Fuchs, *Social Media: A Critical Introduction* (SAGE, 2017), 66-67.

¹⁵ Nicole Matejic, "Diplomacy Isn't #Diplomacy – Info Ops HQ," *Info Ops HQ*, accessed March 25, 2017, <http://www.infoopshq.com/2015/02/25/diplomacy-isnt-diplomacy/>.

Powerful images are currently passing through the mechanical domain, showing dead children lying on a beach after fleeing from the atrocities in Syria. In other images, participants in the cyber-influenced Social Battlespace emotionally compare a young white-man carefully escorted in handcuffs after shooting black people in a South Carolina church. Conversely, a black teenager, who argued with a white police officer, is in the grass face down with a knee to her back (see Figure 4, below). These images, no matter the actual context or truth, spur



Figure 4: Narratives by Meme.

Source: Twitter post by @Tusk81, June 7, 2015.

emotion and, because they are heavily passed through cyber, a Mechanical domain entity, they rapidly and widely influence a global populace on an emotional level.¹⁶ As a result, a call to

action ensues, which causes nations to pledge their support by taking in Syrian refugees or riots in American streets for perceived inequalities, an impact in the Physical domain. Elaine Scarry, author of *The Body in Pain*, states

war is about changing human perceptions of reality through violence. The incredible power of new military technologies ended the possibility of total war (advent of nuclear weapons), and decisive battle is impossible, as well, because

¹⁶ In Chapter 2, David Hudson's civil rights photo accomplished the same emotional reaction. In that case, though, the photo was distributed over television and through newspapers, which took time. Today, cyber can reach people on a global scale quickly.

social media is outpacing the ability of violence to change human perceptions.¹⁷

Cyber is upending how entities access, create, maintain, and dominate narratives within the Social Battlespace. Some organizations are learning cyber's impact on creating and maintaining narratives, while others are slow to internalize the necessary changes to remain competitive in the Social Battlespace.



¹⁷ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford University Press, 1985), 102-104.

CHAPTER 4
CASE STUDY: #BLACKLIVESMATTER

*For when people get caught up with that which
is right and they are willing to sacrifice for it,
there is no stopping point short of victory.*

Martin Luther King, Jr.

*Audiences in the new media sphere actively
engage with the new media; they both consume
and produce messages.*

Timothy Cunningham

On the evening of February 26, 2012, a seventeen-year-old was walking home after buying a piece of candy and a drink from a local corner store. As he walked, he found himself in deep conversation with a girl on his cellphone when, suddenly, he realized that he was being followed by a man in his car. Sensing an uneasiness of the situation, the teenager began running to get away from the would-be assailant, but soon found himself in hand-to-hand combat for his life. Ultimately, the teenager lost and was, by 7:15 pm, found dead and face down in the grass with a bullet wound to his chest.¹ This, no doubt, is a horrific story and one that tugs on the heartstrings of fathers, mothers, and community officials causing people to mobilize and seek justice. Sadly, this story is not so simple; the ideas, emotions, and even the facts are not so complete because other versions eventually emerge.

In another account of this same incident, during the summer of 2009, a man moved into a quaint Florida gated community that served approximately 260 townhomes. Already a year into the American

¹ Lizette Alvarez and Michael Cooper, "Zimmerman to Be Charged in Trayvon Martin Shooting," *The New York Times*, April 11, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/12/us/zimmerman-to-be-charged-in-trayvon-martin-shooting.html>.

recession, this man began seeing falling home values within his neighborhood, which usually averaged \$250,000. Homes in this community were, by 2012, selling for \$100,000.² These new home values brought a transient-type resident into the community and with it, crime. By 2012, break-ins and robberies were almost a daily occurrence within this gated community and established residents became fed up. The man who moved into the community in 2009 was himself one of these fed-up residents and began to act by taking it upon himself to monitor his neighborhood. The residents within the gated community trusted this man so much that the local homeowner's association appointed him captain of their neighborhood watch program.³

In 2011, the captain responded to a call where a mother locked herself and her infant into a bedroom while robbers broke in her home to steal her television.⁴ After the break-in, the man offered the scared mother to stay at his house with his wife while he was at work if she ever felt afraid and even replaced the lock the thieves broke during the robbery. In another night, the captain discovered a teenager peering into an empty home and quickly called 911. The teenager, coincidentally, was one of the robbers who broke into the house of the aforementioned woman a few months before. In all, this man called the police 46 times to stop crime within his neighborhood, but the crimes continued.

On the evening of February 26, 2012, this man began following another suspicious individual walking in his neighborhood. As with the other incidents the man faced, when this individual saw the neighborhood watch captain in his vehicle, the suspicious person began

² Ian Tuttle, "The Neighborhood Zimmerman Watched," *National Review*, accessed April 3, 2017, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/354042/neighborhood-zimmerman-watched-ian-tuttle>.

³ Ian Tuttle, "The Neighborhood Zimmerman Watched," *National Review*, accessed April 3, 2017, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/354042/neighborhood-zimmerman-watched-ian-tuttle>.

