Mapping the Media Terrain in the 2014 Gaza Conflict: A Framework for the Intelligence Preparation of the Information Environment

A Monograph

by

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This monograph argues there are six features of the media terrain that could impact the ability of the United States to leverage narrative and information in support of operations; these include corporate media, journalists, editors, social media, time, and audiences. The key features of the media terrain, analogous to the US Army doctrinal term key terrain, are those features given their proximity, access, and connection to audiences can frame an emotive narrative most rapidly, giving a marked advantage to the supported actor. Comparative analysis of four incidents during Operation Protective Edge (OPE), during the 2014 Gaza Conflict, determined all six features were present, but their relative importance changed given the context. This monograph enables the first step of successful US competition by outlining the characteristics of the media terrain and its key actors, and primary features. This paper recommends that commanders and staffs use the framework of media terrain, and the qualitative descriptions provided of each feature in the Operation Protective Edge case study, to conduct intelligence preparation of the information environment. This project defines the contemporary elements of the media terrain so that US planners can develop the capabilities to successfully integrate narrative maneuver into the practice of operational art. By looking for the same latent features described in the OPE case study, planners will have an actionable mental model and framework to proactively map the media terrain rather than passively cede this terrain to a deliberate foe.

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Abstract

Mapping the Media Terrain in the 2014 Gaza Conflict: A Framework for the Intelligence Preparation of the Information Environment, by MAJ Dirk K. van Ingen, 54 pages.

This monograph argues there are six features of the media terrain that could impact the ability of the United States to leverage narrative and information in support of operations; these include corporate media, journalists, editors, social media, time, and audiences. The key features of the media terrain, analogous to the US Army doctrinal term key terrain, are those features given their proximity, access, and connection to audiences can frame an emotive narrative most rapidly, giving a marked advantage to the supported actor. Comparative analysis of four incidents during Operation Protective Edge (OPE), during the 2014 Gaza Conflict, determined all six features were present, but their relative importance changed given the context. This monograph enables the first step of successful US competition by outlining the characteristics of the media terrain and its key actors, and primary features. This paper recommends that commanders and staffs use the framework of media terrain, and the qualitative descriptions provided of each feature in the Operation Protective Edge case study, to conduct intelligence preparation of the information environment. This project defines the contemporary elements of the media terrain so that US planners can develop the capabilities to successfully integrate narrative maneuver into the practice of operational art. By looking for the same latent features described in the OPE case study, planners will have an actionable mental model and framework to proactively map the media terrain rather than passively cede this terrain to a deliberate foe.

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Abbreviations

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
AP	The Associated Press
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN	Cable News Network
FM	Field Manual
IDF	Israel Defense Force
JP	Joint Publication
MWR	Morale, Welfare and Recreation
NBC	National Broadcasting Company
NPR	National Public Radio
NYT	New York Times
OPE	Operation Protective Edge
PA	Palestinian Authority
TRADOC	Training and Doctrine Command
WP	Washington Post
WSJ	Wall Street Journal

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Introduction

Enemies and adversaries of the United States are leveraging the use of narrative to support their maneuver at the operational level of war with decisive results. In 2014, the Islamic State captured Mosul, Iraq.[1] In this and subsequent operations, the Islamic State operated in the information environment to support maneuver despite qualitative and quantitative military disadvantages.[2] In the same year, Russia used narrative maneuver to support successful operations seizing and then consolidating gains in Crimea.[3] This eventually allowed the annexation of Crimea from Ukraine despite international opposition.[4] The US Army must improve its understanding of the information environment and media terrain at the operational level.

Throughout the world, the United States, along with its enemies, adversaries, and allies, conduct and respond to operational maneuver enabled by narrative effects. Maneuver through the information environment is a characteristic of modern conflict that current US Joint doctrine and practitioners conceptually acknowledge but have no practical framework to apply. To successfully compete through information environment operations, US planners must have a detailed understanding of the contemporary media terrain and how events and information

[1] Mosul Study Group, *What the Battle for Mosul Teaches the Force* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army University Press, 2018), accessed February 29, 2020, https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/Primer-on-Urban-Operation/Documents/Mosul-Public-Release1.pdf, 4.

[2] Brian Steed, "Maneuver in the Narrative Space," June 4, 2016, accessed September 5, 2019, https://www.narrativespace.net/uploads/1/1/7/9/117904861/maneuver_narrativespace2.pdf, 5-7.

[3] Lionel M. Beehner, Liam S. Collins, and Robert T. Person, "The Fog of Russian Information Warfare," in *Perceptions Are Reality: Historical Case Studies of Information Operations in Large-Scale Combat Operations,* ed. Mark D. Vertuli and Bradley S. Loudon, Large-Scale Combat Operations Series (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army University Press, 2018), 40.

[4] Rick A. Galeano, Katrin Galeano, Samer Al-Khateeb, Nitin Agarwal, and James N. Turner, "Botnet Evolution during Modern-Day Large-Scale Combat Operations," in *Perceptions Are Reality: Historical Case Studies of Information Operations in Large-Scale Combat Operations,* ed. Mark D. Vertuli and Bradley S. Loudon, Large-Scale Combat Operations Series (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army University Press, 2018), 165.

coalesce into a narrative that shapes actors' reality, options, and actions.[5] The first step of enabling successful US competition is understanding the characteristics of the media terrain and its key actors and primary features. It is critical to define the contemporary elements of the media terrain so that US planners can develop the capabilities to successfully integrate narrative maneuver into the practice of operational art. This project provides the basis of such an understanding by examining one of the most closely reported conflicts of 2014 – the 2014 Gaza Conflict. It finds that six features of the media terrain could impact the ability of the United States to leverage narrative and information in support of operations; these include corporate media, journalists, editors, social media, time, and audiences. The key features of the media terrain, analogous to the US Army doctrinal term key terrain, are those features given their proximity, access, and connection to audiences were able to frame an emotive narrative most rapidly, giving a marked advantage to the supported actor.[6] Applying the knowledge of how to map the media terrain given a specific context, the United States can contest adversary actors for domestic and international support that they would otherwise cede.

This project relies on Dr H. Porter Abbott's description of narrative to reverse engineer the media terrain. According to Abbott, a narrative is the "representation of events, consisting of story and narrative discourse; a story is an event or sequence of events; narrative discourse is those events as represented."[7] While a story consists of events and entities, narrative discourse refers to how a narrator mediates a story to an audience.[8]

[5] US Department of the Army, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018), 29.