⁴ Chris Francescani, "George Zimmerman: Prelude to a Shooting," *Reuters*, April 25, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-florida-shooting-zimmerman-idUSBRE83O18H20120425>.

to run. Frustrated that another criminal could possibly get away, the captain, who was already on the phone with 911, decided to confront the individual.⁵ As soon as he did, he was fighting for his life and was losing as the suspicious individual was on top of him, beating him.⁶ The neighborhood watch captain pulled out his gun and fired, striking the suspicious individual in the chest; he would ultimately succumb to his wounds and die in the grass of the gated community.

These two accounts and their associated facts describe the tragic incident between Trayvon Martin, the teen who died, and George Zimmerman, the neighborhood watch captain who killed Martin. What followed was a firestorm of narratives competing for dominance in the Social Battlespace. One of the dominant movements that arose from this incident was Black Lives Matter, armed with a message that the organization existed as “a call to action and a response to the virulent anti-Black racism that permeates our [U.S.] society.”⁷ The Black Lives Matter movement is more than the Zimmerman-Martin case or a simple hashtag as they look to expose inequalities at a variety of levels within the governmental, civilian, and commercial sectors. However, for purposes of brevity, the establishment of this organization, fueled by George Zimmerman’s acquittal in July 2013, to the popularization of the ‘#BlackLivesMatter’ hashtag by the end of 2015 is the focus of this study. In it, one will see how the five narrative-shaping factors and the influencing role of cyber helped to compound the competitive nature of the Social Battlespace.

⁵ Serge F. Kovalski, “Trayvon Martin Case Shadowed by Police Missteps,” *The New York Times*, May 16, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/17/us/trayvon-martin-case-shadowed-by-police-missteps.html>.

⁶ Mark Memmott, “Zimmerman’s Account Of Fatal Encounter With Trayvon Made Public,” *NPR.org*, accessed April 4, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2012/06/21/155485499/zimmermans-account-of-fatal-encounter-with-trayvon-made-public>.

⁷ “About | Black Lives Matter,” accessed April 14, 2017, <http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>.

Factor #1: Narratives Are Not New and Do Not End

The narrative pursued by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement did not originate solely with the death of Trayvon Martin or the acquittal of George Zimmerman. This one event, although tragic, does not produce nation-wide riots or strong backlash against a state's judiciary system. As stated earlier, narratives take time and they gain or lose social popularity throughout its existence, but they do not end. Slavery, systematic racism, race-based murder, and civil rights violations are, unfortunately, historical facts for the United States that continue in many ways to pervade American society.⁸ Ida B. Wells-Barnett famously recorded the plight black people faced in the United States prior to the Civil War under the burdens of slavery. However, she also states that with freedom, a new system of hate and even murder began emerging within this new American system.”⁹

With this brutality arose an emotional appeal to end racial inequality by those Americans who felt continuously endangered by an apparent and accepted American norm. Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave who became a social reformer, abolitionist, orator, writer, and statesman during the 19th Century, declared that after he learned to read as a slave,

the silver trump of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness. Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever. It was heard in every sound and seen in everything. It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition. I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it. It looked from

⁸ V. Paul Poteat and Lisa Spanierman, “Modern Racism Attitudes Among White Students: The Role of Dominance and Authoritarianism and the Mediating Effects of Racial Color-Blindness (PDF Download Available),” *The Journal of Social Psychology* 152, no. 6 (2012): 758–74, doi:10.1080/00224545.2012.700966, 759.

⁹ Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *The Red Record Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States* (tredition, 2012), 73.

every star; it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.¹⁰

Throughout African-American history, both men and women rose to speak, as Frederick Douglass did, against American racism with the purpose of moving equality forward as a nation. This older narrative was still alive by the time George Zimmerman walked free in July 2013. For some, however, the Zimmerman-Martin case was another reminder that the narrative, expressed by previous civil rights leaders, was never fulfilled. This produced an emotional outrage, fed by centuries of mistrust, anger, and disenfranchisement, unleashed on an unprepared society.

This time, when an old narrative evolved to meet a contemporary context and began gaining popular support, cyber increased its competitive nature within the Social Battlespace. Unlike the case of Martin Luther King, Jr. in the 1960s, community leaders did not have to create an “organization of organizations” and physically spread the word from group to group.¹¹ Rather, in a cyber-influenced Social Battlespace, geographically separated communities who shared the same emotional mistrust and anger with American racial inequality were immediately connected. When the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag first appeared on Twitter after the acquittal of George Zimmerman, over five thousand people immediately shared it within their cyber-communities.¹² By the end of 2015, after thousands of people had used their smart technologies and mobile communication devices to record alleged police brutality against non-white Americans, over forty million people shared the

¹⁰ Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Courier Corporation, 1995), 37.

¹¹ *U.S. News & World Report*, “Revolt Without Violence - The Negroes’ New Strategy | The Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change,” *U.S. News Publishing Corp*, March 21, 1960.

¹² Monica Anderson and Paul Hitlin, “3. The Hashtag #BlackLivesMatter Emerges: Social Activism on Twitter,” *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*, August 15, 2016, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/08/15/the-hashtag-blacklivesmatter-emerges-social-activism-on-twitter/>.

#BlackLivesMatter hashtag, as well as subsequent BLM-influenced hashtags.¹³ What once took previous civil rights activists months and even years to reach a national audience; now, ordinary, non-authoritative citizens required only hours and, in some cases, minutes to achieve the same results.

Factor #2: The Counternarrative:

As soon as the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag appeared in July 2013, there was an immediate counternarrative to try to dislodge support from the BLM movement. As BLM began gaining momentum on the American stage, a new narrative was forming to show that BLM's cause for protest, Trayvon Martin himself, was a farce because Martin was no saint. Some blogs and news organizations began reporting that Martin was a drug dealer who was suspended from school for possessing marijuana.¹⁴ There was no solid evidence to support any of these claims, but the counternarrative was out there, gaining support from many Americans.

Another counter to the BLM movement was the #AllLivesMatter hashtag that appeared after news that a grand jury decided not to indict Daren Wilson, a police officer, in the death of Michael Brown, another black teenager.¹⁵ As outrage poured across the cyber-influenced Social Battlespace through platforms like Twitter and Facebook, in less than 30 days over 100,000 people shared the #AllLivesMatter hashtag as a counter to the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag.¹⁶ To reduce even more

¹³ Deen Freelon, "The Measure of a Movement: Quantifying Black Lives Matter's Social Media Power" (American University, 2016), <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/1180/fa1e3121db61cfc8556688731a21677bed72.pdf>.

¹⁴ Erhardt Graeff, Matt Stempeck, and Ethan Zuckerman, "The Battle for 'Trayvon Martin': Mapping a Media Controversy Online and off-Line," *First Monday* 19, no. 2 (January 28, 2014), <http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/4947>.

¹⁵ Ryan J. Gallagher et al., "Divergent Discourse between Protests and Counter-Protests: #BlackLivesMatter And #AllLivesMatter" (Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Computational Story Lab, Vermont Complex Systems Center, and Vermont Advanced Computing Core: University of Vermont, Burlington, VT, October 18, 2016), <https://arxiv.org/abs/1606.06820>, 3.

¹⁶ Gallagher, "Divergent Discourse," 2.

attention from the BLM movement, another counternarrative emerged as an emotional reaction to a perceived increase of hate allegedly produced by BLM. After the death of two New York police officers, murdered because a small minority of people targeted members of law enforcement as a response to a perceived increase in police brutality, a #BlueLivesMatter hashtag appeared in 2014 and was likewise gaining popular support.¹⁷

With this latest movement, people were raising American Flags with blue stripes and painting a blue streak on the curb near their homes.¹⁸ Due to the nature of cyber, as soon as events occurred around the United States, narratives and counternarratives began to emerge from ordinary people who used their mobile devices and social media platforms to participate in the Social Battlespace. Hierarchical institutions, like the police and other governmental agencies, could not keep up with the constant competition of narratives and were mostly reacting to events and statements made in cyberspace.

It is disheartening for a population, that looks to organizations like the police, their government, and even their leaders, and see that these entities are so ill-equipped to anticipate problems and are slow to respond to narratives in this cyber-influenced social medium. This breed mistrust and reduced confidence in such organizations that did not know how to speak for themselves. It is important to acknowledge here that there are many reasons why a counternarrative grew after Zimmerman's acquittal, whether because of racism, ignorance, or experience. However, what is necessary to realize for this study is that the elements within the three domains, formed by violence, rhetoric, images, and videos

¹⁷ Eric Geller, "What Is #BlueLivesMatter, and What Do Its Supporters Want?," *The Daily Dot*, December 22, 2014, <https://www.dailydot.com/layer8/blue-lives-matter-twitter-hashtag/>.

¹⁸ The blue streak on the curb apparently meant that if a police officer was ever in danger, a home with a blue streak was a 'safe' space they could retreat to for safety.

distributed in cyber, heavily influenced people in forming their decisions to support a particular narrative.

Factor #3: There are Always Some Facts

At the beginning of the incident described in this study were the facts regarding the death of Trayvon Martin and the neighborhood watch captain, George Zimmerman, who killed Martin. The facts alone did not spark a national outrage; rather, an old narrative evolved to meet a contemporary context and the rising counternarratives that competed with one another for support created this firestorm. However, facts are still important as the BLM had to point to something, the death of Trayvon Martin, in order to spark movement within the three domains to fulfill the goals of their cause.