[6] US Department of the Army. Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 1-02, *Terms and Military Symbols* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018), 1-58.

[7] Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 19.

[8] Ibid., 19-20.

Within a story there are either constituent events or supplementary events. Abbot defined constituent events as those events that are necessary for the story to move forward.[9] He defined supplementary events as those that do not drive the story forward; the story would remain intact without them, but they add narrativity.[10] According to Abbott, narrativity is the "set of qualities marking narrative," or that which builds the feeling and emotional context that makes a story compelling to an audience.[11]

To understand the evolving role of the media in modern conflict, with specific reference to the Israeli-Palestinian context, this paper relies on Dr Nachman Shai's models of public diplomacy. Dr Shai's book, *Hearts and Minds: Israel and the Battle for Public Opinion*, included six theoretical models of historical and proposed public diplomacy.[12] This project references Dr Shai's Basic Model, Cable News Network (CNN) International Model, and the New Public Diplomacy in the Facebook Era Model.[13] In the Basic Model, which corresponds to the basic tendency of actors to influence the media terrain, the government has a monopoly on control of information and is the source of authority for information. The media's role in this model is to serve as the mediator to the public. Within this model, the government or official spokesperson must explain decisions or events to the target audience or public.[14]

In the CNN International's Model, the source of authority for information changed to include private corporations, and due to technology, domestic and international audiences could access the same information. This broke the monopoly of control of information by any one government actor. With the advent and maturation of the internet and social media, this model

[9] Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 24.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 24-25.

[12] Nachman Shai, *Hearts and Minds: Israel and the Battle for Public Opinion,* trans. by Ira Moskowitz (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018), Kindle.

[13] Ibid., fig. 14.1, fig. 14.3, fig. 14.5. Kindle.

[14] Ibid., chap. 6, Kindle.

evolved into the Facebook New Public Diplomacy Model. This model empowered the individual within the audience. In sharp contrast to the basic model, this evolution is non-hierarchical and multi-directional. Technology empowered individuals to initiate and create content, and the timely flow of information became the key to sound public diplomacy.[15]

Definitions of the components of the information environment and media terrain are critical to understanding the following case study. Joint Publication (JP) 3-13, *Information Operations*, defines the information environment as "the aggregate of individuals, organizations, and systems that collect, process, disseminate, or act on information."[16] As shown in figure 1, the information environment encompasses a cognitive dimension, information dimension, and physical dimension.[17] The media terrain attempts to provide the theoretical bias to build a model bridging these dimensions of the information environment into descriptive features.

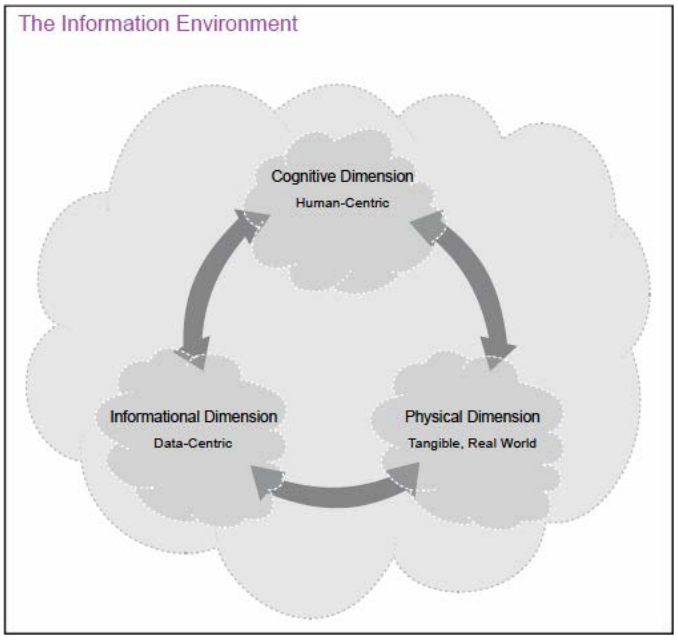

Figure 1. The Information Environment. US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-13, *Information Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), I-2.

[15] Shai, *Hearts and Minds*, chap. 14, Kindle.

[16] US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-13, *Information Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), I-1.

[17] Ibid., I-1 – I-3.

This project defines six features of the media terrain to categorize, summarize, and analyze findings. In the study, the term corporate media refers to three categories of for-profit commercial media entities. First, the US Major Dailies, a ProQuest database accessed through Army MWR Library, which provides full-text, same day, and archive publication access to five major US newspapers: *New York Times (NYT)*, *Wall Street Journal (WST)*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Washington Post (WP)*.[18] Next, international, or non-US or non-Israel, media entities whose primary audiences are international. Third, this paper uses domestic Israeli corporate media, or entities based in Israel.

This study distinguishes between four types of journalists: staff journalists, authors, contributing journalists, and stringers. For this paper, staff journalists are those employed by media corporations. The designation of author directly refers only to those journalists identified as the authors of specific articles. In this project, contributing journalists are those journalists cited within an article as providing content. For stringers, this monograph uses author Anthony Feinstein's definition of "part-time, non-staff correspondents covering stories and locations for newspapers or news agencies operating elsewhere."[19]

This study identifies editors as those persons in a position within media organizations to make editorial decisions, or decide the tone, title, and final content of an article. This definition operationalizes Howard Tumber and Frank Webster's description of editors as persons who "play a crucial role in framing and contextualizing what the frontline correspondent sends through."[20] Social media in this study refers to a broad range of digital mediums, such as Twitter, Facebook,

[18] "US Major Dailies," ProQuest, accessed March 1, 2020, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/usmajordailies/?accountid=196094.

[19] Anthony Feinstein, *Journalists Under Fire: The Psychological Hazards of Covering War* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 91-92.

[20] Howard Tumber and Frank Webster, *Journalists Under Fire: Information War and Journalistic Practices* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 170.

Instagram, and YouTube, which allow individuals to interact digitally through the internet instantaneously.

Time in this project refers to what Magnus-Sebastian Kutz called the "CNN Effect."[21] Kutz described this effect as when "technological development (the internet and satellites, convergence of space, cyber, and economics) of the "media system" allowed the speed networks could distribute the news.[22] This led to time becoming an important feature due to the need for actors and corporations to get their message out first and set the narrative.[23] This monograph uses the terms audience, and target audience to broadly denote a media entity's intended public, and narrowly describe the individuals whose interaction with content from the media shapes which narrative was legitimate and credible.

There are additional considerations beyond the scope of this monograph. One area is the for-profit nature of the contemporary media. Analysis of syndication agreements, corporate media groups, their ownership, and identification would strengthen the research started in this project. Another area of inquiry should focus on Russia and China's interaction with the media and the information environment.

Historical and Strategic Context of Operation Protective Edge

Between Israel's full withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005 to the start of the 2014 Gaza Conflict, Hamas and other organizations fired over 11,600 rockets into Israel. Israel imposed a blockade of the Gaza Strip as a measure intended to prevent rockets from reaching Hamas and other fighters in Gaza.[24]

[21] Magnus-Sebastian Kutz, "Just Wars and Persuasive Communication," in *Selling War: The Role of the Mass Media in Hostile Conflicts from World War I to the "War on Terror,"* ed. Josef Seethaler, Matthias Karmasin, Gabriele Melischek, and Romy Wöhlert (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 118.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., 109.

[24] The State of Israel, *The Operation in Gaza, 27 December 2008 - 18 January 2009: Factual and Legal Aspects* (Tel Aviv: The State of Israel, July 2009), 18-19.

By 2014, Hamas lost significant financial and economic support from Egypt, Iran, and Syria.[25] As a result, Hamas started a cycle of provocation in the spring and summer of 2014. The increased intensity caused the IDF to react militarily and created favorable incidents supporting Hamas' David vs. Goliath narrative in the hope of forcing favorable negotiations.[26] These rising tensions exploded when Hamas kidnapped and killed three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank.[27]

In response, Israel launched Operation Brother's Keeper to recover the teenagers. The IDF raided Hamas homes in the West Bank, arresting Hamas members in the West Bank and closing organizations affiliated with Hamas.[28] Palestinians responded to Operation Brother's Keeper with street protests and growing civil unrest.[29] As the riots and civil unrest increased, the bodies of the Israeli teenagers were found, and in response, a Palestinian teenager was murdered in a suspected vigilante revenge killing.[30] On July 5, the IDF conducted aerial strikes on a cross-border assault tunnel to reportedly prevent a Hamas tunnel infiltration into Israel.[31] Finally, Hamas and other militant organizations fired over 60 rockets at Israel from the Gaza Strip on July 7, 2014. According to The State of Israel's legal and factual report on the conflict, this was the trigger for starting the aerial operation against Hamas.[32]

25 Jeroen Gunning, "What Drove Hamas to Take on Israel?" *BBC*, July 18, 2014, accessed October 29, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28371966; Eitan Shamir, "The 2014 Gaza War: Rethinking Operation Protective Edge," *Middle East Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (Spring 2015): 2, accessed October 29, 2019, https://www.meforum.org/articles/2015/rethinking-operation-protective-edge.

26 The State of Israel, *The 2014 Gaza Conflict (7 July-26 August 2014): Factual and Legal Aspects* (Tel Aviv: The State of Israel, May 2015), 25.

27 Ibid.

28 Gunning, "What Drove Hamas to Take on Israel?"

29 Ibid.

30 NBC, "Revenge Killing? Burned Body of Arab Teen Found in Jerusalem," *NBC*, last modified July 2, 2014, accessed December 12, 2019, https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/west-bank-kidnappings/revenge-killing-burned-body-arab-teen-found-jerusalem-n146136.

31 The State of Israel, *The 2014 Gaza Conflict,* 1.

32 Ibid., 7.

Operation Protective Edge lasted for fifty-six days, from July 7, 2014, until a ceasefire went into effect on August 26, 2014. Israel's publicly announced strategic objectives for OPE were "to defend its citizens and restore sustained calm and security to the Israeli civilian population from unlawful attacks."[33] Conversely, Hamas needed to "win by not losing – to survive in power," and focus international pressure on Israel to lift the embargo on Gaza to strengthen its domestic political position.[34] During OPE, Hamas increased its use of tunnels and social media to address Israel's quantitative and qualitative military advantages that were apparent during Operation Cast Lead.[35]

2014 Operation Protective Edge

This case study identifies the key features of the media terrain during Operation Protective Edge (OPE) from the start of the operation with the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) air campaign on July 7, 2014, to the final ceasefire on August 26, 2014. By examining exemplary incidents, this project highlights the interaction of the features of the media terrain. Through comparative analysis, it provides a qualitative assessment of how these features affected the primary actors' ability to shape their narratives in support of operations.

The following four incidents provide evidence to identify the key features of the media terrain within the specific context of OPE. First, the start of OPE and the IDF air campaign on July 7, 2014. Next, the failed Egyptian brokered ceasefire proposal and coverage of the killing of four Palestinian boys by Israel on July 15 – 16, 2014. Third, the Hamas cross-border attack at Sufa and the start of the IDF ground offensive into Gaza in response on July 17, 2014. Finally, the July 20, 2014 kidnapping of the body of Staff Sergeant Oron Shaul during a tunnel attack by

[33] The State of Israel, *The 2014 Gaza Conflict,* 33.

[34] Glenn E. Robinson, "Gaza 2014: Hamas' Strategic Calculus," *Parameters* 44, no. 4 (Winter 2014-15): 99, accessed October 29, 2019. https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1665220706?account id=28992.

[35] Shamir, "The 2014 Gaza War: Rethinking Operation Protective Edge," 9.

Hamas in Shuja'iyeh. While the conflict continued for several weeks following the Shuja'iyeh attack, these incidents provide ample iterations to understand how incidents interact with the media terrain and coalesce into shaping narratives and operations.

How Was It Covered: Incident 1 – The IDF Air Campaign

The world received notification of the start of the air campaign through the IDF's Twitter post, "#Hamas will not be safe as long as it continues to threaten the lives of #Israeli civilians." The July 7, 2014 post included a meme showing an Israeli Air Force pilot saluting with text stating, "the IDF has commenced Operation Protective Edge to defend Israel's civilians against Hamas Terrorism."[36] With that Twitter post, OPE began interacting with the features of the media terrain. In this first incident, the features of the media terrain which effected Israel and Hamas' ability to leverage narrative and information in support of operations were corporate media, journalists, editors, social media, and the effect of time.