Truth is more subjective because groups shape facts to meet their narrative causes. For example, a fact not presented at the beginning of this study was that Trayvon Martin was black and George Zimmerman was not. These facts, no doubt, aligned themselves to an explosive and emotional narrative of racial discrimination that was ripe for groups to pick and shape for their cause. In fact, global news organization CNN categorized George Zimmerman, who is Hispanic, as a 'white Hispanic' a year after Martin's death.¹⁹ This statement proliferated across social media platforms, was expressed in local news syndicates, and discussed in homes across America. Soon, the Zimmerman-Martin case was no longer about the tragic event itself; rather, Americans were debating whether they, as a nation, progressed from racism, if universities required "safe spaces," or if police brutality was on the rise, so much so

¹⁹ Roque Planas, "CNN's 'White Hispanic' Label For George Zimmerman Draws Fire," *Huffington Post*, July 12, 2013, sec. Latino Voices, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/12/cnn-white-hispanic_n_3588744.html.

that the fear of police and subsequent injustices seemed to grip black communities throughout the United States.²⁰

In cyber, Twitter follower, @MrPooni, placed an image on Twitter



Figure 5: #BlackLivesMatter Tweets.

Source: Twitter Profile @MrPooni.

showing the photos of twelve individuals, six of them white and six of them black (see Figure 5). In the six photos of white people who purportedly committed murder themselves, the word ‘apprehended’ was underneath. For those photos with black people, who committed no grievous crimes, the word ‘murdered’ hung below each image.²¹

In one post, shared over two thousand times, the complaint that police brutality was on the rise and largely ignored proliferated

across the United States. Change, as the BLM movement expressed on another social platform with a list of demands that needed to happen within the United States at all levels of American society.²² However, a study conducted by New York officials, concluded,

²⁰ Lisa M. Landreman, *The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections from Social Justice Educators* (Stylus Publishing, LLC., 2013), 138-139.

²¹ Sophie Kleeman, “15 #BlackLivesMatter Tweets Everyone Needs to See,” accessed April 17, 2017, <https://mic.com/articles/105002/15-black-lives-matter-tweets-everyone-needs-to-see>.

²² Black Lives Matter, “Our Demands,” #BLACKLIVESMATTER, accessed April 17, 2017, <http://blacklivesmatter.tumblr.com/demands>.

complaints against police officers had fallen significantly in the second half of the year, compared with July to November 2013. A report that tallied complaints said 1,813 were made so far since July 1 of this year [2014], 26% less than the number of complaints filed with the Civilian Complaint Review Board in the same period of the prior year. Excessive force allegations fell by 29%.²³

Facts are not enough by themselves for people to emotionally connect to them. Yes, incidents like the Zimmerman-Martin case are tragic and there is an emotional element for the young man who died that night, as well as either sympathy for George Zimmerman or, as shown in the BLM movement, outrage. However, the lesson here is that for people to offer their support to a narrative, only some facts are required as long as they fit into their notions of what is true and what is not.²⁴

Factor #4: A Call to Action

As noted earlier in this study, the BLM's narrative was a call to action to ignite and mobilize the elements within the three domains. BLM began using a variety of cyber platforms and posted images showing racial inequalities, videos of police brutality against minorities, and claims that leaders within the local state and national governments lacked any interest in changing such norms. BLM's evidence united communities who were otherwise disconnected outside of cyber and charged them to act. "Participation in future protests was associated with a spike in the intensity of social media conversations" and occurred

²³ Athena Jones, Steve Almasy, and Ray Sanchez, "Protests Feature Demands, Die-Ins and Calls for Justice," *CNN*, accessed April 17, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/05/justice/new-york-grand-jury-chokehold/index.html>.

²⁴ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2015), 172.

simultaneously throughout the nation.²⁵ The narratives that competed within the Social Battlespace rapidly gained support through cyber platforms, made it difficult for civilian, commercial, and governmental leaders to ignore.

Soon, students who were subscribed BLM members began making demands to universities across the nation to further the movement's cause.²⁶ In December 2014, the President of the United States finally met with appointed BLM leaders, more than a year after the Zimmerman-Martin case, to discuss their grievances against systematic racism in America and their recommendations.²⁷ Protests, videos, images, and subjective truths were rapidly making their way through cyber to feed and expand the narratives and counternarratives for a particular cause. In turn, people reacted emotionally and, sometimes, violently. In either case, people, connected by cyber, mobilized to use the domain elements to further their causes.

Factor #5: A Cycle of Influence

The evidence, shown so far, reveals how the BLM movement uses cyber platforms to compete a narrative within the Social Battlespace that mobilizes elements in each of the three domains. As stated earlier, the elements within the three domains also affect the narratives within the Social Battlespace, creating a cyclical influence. On the night of August 9, 2014, Michael Brown and his friend were jaywalking when a patrolling police officer, Darren Wilson, stopped them. Witnesses state that the confrontation quickly escalated and, for some reason, Brown and his

²⁵ Munmun De Choudhury et al., "Social Media Participation in an Activist Movement for Racial Equality.," 2016, http://www.munmund.net/pubs/BLM_ICWSM16.pdf.

²⁶ Stetson Payne, "Students And Faculty Participate In 'Black Lives Matter' Protest, Issue List of Demands To University," *Ocolly.com*, accessed April 17, 2017, http://www.ocolly.com/news/students-and-faculty-participate-in-black-lives-matter-protest-issue/article_784cd4c6-7cdd-11e4-9362-d35a679dcd18.html.