Initially, corporate media continued their coverage of ongoing social unrest while providing initial coverage of OPE. On July 7, 2014, US major daily corporate media coverage included six articles from the *WP*, six articles from the *WSJ,* six articles from the *NYT*, and one article each from the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*. The *WP's* six articles were representative of the other US Major Dailies' coverage. Most reporting on July 7, 2014, focused on the heightening tensions from the kidnapping and murder of the three Israeli students and the suspected revenge killing of a Palestinian teenager in in response.[37] These articles tended to include quotes from the IDF spokesperson, the Hamas spokesperson, or both. Examined through

[36] Israel Defense Forces (@IDF), "#Hamas will not be safe as long as it continues to threaten the lives of #Israeli civilians," Twitter, July 7, 2014, 6:13 p.m., https://twitter.com/IDF/status/486286967726800896.

[37] Ruth Eglash and Griff Witte, "Israeli Jets Pound Gaza Targets: Tensions between Israelis and Palestinians Flare to their Worst Level in Years After the Suspected Murder of an Arab Teenager by Jewish Settlers in East Jerusalem and the Killings of Three Israeli Teenagers," *The Washington Post*, July 7, 2014, accessed November 21, 2019. ProQuest US Major Dailies, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/docview/1543395331?accountid=196094.

Abbott's narrative framework, these articles built a framing narrative that included and exceeded the direct discourse provided thorough spokesperson interviews.[38] Each of the articles anchored off the embedded, or current officially established narrative, of social unrest and violence.[39]

The international corporate media outlet, *Al Jazeera America,* published several articles on July 7, 2014. Its articles provided a different perspective, or framing narrative, from the US Major Dailies. The difference started with the articles' titles, "Israel launches deadly airstrikes in Gaza," and "Hamas threatens revenge after Gaza air raids" were two notable examples.[40] *Al Jazeera America*'s leading titles framed Israel's offensive action against Gaza. Despite this, the coverage presented a factual tone due to the skillful use of direct discourse between the embedded and framing narrative.

As in the US Major Dailies, *Al Jazeera America* mediated the discourse from spokespersons and witnesses to their audience, but created a different framing narrative. The first article reported the results of the IDF airstrikes, the Palestinian fighters' response with rockets and mortars from Gaza, as well as riots following the murder of Mohammed Abu Khdeir.[41] The second *Al Jazeera America* article highlighted Hamas' threats of revenge, Israel's escalation, narrated one Palestinian's desire to see the Israelis "punished," and quoted Israeli politicians contesting the domestic political situation.[42] *Al Jazeera America's* representation of the events differed in both tone and conclusion from the facts presented in the post-conflict report by the

[38] Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 50-52.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Al Jazeera America, "Israel launches deadly airstrikes in Gaza," *Al Jazeera America*, July 7, 2014, accessed November 21, 2019, Gale Academic OneFile, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A373802869/AONE?u=cfsc&sid=AONE&xid=0d3b3593; Al Jazeera America, "Hamas threatens revenge after Gaza air raids," *Al Jazeera America*, July 7, 2014, accessed November 21, 2019, Gale Academic OneFile, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A373860576/AONE?u=cfsc&sid=AONE&xid=0418a39c.

[41] Al Jazeera America, "Israel launches deadly airstrikes in Gaza."

[42] Al Jazeera America, "Hamas threatens revenge after Gaza air raids."

State of Israel and contemporary reporting by the *WP*.[43] *Al Jazeera*'s portrayal of its sources' discourse to the international audience created the contrast, shaping an alternative narrative reality.

Israeli domestic corporate media also covered the start of OPE. In one notable example, the *Times of Israel* published a live blog of events over the day. The blog combined content into an online digital article which included descriptions of political actions, attacks, and social media posts.[44] The *Times of Israel's* establishment of the blog integrated several elements of the media terrain, including corporate media and social media. As in the US Major Dailies and *Al Jazeera America's* international coverage, Israeli domestic corporate media established its framing narrative using the direct discourse of the actors, pulling from a wide variety of sources to establish their representation of the events.

In an example of another mode of coverage, the National Public Radio (NPR) program, "All Things Considered," also reported on the start of the conflict on July 7, 2014. The radio broadcast from Jerusalem's Old City interviewed a young Palestinian woman about continued fighting between Israelis and Palestinians. The short segment mainly discussed civil unrest and violence between the two populations as military attacks continued.[45]

As the air campaign continued, analytical articles joined the initial reporting. In one prescient article, *WP* digital editor Swati Sharma published a short article online on July 11, 2014, which described how each side of the conflict used twitter and other social media platforms to shape their narrative. Her article included Twitter posts, tweets, from different sources, including

[43] The State of Israel, *The 2014 Gaza Conflict*, 2.

[44] Itamar Sharon, Marissa Newman, and Ilan Ben Zion, "Israel Launches 'Protective Edge' Counteroffensive on Gaza, Jewish Suspects Reenact Teen's Murder," *Times of Israel*. July 7, 2014, accessed November 1, 2014. https://www.timesofisrael.com/as-israel-grapples-with-homegrown-killers-violence-continues/.

[45] NPR, "In Jerusalem, And Caught In A Crossfire Of Thrown Stones," *All Things Considered*, July 7, 2014, accessed November 21, 2019, Gale Academic OneFile, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A374942428/AONE?u=cfsc&sid=AONE&xid=426c86eb.

both Iran's Ayatollah Khamenei and the IDF. It identified trending content that enabled her audience to search for and collaborate with the content, interacting with the represented actors' narratives. The content included "#Israelunderattack" aligned with the question "what if Hamas was in your neighborhood?" The article also included the trending counter narrative #Gazaunderattack, "What if Israel was bombing your city?" As with the *Times of Israel,* the *WP* employed social media to augment reporting to create a sense of proximity to the conflict, and add credibility to framing narratives through direct discourse with entities close to the event.[46]

Examination of corporate media articles that covered the start of OPE show emergent trends concerning the originators of the content – the journalists. Some of the reporting featured a regular staff journalist integrating their corporation's local journalists to create on-location content. For example, NPR's journalist Robert Siegal broadcasted an interview conducted by NRP journalist, Ari Shapiro, in Jerusalem using an Arabic translator, Nuha Musleh.[47]

In contrast to corporate media's employment of staff journalists or clearly attributing where the content originated within the corporation, some of the digital publications did not identify an author. Neither the digital article "Hamas threatens revenge after Gaza air raids," from *Al Jazeera America,* nor the *New York Times'* "Israel Calls Up 1,500 Troops as Tensions Mount With Hamas," identified an author.[48] These same articles specified reporting and contributions from journalists such as Nisreen el-Shamayleh for *Al Jazeera America*, Said Ghazali for the *NYT*, and Fares Akram for both.[49] Said Ghazali was a local Palestinian investigative reporter used as a

[46] Swati Sharma, "The Israeli-Palestinian Twitter War, in 8 Graphics," *Washington Post*, July 11, 2014, accessed November 1, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/07/11/the-israeli-palestinian-twitter-war-in-8-graphics/.

[47] NPR, "In Jerusalem, And Caught In A Crossfire Of Thrown Stones."

[48] Al Jazeera America, "Hamas threatens revenge after Gaza air raids."; New York Times, "Israel Calls Up 1,500 Troops as Tensions Mount with Hamas," *New York Times*, July 7, 2014, accessed November 21, 2019, ProQuest US Major Dailies, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/usmajordailies/docview/2213136746/6583505F14CF494FPQ/5?accountid=196094.

[49] Al Jazeera America, "Hamas threatens revenge after Gaza air raids."; New York Times, "Israel Calls Up 1,500 Troops as Tensions Mount with Hamas."

stringer by an corporate media outlet. In contrast to Ghazali, Nisreen el-Shamayleh, was an example of a staff journalist from *Al Jazeera* traveling to the conflict zone.[50] By not identifying an author, the origin of the content creator was a mystery. Instead the corporate media entity itself became the narrator. By identifying the individuals participating in the narrative discourse, corporate media created a virtual representation which strengthened the narrator's framing narrative.

Sometimes, the person used as a virtual representation for direct discourse can construct the story and shape the narrative discourse. Fares Akram, was a local Palestinian Associated Press (AP) reporter who also worked as a stringer for the *NYT* during OPE.[51] Working for both corporate media entities, Akram shaped how events became news. As an example, Fares Akram's name appeared in 139 articles he contributed to with the *NYT* alone between July and August 2014.[52] The volume and acknowledgment of his contribution evidenced how both stringers and news agencies shape the media terrain.

Part of Akram's reach was due to his role with the AP. The AP is a news agency, also known as a wire service, newswire, or news service. According to the AP's website, they provide "content and services to help engage audiences worldwide, working with companies of all types."[53] They operate by providing wholesale stories, photographs, and video from locations worldwide to corporate news media. Their influence was such that they confidently stated, "more

[50] Al Jazeera, "Nisreen El-Shamayleh," accessed January 7, 2020, https://www.aljazeera.com/profile/nisreen-el-shamayleh.html.

[51] "Fares Akram," *Muck Rack*, accessed January 9, 2020, https://muckrack.com/fares-akram; New York Times, "Gaza: When Home Is a War Zone," *New York Times*, August 6, 2014, accessed January 9, 2020, ProQuest US Major Dailies, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/usmajordailies/docview/2213055016/B66E7D37BBA4469PQ/1?accountid=196094.

[52] Search by author for keyword "Fares Akram" on ProQuest, US Major Dailies, with the search restricted from July 2014 to August 2014, accessed January 9, 2020, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/usmajordailies/results/B66E7D37BBA4469PQ/1?accountid=196094.

[53] Associated Press, "About Us," accessed January 9, 2020, https://www.ap.org/about/.

than half the world's population sees our content every day."[54] News agencies were powerful canalizing features of the media terrain. Through their structure a single journalist's framing narrative can become global.

As with news agencies, social media was a global feature of the media terrain from the start of OPE. The IDF's tweet and Sharma's *WP* article showed how social media interacted with corporate media and journalists. Social media also could bypass the other features of the media terrain. For example, @IDF on Twitter provided constant social media representation of the IDF during OPE.[55] As a state information operation manager, the IDF's self-coverage directly supported their narratives of self-defense and Hamas' provocation for the air campaign.

In contrast to the IDF's information operations, Palestinian sixteen-year-old Farah Baker live-tweeted the war. Her story was a powerful example of social media as a non-corporate, non-state feature of the media terrain. Baker was not a journalist but a local Palestinian civilian. Through social media her political and social affiliations were evident from the beginning of OPE. At the start of the air campaign on July 7, 2014, she tweeted, "one of the martyrs who died last night because of Israeli bombs! What did this baby do to die this way!:("[56] Her tweet referenced the picture of a funeral procession for a baby whose death she explicitly linked to the IDF airstrikes. This tweet, early during the air campaign, only received twenty-nine retweets and eighteen likes.[57] Later on July 7, 2014, she tweeted, "#Hamas says to #Israel: The blood of the

54 Associated Press, "About Us."

55 Russell W. Glenn, *Short War in a Perpetual Conflict: Implications of Israel's 2014 Operation Protective Edge for the Australian Army*, Army Research Paper, no. 9 (Commonwealth of Australia: Australian Army, June 2016), 75.

56 Farah Baker (@Farah_Gazan), "one of the martyrs who died last night because of Israeli bombs! What did this baby do to die this way!:(,"Twitter, July 7, 2014, 5:18 a.m., accessed January 14, 2020, https://twitter.com/Farah_Gazan/status/486091895094116352.

57 Ibid.

martyrs of last night will not go in vain #Gaza"[58] This overtly partisan tweet only was retweeted twice.[59] Yet her persistence, proximity, and the global reach of her platform catapulted her from obscurity to international notoriety.

Baker's ability to represent a personal, relatable narrative shows why social media is a powerful feature of the media terrain. Baker became famous during OPE for her ability to provide deeply relatable content, with her online following growing from 800 to over 200,000 during the operation.[60] On July 28, 2014, she posted what became an iconic tweet, "This is in my area. I can't stop crying. I might die tonight…"[61] The tweet included a blurry picture through a window with glowing flares streaking down.[62] This tweet received over 13,700 retweets, over 3,400 likes.[63] Significantly, it also resulted in corporate media writing articles about her social media content and secondary source publications on OPE to use her as an example of the impact of social media in the conflict.[64] Today, her 175,000 followers have somewhat dropped from the height of OPE, but with over 15,300 tweets, she remains an example of social media as a continuing fixture of the media terrain.[65]

[58] Farah Baker (@Farah_Gazan), "#Hamas says to #Israel: The blood of the martyrs of last night will not go in vain #Gaza," Twitter, July 7, 2014, 12:14 p.m., accessed January 14, 2020, https://twitter.com/Farah_Gazan/status/486202734757294080.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Glenn, *Short War in a Perpetual Conflict,* 76.