²⁷ Phillip Agnew, "What Happened When #BlackLivesMatter Met Obama," *PopularResistance.Org*, December 26, 2014, <https://popularresistance.org/what-happened-when-blacklivesmatter-met-obama/>.

friend began to run from Wilson. At that point, Wilson drew his weapon and shot Brown six times in the back, killing him. Michael Brown would lay four hours on the pavement as additional police officers and investigators arrived on the scene.²⁸ For BLM, the Brown incident was another instance proving police respond more violently with people of color than those who are white.

Specifically, in this context, when a Grand Jury did not indict Darren Wilson, BLM began mobilizing the elements within the three domains.²⁹ Soon protestors were clashing with police officers in riot gear, people were looting and damaging private and public property, and the chaos was all playing out on the world stage via a variety of cyber platforms. More powerfully, was the fact that this was not only happening in Ferguson, Missouri, where Brown died. Rather, this was happening all over the nation, simultaneously, in places like New York, Seattle, and California.³⁰

As these events unfolded, the competing narratives within the Social Battlespace began to evolve to meet the Brown-Ferguson context where supporters and critics voiced their concerns. One supporter, @Deray, stated, “You think we WANT to protest? Nah. We wanna live. We protest because we are being slaughtered. #Ferguson.”³¹ A critic, @SharonWamae, who was not only following the riots, but also following it from Kenya states “Destroying your own community will not bring any

²⁸ Stephanie Jones, “The Effect of #BlackLivesMatter: The Relevance of Communities and Collective Identity,” accessed April 17, 2017, <http://search.proquest.com/openview/f9feb096d8e49330116ec571e84adf00/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>.

²⁹ “Ferguson Riots: Ruling Sparks Night of Violence,” *BBC News*, November 25, 2014, sec. US & Canada, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-30190224>.

³⁰ Rishi Iyengar, “Twitter Reacts to Ferguson Protests,” *Time*, accessed April 17, 2017, <http://time.com/3604478/ferguson-michael-brown-darren-wilson-social-media/>.

³¹ Deray Mckesson, “You Think We WANT to Protest? Nah. We Wanna Live. We Protest Because We Are Being Slaughtered. #Ferguson,” microblog, @deray, (November 25, 2014), https://twitter.com/deray/status/537133079228198912?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw&ref_url=http%3A%2F%2Ftime.com%2F3604478%2Fferguson-michael-brown-darren-wilson-social-media%2F.

justice. #PrayForFerguson.”³² Even Palestinians in the Middle East, watching from their own Twitter feeds, began advising the Ferguson protestors how to remain calm while the police used tear gas, claiming they too knew how it felt when authorities attacked people based on their ethnicity.³³ An old narrative once used to address the plight of American inequalities was now evolving to contemporary events that were reshaping the three domain elements, rallying together not only geographically separated American communities, but international ones as well. Cyber and its various interconnecting technologies and platforms made this possible. As one Ferguson activist stated, “People would not have heard about Ferguson if it wasn't for social media,” which was not only causing people to talk, but to have that conversation on a national level.³⁴

The BLM movement is still alive and expanding its cause to include additional issues like feminism, sexual orientation, and other areas in which people feel discriminated. What is clear is that BLM, as an organization, continues to capitalize on cyber technologies and platforms to maintain support for its narrative in order compete within the Social Battlespace. For BLM, there is no hierarchal structure, nor orders given from leaders to mobilize and concentrate their efforts for their cause. Rather, BLM consists of disjointed communities and people with shared interests who use platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to proliferate their message. The power of their narrative comes

³² Sharon W. Wamae, “Destroying Your Own Community Will Not Bring Any Justice. #PrayForFerguson,” microblog, @SharonWamae, (November 25, 2014), https://twitter.com/SharonWamae/status/537149669655449600?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw&ref_url=http%3A%2F%2Ftime.com%2F3604478%2Fferguson-michael-brown-darren-wilson-social-media%2F.

³³ Mark Molloy, “Palestinians Tweet Tear Gas Advice to Protesters in Ferguson,” August 15, 2014, sec. World, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/11036190/Palestinians-tweet-tear-gas-advice-to-protesters-in-Ferguson.html>.

³⁴ Shannon Luibr et al., “How a Death in Ferguson Sparked a Movement in America,” accessed April 17, 2017, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/how-the-black-lives-matter-movement-changed-america-one-year-later/>.

from the ability to diffuse narrative control amongst those who subscribe to their values. Since no one person or organization is in charge, isolating any centers of gravity becomes difficult for those entities who wish to stop the BLM movement. Therefore, organizations who wish to counter narratives within a cyber-influenced Social Battlespace must diffuse their narrative power amongst its own members and give them the encouragement to participate in the social competition.



CONCLUSION

Those who concern themselves with developing new theories and strategies to successfully maneuver their nations, organizations, or even themselves into a more favorable position than their peers, must consider the three domains and the Social Battlespace in their calculus. The three domains, however, do not represent a common perspective where ideas solely focus on air, land, and sea strategies; these make up only one element of one domain. Nor does considering cyber a new domain help produce more effective strategies. Rather, the three domains that strategists must consider are Physical, Cognitive and Mechanical.