[61] Farah Baker (@Farah_Gazan), "This is in my area. I can't stop crying. I might die tonight #Gaza #GazaUnderAttack #ICC4Israel #AJAGAZA," Twitter, July 28, 2014, 4:59 p.m., accessed January 14, 2020, https://twitter.com/Farah_Gazan/status/493878477968642048.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Glenn, *Short War in a Perpetual Conflict*, 76; David Patrikarakos, *War in 140 Characters: How Social Media Is Reshaping Conflict in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 34.

[65] Farah Baker (@Farah_Gazan), Twitter, accessed January 14, 2020, https://twitter.com/Farah_Gazan.

Analysis: Incident 1

Based on the coverage of this first incident of Operation Protective Edge, the key features of the media terrain were corporate media, journalists, stringers, editors, social media, and time. Individually, none of these features represented what a military professional would call key terrain, or "any locality, or area, the seizure or retention of which affords a marked advantage to either combatant."[66] Yet, together the interaction of these features was responsible for the creation of so-called newsworthy content and its representation to domestic and international audiences.

Matti Friedman, a former AP correspondent during the 2014 Gaza conflict, ironically described the volume of coverage as proof it was "the most important story on earth."[67] The ubiquitous presence of corporate media reporting during the first incident provided a strong argument that it was the critical feature, controlling content creation, representation, and the dissemination to audiences. Corporate media performed the framing role described by Abbott, including, and exceeding the embedded narratives corporate media covered.[68] Corporate media was able to cover the start of OPE due to the social unrest already underway in the aftermath of Operation Brother's Keeper. Collectively, the corporate media at the start of OPE tried to mediate information in a manner consistent with Dr. Shai's CNN International Model.[69] Corporate media was unable to dominate the media terrain, and belief that it alone could be responsible for the propagation of narrative fails to consider its interaction and dependence on other features of the media terrain.

[66] US Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 1-02, *Terms and Military Symbols* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018), 1-58.

[67] Mattie Friedman, "An Insider's Guide to the Most Important Story on Earth," *Tablet*, August 26, 2014, accessed September 4, 2019, https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/183033/israel-insider-guide.

[68] Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 50-52.

[69] Shai, *Hearts and Minds*, fig. 14.3, Kindle.

Several of the US Major Dailies' articles were very similar, indicating that corporate media coverage of the incident was not as diverse as the number of corporations made it seem. One of the root causes of the lack of diversity in coverage was the use of stringers by major news corporations for a large volume of reporting.[70] Said Ghazali, was a similar example of this narrow authorship. Ghazali was a prolific contributor to the *NYT* during OPE. He contributed to thirty-four articles between July and August 2014.[71] Two different major corporate media entities, the *NYT* and *Al Jazeera America*, received their content partially from the contribution of a single individual – Fares Akram. During the first incident, corporate media entities were dependent on the availability of stringers to provide coverage from the conflict zone.

The use of stringers to cover conflicts was not new to OPE. Mark Pedelty's study on the Salvadoran Foreign Press Corps Association during that country's civil war presented a similar example of the use of stringers by major corporate media. He noted the dichotomy of the "A Team," or staff journalists, and the "B Team," the stringers. The B Team saw the A Team as culturally and physically removed from the conflict they were covering, while exploiting the B Team's knowledge without adequate compensation.[72] This characterization was derisively described as the "New York Times disease," because journalists defined themselves by the organization they worked for, and the organization defined what was considered news.[73] Without imposing conclusions from El Salvador on the Gaza Conflict, Pedelty's qualitative logic shows the propensity for divergent motivations and perceptions within the seemingly monolithic entities of corporate media. Stringers create content, and they may or may not have aligned biases or a

[70] Throughout this monograph, the term stringers adheres to Feinstein's definition of "part-time, non-staff correspondents covering stories and locations for newspapers or news agencies operating elsewhere." Feinstein, *Journalists Under Fire,* 91-92.

[71] Search by author for keywords "Said Ghazali" on ProQuest, US Major Dailies, with the search restricted from July 2014 to August 2014. https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/usmajordailies/results/254BF32308B142F2PQ/3?accountid=196094.

[72] Feinstein, *Journalists Under Fire,* 92.

[73] Ibid.

shared understanding with the organizations they represent in deciding what perspective of an event is newsworthy.

This sub-division of corporate media illustrates that journalists and editors were content creators and operated as canalizing features of the media terrain. As noted by Friedman, the media's descriptions of reality representing the actual events during OPE was "the result of decisions made by individual human beings in positions of responsibility – in this case, journalists and editors."[74] Therefore, journalists or editors could have been the key feature of the media terrain, not just because of their decisions regarding reporting, but because of how information moved through corporate media.

Journalists created content during the first incident of the case study. In general, journalists and stringers, collected data and information from witnesses, sources, or their own experience. From this starting point, journalists and stringers chose a depiction of the event to present through either written digital media, pictures, video, or voice and transmitted this account to an editor. Examples of this were Fares Akram contributing to the *NYT* or Nisreen el-Shamayleh for *Al Jazeera*. In either case, it remained the prerogative of uncredited editorial decisions to decide on the tone, title, and final cut of the content.

In Freidman's experience of the editorial culture covering Gaza in 2014, journalists "were instructed to ignore" reporting that did not fit the editorial direction of the organization they were affiliated with.[75] In an article denouncing biased editorial processes during the conflict he stated "many of the people deciding what you will read and see from [Israel] view their role not as explanatory but as political."[76] If true, this supports a shift from journalists to editors as the key feature of the media terrain.

[74] Friedman, "An Insider's Guide to the Most Important Story on Earth."

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

In response to Freidman's argument the AP's Director of Media Relations, Paul Colford, published a statement asserting "the AP aimed, as always, to present a fair and accurate picture."[77] The official response cited obstacles in covering OPE in Gaza which included security concerns, anti-media agitation, the intensity of the conflict, and Israeli military censorship.[78] Corroborating the AP's assertions was the *Freedom House's* report which highlighted significant security concerns to journalists and the political pressure on corporate media.[79] However valid the safety concerns, obstacles, or honorable the intent behind the AP's statement and actions, their statement implicitly confirms editors' importance in creating a representation of reality for public and corporate consumption. Therefore, it is the journalists who create the content and editors who ultimately decide and frame what their target audience receives.

Perhaps in response to the canalization of information through corporate media and its connective tissues, social media emerged as a parallel and interactive feature of media terrain during the first incident of OPE. On one side, IDF information operations managers used social media to present information in support of their narratives at the start of the operation. The IDF used multiple social media platforms, even announcing the start of the operation, the IDF's intentions, and justification to a global audience.[80] A notable example of the IDF's usage of social media occurred on July 9, 2014. The IDF published on their YouTube channel a video report of the Hamas spokesperson encouraging the use of human shields on Al Aqsa TV.[81] Since the IDF published the video, it has received over 173,000 views. The IDF's usage of social media and the

[77] Paul Colford, "AP statement on Mideast coverage," Associated Press, December 1, 2014, accessed January 14, 2020, https://web.archive.org/web/20141204110131/http://www.ap.org/content/press-release/2014/ap-statement-on-mideast-coverage.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Freedom House, "West Bank and Gaza Strip," *Freedom House*, accessed December 9, 2019, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/west-bank-and-gaza-strip.

[80] Glenn, *Short War in a Perpetual Conflict*, 67.

[81] Israel Defense Forces, "Hamas Spokesperson Encourages Use of Human Shield," *YouTube*, July 9, 2014, accessed December 9, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXZEzbT0H1s.

number of views suggests that it did not need corporate media to mediate or legitimize its message.

Several digital corporate media articles used journalists' social media accounts as primary source material. Social media accounts in effect became the war dispatches of an earlier era.[82] However, they not only laterally informed the home corporation but horizontally informed everyone on the social media platform as well. According to David Patrikarakos's description of social media during OPE, twitter feeds were "like a newswire service; a tweet became comparable to an Associated Press bulletin."[83] He concluded that since corporate media cited social media as primary sources, journalists effectively became public relations agents for social media influencers.[84] This tendency indicates social media has the potential to supplant, not just supplement corporate media. As a result, corporate media needed to interact with social media to legitimize content to their audience.

Even though corporate media needed to interact with social media, audiences did not have to rely on corporate media structures for news. Evidence from the first incident was consistent with what Dr. Shai described as the Facebook New Public Diplomacy Model.[85] This model depicted empowered individuals as both initiators and creators of content.[86] Governmental and corporate media monopoly or control of the media no longer existed.[87] Social media enabled audiences at the individual level to become journalists, editors, and publishers, in addition to consumers of information.

[82] Patrikarakos, *War in 140 Characters,* 34.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Shai, *Hearts and Minds*, fig. 14.5, Kindle.

[86] Ibid., chap. 14. Kindle.

[87] Ibid.

During OPE, Farah Baker best represented this reality and the challenge it posed to traditional corporate media and state information operations. According to the CEO of Jerusalem Capital Studios, Hanani Rapoport, "when you have a girl [Farah Baker] reporting, you don't need CNN. You have user generated content."[88] He observed social media benefited the consumer because it was free, instantaneous, and replaced the need for corporate media.[89] Social media removed barriers to access and interaction, giving voice to new individuals.

Of course, the individualization of the media terrain through social media also created an accuracy problem. In one example, the BBC reported on the trending hashtag #GazaUnderAttack.[90] The article fact-checked some of the images proliferated under the hashtag, and revealed some of images were from earlier events in 2009 or even images from other conflicts entirely in Syria or Iraq.[91] However, corporate media fact-checking did not guarantee the narrative produced on social media with fake images not having the desired effect.[92]

These trends are evident in the case of Farah Baker. Her accuracy and political alignment may have been irrelevant to her audience. In response to the question if Baker was operating as an independent civilian, Israeli media executive Hanani Rapoport stated, "It doesn't matter. The effect was to make public opinion and it did it… Even if you found she was the daughter of a Hamas leader sitting in Switzerland and writing the content, it doesn't matter. The IDF can state that two days later, but it's too late. She is the underdog."[93]

The relative insignificance the IDF's hypothetical two-day-late revelation revealed the relative advantage of being first with information entering the media terrain. What Rapoport

[88] Glenn, *Short War in a Perpetual Conflict,* 78.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Neil Meads, "#BBCtrending: Are #GazaUnderAttack images accurate?" *BBC*, July 8, 2014, accessed December 9, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-28198622.

[91] Ibid.

[92] P.W. Singer and Emerson T. Brooking, *LikeWar: The Weaponization of Social Media* (NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018), 196 – 197.

[93] Glenn, *Short War in a Perpetual Conflict,* 78.

described was what theorist Porter Abbott termed the Primacy Effect, where in "our tendency to privilege, in our memory of a narrative, the first impression we developed early in the reading or witnessing of it."[94] At a cognitive level, first is always better for the audience. Even if inaccurate, it is hard to replace even with later facts especially, if the first instance resonates emotionally.[95] Therefore, while time is not equally available across the features of the media terrain, it certainly is its impetus, which explains the decision of international corporate media to rely on stringers and AP correspondents for reporting.

Nearly all corporate reporting on the conflict in Gaza on July 7, 2014, had a lag, focusing on the causes of the conflict which had happened earlier. This highlights the effect of time on the corporate media's cycle, especially versus social media in telling the instantaneous story. Several articles on July 7, 2014, still focused on the social unrest and incidents leading up to Operation Protective Edge. Even so, three articles by the *NYT, WSJ,* and *WP* covered the start of the conflict.[96] However, only the *NYT* daily briefing quoted the IDF's twitter post stating they "commenced Operation Protective Edge in Gaza."[97] Since the air campaign continued throughout Operation Protective Edge, aspects of the coverage beginning with this incident continue to interact with the media terrain even as new incidents occurred.

Throughout this incident, the interaction and intercedence of corporate media, stringers, journalists, editors, social media, and time demonstrated the complexity of the media terrain.

[94] Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 88.

[95] Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 295-296.

[96] New York Times, "Israel Calls Up 1,500 Troops as Tensions Mount with Hamas."; Joshua Mitnick, "Rocket Barrage from Gaza Puts Pressure on Israeli Leader; Military Hits Back with Series of Airstrikes," *Wall Street Journal*, July 7, 2014, accessed November 21, 2019, ProQuest US Major Dailies, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/docview/1543311243?accountid=196094; William Booth and Ruth Eglash, "Muslims and Jews in Jerusalem Fear More Abductions, as Rockets from Hamas Fly: As Fears of further Revenge Killings Mount, Hamas Fires More Rockets at Israel from the Gaza Strip," *Washington Post*, July 7, 2014, accessed November 21, 2019, ProQuest US Major Dailies, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/docview/1635385986?accountid=196094.