In the Physical domain, there are three elements that influence this space: blood—the human capital; bombs—the industrial and technological innovations; and butter—the interests entities pursue. The Cognitive domain has four elements: education, training, experience, and ignorance. These elements, coupled together, produce willpower, support, emotion, innovation, rationality, and irrationality. Finally, there is the Mechanical domain, which is made up of elements from both the Physical and Cognitive domains, and consists of three elements itself: norms, orders, and systems. The Mechanical domain takes those Physical and Cognitive elements and normalizes their actions in a local, domestic, or international setting, as seen with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. These domains are inadequate by themselves, however, and require a ‘call to action’ to mobilize their domain elements.

The Social Battlespace facilitates this ‘call to action’ where narratives compete with other narratives for dominance in order to mobilize specific domain elements to fulfill a cause. These narratives give reason to each of the domains by invoking emotion, like in the Cold War examples where fear mobilized nations, people, and resources to gain some form of security. Likewise, in the #BlackLivesMatter case

study, anger moved people to pressure national leaders within the political stream to listen to their agenda. It is within the Social Battlespace where effective strategies can impact a whole echelon of elements within the three domains.

Cyber, with its interconnected platforms, is changing how people access and control narratives within the Social Battlespace who impact the domain elements like never before. Historically, national leaders, elites, and people with influence had the power to create and maintain narratives within the Social Battlespace. Today, on the other hand, people who have the technological access can quickly establish and proliferate a competing narrative by using cyber platforms, like mobile communications, the Internet, and social media. Therefore, cyber is creating a diffusion in narrative power that is creating new implications that leaders must consider before developing new strategies.

Implications – A Whole-of-Government Perspective

The implications of this cyber-influenced Social Battlespace reveal that organizations who pass information with a hierarchal and centrally-controlled mindset will struggle in competing with or countering narratives. The United States government and its many organizations fall victim to hostile actions in the Social Battlespace because the institutions the nation built rely heavily on hierarchal processes and control. Therefore, a whole-of-government approach needs to shift and align these institutions to strategies that diffuse narrative power to its suborganizations if it wants its national narrative to adequately compete and dominate the Social Battlespace.

When facing security threats from enemies, for example, who operate within a cyber-influenced Social Battlespace to attack the emotions of individuals, groups, and nations, the United States responds by allowing its military services to focus on buying more Remotely Piloted Vehicles, 5th Generation Fighters, Precision-Guided Munitions (physical

domain assets), and heavily invest in cyber security (mechanical domain asset). Of course, these investments are important to the services in fulfilling the National Security Strategy's (NSS) principal of "leading with strength;" however, there is no substantial investment in developing strategies for the cognitive domain or Social Battlespace, a definite chink in each service's armor.¹

Looking specifically at one of these hierarchical organizations within the United States' government structure, such as the United States Air Force (USAF), one can conclude that the USAF looks for solutions that deliver kinetic effects in the Physical domain. Although the USAF uses the mechanical domain, such as cyber systems, and scans Instagram and Twitter for intelligence and potential targets, they do so for the physical effect.

In essence, the USAF uses the mechanical domain not to exploit the cognitive or compete within the Social Battlespace, but to affect the physical domain by shortening the kill chain. A good example of this is a strike against an ISIS command and control center identified as a target when a member of the terrorist group took a picture of himself in front of the facility and posted it on Twitter.² Traditionally, this is a win for airpower and the capabilities it can employ, which only pushes the USAF to cry for newer technologies like the F-35, and cyber, ISR, and space weapon systems. However, how does a physically-minded Air Force reduce the capabilities of a cognitively-minded and cyber-influenced Social Battlespace-savvy enemy, such as ISIS? Currently, it does not.

Strategists must realize that organizations, like the USAF, are not equipped to fight in the Social Battlespace of today. Carl von Clausewitz

¹ President of the United States, "2015 US National Security Strategy" (The White House, Feb 2015), <http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015.pdf>, 3.

² Douglas Ernst, "Air Force Bombs ISIS HQ after Terrorist 'moron' Posts Selfie Online," *The Washington Times*, accessed March 25, 2017, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/jun/4/air-force-bombs-islamic-state-hq-building-after-te/>.

argued that there is polarity between opposing forces or nations during times of war. He states that in war pure polarity are the goals and objectives each side wishes to achieve and are usually opposite from each other.³ For example, if one nation wants to gain territory from another nation, the opposing nation's objectives are to stop their enemy from gaining that territory. Taking this idea of polarity and applying it to the United States' current narrative in the War on Terror, difficulties arise. In the United States' NSS, not only does the narrative ask its government organizations to lead in security, but to advance global equality, end mass atrocities, and stabilize the Middle East; these are actions that require strategies across all three domains.⁴ However, some organizations have trouble aligning their narratives to this wide agenda because they are so physically and mechanically focused.⁵

In the case of the USAF and its efforts against ISIS, the USAF's objectives are to seek out and kill ISIS terrorists. However, ISIS members are not necessarily worried about dying, as many believe self-sacrifice gives them more power for their cause; rather, they seek international recognition and use the cyber-influenced Social Battlespace as a tool to increase the required support to meet that cause. Author Emile Simpson in his book, *War from the Ground Up*, best describes this lack of polarity in war. At the core of his argument, Simpson contends that the USAF and ISIS are actually fighting two different wars. The USAF is fighting members of ISIS and measuring their effectiveness in the Physical domain as used in traditional warfare: blood, bombs, and butter. However, their physical actions have no negative impact (meaning disruption of capability) within the Social Battlespace. As stated earlier, cyber structures itself as an interweb of decentralized networks. Bombing a command center does not disrupt an interweb of

³ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton University Press, 1989), 83.

⁴ President of the United States, "NSS," 20, 23-26.

⁵ President of the United States, "NSS," 20.

independent networks, as each node is equally powerful and capable of producing an anti-American narrative. Additionally, the kinetic actions the USAF takes in the Physical and Mechanical domains do not meet the wide spectrum of agendas outlined in the NSS. Yes, other organizations do accomplish the other agenda items that the USAF does not currently meet; however, this does not alleviate the necessity for the USAF to contribute toward competing the full national narrative in the Social Battlespace.

Another reason why United States government organizations are failing within the Social Battlespace is due to their structural mindset. As stated earlier, a cyber-influenced Social Battlespace is not hierarchal, whereas government organizations, like the USAF and its sister services, heavily rely on hierarchal structures. These services cannot treat this battlespace the same way in which they treat Information Operations, where functions separate into strategic, operational, and tactical levels. This top-down approach is good at turning strategy into tactics for military campaigns, but a cyber-influenced Social Battlespace moves faster than any effective campaign plan. American organizations, like the USAF, must structurally change, in a social sense, to combat hostile entities within this contested battlespace.

Lastly, strategists must appreciate that the United States and its subsequent organizations have a weak, slow, and reactive narrative within the Social Battlespace. As stated earlier, the military services measure themselves against Physical domain elements; however, this does not translate within the Social Battlespace. For example, insurgencies and terrorist groups, like the Taliban, ISIS, and Al Qaeda, target the population to control territory and gain international support, and they are doing this in part through cyber. David Galula argues that population control is the first real law that an insurgency or terror group lives and dies by to ensure not only their relevancy, but also their very

existence.⁶ While the military is out for blood, terror organizations rally support by stating ‘look at our cause...we will be great again...we will unite...yes, the United States is powerful, but we have a higher calling; we have Jihad!’ In response, the message of the military is ‘we will search you out and kill you wherever you are.’

This is not a message people can rally behind. Even more concerning is that all terror groups have to do is wait for the services to miss a target and then quickly capitalize on it and show the world how ineffective the United States is meeting their goals. All the United States can do at this point is reactively try to convince the population and the world that they were not intending to miss their targets, nor kill civilians in the process. It does not matter if the local population does not like ISIS or Taliban insurgents, nor does truth matter. As stated earlier, organizations like ISIS are upholding their part of the narrative; the United States, however, is not because it is too slow to react or shape the narrative due to their government’s hierarchal structures and Physical-domain focus. Does the United States and its hierarchal organizations really think they can kill all the terrorists? The ideas maintained by the United States must change within a cyber-influenced Social Battlespace.

Recommendation #1 –Hierarchal Strategies Do Not Work!

Since cyber is an interweb of domain element connections, there is no top, bottom, or even middle structure with overriding authority. This poses a difficulty for organizations, like militaries, who place a high value in an organization’s structure with defined lines of authority. Therefore, the implication here is twofold: 1) structuring an organization to operate in the Social Battlespace and 2) who gets control.

Hierarchal organizations do not need to physically restructure their organizations, which become extremely important in other areas of

⁶ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 55.

operations; rather, these organizations must change how information gets to the world. In Air Force Instruction 35-107, for example, the USAF concedes that all information that leaves one of their many organizations must first receive clearance from an associated public affairs office or officer.⁷ This means that any information that comes from the top or bottom must receive approval before official publication. This is how the United States wants its organizations to participate in the Social Battlespace. This comes from a hierarchal mindset, but is not how narratives operate within a cyber-influenced Social Battlespace, leading to the second problem—control.

Under USAF's own guidance, the organization is restricting who controls the narrative and who gets to participate in competing it in the Social Battlespace. As seen in the #BlackLivesMatter case study, the BLM organization does not control the narrative from the top; rather, each of its members participate in the Social Battlespace to further BLM's overall cause. The USAF, and many other hierarchally-minded organizations with the United States government, do not operate this way. Thus, they are not aligned to compete in today's Social Battlespace.

Therefore, using the USAF as an example, each unit commander and its members should have the ability to participate in competing the United States' narrative. This means that each member, under the diffusion of narrative power concept, has the same narrative power as the commander does in shaping that narrative. Additionally, each unit should be its own entity with no narrative hierarchy. This suggests that one unit cannot control the actions of another and cannot tell them what to say, post, or share. Control is inherent with each of the unit members, not the public affairs officers.

⁷ Lawrence Cox, "AFI 35-107, Public Web and Social Communication" (Secretary of the Air Force, March 15, 2017), http://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/saf_pa/publication/afi35-107/afi35-107.pdf, Para 1.3.2.2.1.

This may raise eyebrows because it clashes with the idea of control and accountability. What if a member goes rogue and says something outside the intended narrative? Who is held accountable? These are good questions, but are ones that do not matter within the contemporary Social Battlespace. For example, in the BLM movement there were participants who posted racist and violent comments against other races and members of law enforcement on social media platforms, while using the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag. This, however, did not distract from the overall message that BLM was pushing because so many people were participating that it drowned-out the inconsequential 'bad' tweets and posts. By diffusing narrative power to all its members, the United States' narrative is proliferated by its many supporters, while simultaneously drowning out the negative rhetoric. Moreover, members who advertently or inadvertently push a bad narrative within the Social Battlespace do it today already. Those who are mature and responsible try to use their cyber platforms properly; those who are not mature and responsible, do not. Either way, both parties are already using cyber platforms, are already participating in competing other narratives within the Social Battlespace. Why are organizations within the United States, like the USAF, not using them for their own benefit?

Recommendation #2 – It Pays to Be First

Entities who can compete their narrative in the Social Battlespace first will have the advantage because other groups will not only have to establish their own narrative, but counter the original narrative as well. As seen in the #BlackLivesMatter case study, BLM created a narrative about inequalities in America and the violence against a non-white population. Later, new organizations like #BlueLivesMatter and #AllLivesMatter looked to displace some of BLM's popular support, but

never could those two organizations overcome BLM's popularity.⁸ The lesson here is that nations, organizations, and individuals cannot wait, nor be slow in pushing their narrative and must quickly participate in the Social Battlespace. There cannot be any approval processes or authoritative entities charged with creating and maintaining a narrative. A cyber-influenced Social Battlespace moves too fast and each member of an organization must be ready to participate—daily. If they do not strive to become first, then “the best they will ever do is damage control.”⁹

Recommendation #3 – More is More

There cannot be a ‘less is more’ mentality when it comes to the Social Battlespace because competing narratives require constant attention and continuous effort. This is not a new idea. During the Cold War, national leaders constantly told their people about the ‘evil’ the United States or Soviet Union was doing. As shown in these Cold War examples, advertisements for fallout shelters, nuclear drills at school, and scenes in movies and television were all engaged to drive home the narrative in order to mobilize the domain elements into action. However, due to the increasing impact of cyber and its interconnecting technologies, ordinary people who normally do not possess credible authority or influence are now participating in competing narratives within the Social Battlespace. During the BLM movement, posts, images, videos, and comments were constantly flooding the Social Battlespace to support the narrative. Organizations, which were slow to react due to their structure, authority, and inability to understand the importance of the Social Battlespace, could not keep up with the amount of ‘talk’ occurring.

⁸ Monica Anderson and Paul Hitlin, “Social Media Conversations About Race,” August 15, 2016, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/08/15/social-media-conversations-about-race/>, 15.

⁹ Quote is attributed to Dr. Steve “Wilbur” Wright spoken during a mentoring session with the author on March 16, 2017.

The lesson from the BLM movement is that more is more, meaning more participation in the narrative creates a more effective and dominant narrative in the Social Battlespace. Thus, entities who possess a more dominant narrative have more control over the elements that are resident within the three domains. Government organizations, like the USAF, cannot rely solely on a public affairs organization or officer to create this mass effect for their narrative. Rather, these organizations have to rely on their members by diffusing power and control, enabling these members to quickly participate in the Social Battlespace, and concentrating their narrative power for one purpose—competing for narrative dominance.

Cyber, the interweb of connections between the Physical, Mechanical, and Cognitive domain elements, has given rise to the number of narratives competing within a Social Battlespace. Cyber is giving ordinary people, who would otherwise not have such power, the ability to access and compete their own narratives. This is challenging those states, organizations, and individuals who approach the Social Battlespace with traditional and hierarchal strategies; much like the many organizations do within the United States government today. Strategists must recognize the evolution occurring within a cyber-influenced Social Battlespace and develop strategies that capitalize on the strengths of having diffused narratives. Failure to do so will ensure their organizations and, most importantly, their cause will succumb to ones that are more dominant.

It is imperative for current and future leaders to understand these simple concepts in order create effective future strategies. No longer can one national power, especially in this globalized world, rely heavily on using force within the Physical and Mechanical domains to impact the Cognitive domain. Strategists must now consider influencing the narrative prior to assuming action in the three domains. Through these actions, nations, organizations, and individuals can gain the support

needed for their cause while, simultaneously, weakening that same ability for their peers. As Sun Tzu states, it is “best to subdue his army, his state, his cities without fighting.”¹⁰ This is accomplished by competing and dominating a narrative within the Social Battlespace.



¹⁰ Samuel B. Griffith, *The Art of War* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1971), 79.

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