[97] New York Times, "Israel Calls Up 1,500 Troops as Tensions Mount with Hamas."

Since no single feature alone represented key terrain, the key lesson for strategic and operational planners today is to proactively examine the media as a system to understand how the different features interact in a given context.

How Was It Covered: Incident 2 –Ceasefire Proposal and Civilian Casualties

This case study's second incident examines two seemingly unconnected events that transpired within the same two days. On July 15, 2014, Egypt mediated a ceasefire proposal between the two actors, the Arab League endorsed the proposal, Israel accepted it, but Hamas rejected the ceasefire.[98] The next day, on July 16, 2014, Israeli bombs killed four Palestinian boys on a beach in Gaza City.[99] These events represented an operational and narrative deviation from the coverage described during the first incident. While the first incident highlighted the interaction and interdependence of the media terrain during OPE, this second incident suggests that given certain circumstances, certain features of the media terrain become key terrain.

In general, the corporate media coverage of the ceasefire proposal was very similar to the coverage described during the first incident. The US major daily publications covered the ceasefire proposal within twenty-four hours of when Israel's legal and factual review stated it

[98] The State of Israel, *The 2014 Gaza Conflict,* 2.

[99] Tyler Hicks, "Through Lens, 4 Boys Dead by Gaza Shore," *New York Times*, July 16, 2014, accessed January 9, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/17/world/middleeast/through-lens-4-boys-dead-by-gaza-shore.html.

happened. The *WSJ* published articles on both July 16, 2014, July 17, 2014.[100] Likewise, the *WP* posted on July 15, 2014.[101] While the *NYT* published their article a day later, on July 16, 2014.[102]

Another element of continuity between the two incidents was the importance of the relationship among stringers, journalists, and editors in creating and transmitting content to international and domestic audiences. Since the ceasefire incident included actors from the United States, Egypt, Israel, and Hamas, the noted coverage displayed the collaboration of the journalists within individual articles and corporate entities. For example, Isabel Kershner's article with the *NYT* included contributions from Kareem Fahim from Cairo about Egypt's role in the ceasefire negotiations, Fares Akram from Gaza about Hamas and Israeli reactions, and Michael D. Shear in Washington about the US State Department's role.[103] As in the first incident, the relationship of stringers, journalists, and editors provided the canalizing terrain within corporate media between events and their representation to audiences. However, this interdependence and interaction was subject to the emergence of significant events.

Photojournalism gave context to the coverage of the ceasefire. The *NYT* article displayed the destruction of the conflict by including photographs taken in Israel and Gaza City. Reuters photojournalist Amir Cohen took one photograph in Israel's port city of Ashdod after a rocket

[100] Joshua Mitnick, "Israel Military to Observe Humanitarian Cease-Fire in Gaza; Cease-Fire Scheduled to Go into Effect at 10 a.m. Local Time," *Wall Street Journal*, July 16, 2014, accessed November 21, 2019, ProQuest US Major Dailies, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/docview/1545326905?accountid=196094; Jeffrey Sparshott, "Obama Pledges Diplomatic Resources for Gaza Cease-Fire; President Says 'Heartbroken' Over Death of Civilians in Israel and Gaza," *Wall Street Journal*, July 16, 2014, accessed November 21, 2019, ProQuest US Major Dailies, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/docview/1545338724?accountid=196094.

[101] William Booth, "Israel Accepts Truce Plan; Hamas Balks: As Egypt Pushes Ceasefire, Hamas Drone Shot Down Over Israel," *Washington Post,* July 15, 2014, accessed November 21, 2014, ProQuest US Major Dailies, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/docview/1545134588?accountid=196094.

[102] Isabel Kershner, "Egypt Presents Proposal to Israel and Hamas for a Cease-Fire in Air Attacks: Foreign Desk," *New York Times*, July 15, 2014, accessed November 21, 2019, ProQuest US Major Dailies, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/docview/1544928729?accountid=196094.

[103] Kershner, "Egypt Presents Proposal to Israel and Hamas for a Cease-Fire in Air Attacks."

attack.[104] Reuters, like the AP, is a wire service or press agency that wholesales news to the media industry.[105] News agency photojournalists and reporters continued to canalize content creation from their pens and lenses to a broad audience. In Gaza City, *NYT* photojournalist Tyler Hicks contributed a photograph of a man inspecting the ruins of an apartment building after Israeli bombs hit it.[106] In contrast to Cohen, Tyler Hicks was a photographer exclusively for the *NYT*. His photographs, along with those of Ayman Mohyeldin of MSNBC became the 2014 Gaza Conflict's reference point for the media terrain.[107]

On July 16, 2014, Israeli bombs landed on a beach in Gaza City. Apart from whatever their military target was, they resulted in the deaths of four Palestinian boys – Mohammad, Ismail, Zakariya, and Ahed Bakr.[108] Photojournalists Tyler Hicks of the *NYT* and Ayman Mohyeldin of MSNBC captured the tragic aftermath. Their presence, reporting, and pictures at the event contributed to published coverage in forty-nine instances across the US Major Dailies in July 2014 alone.[109] The next day's *NYT* print edition featured one of Hick's photographs of the incident as a quarter-page blow up on the front page.[110]

[104] Kershner, "Egypt Presents Proposal to Israel and Hamas for a Cease-Fire in Air Attacks."

[105] Victor Jeffrey Serote, "How does Reuters gather news?" Reuters, December 15, 2019, accessed January 9, 2020, https://reuters.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/215713703-How-does-Reuters-gather-news-.

[106] Kershner, "Egypt Presents Proposal to Israel and Hamas for a Cease-Fire in Air Attacks."

[107] New York Times, "Tyler Hicks," *New York Times*, last modified August 25, 2019, accessed January 9, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/by/tyler-hicks; *MSNBC*, "Ayman Mohyeldin," Talent Bios, accessed January 9, 2020, https://www.nbcumv.com/talent/ayman-mohyeldin/bios_read_more?division=1&network=33138&show=151419.

[108] Anne Barnard, "Boys Drawn to Gaza Beach, and Into Center of Mideast Strife," *New York Times*, last modified July 22, 2014, accessed January 9, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/17/world/middleeast/gaza-strip-beach-explosion-kills-children.html?action=click&module=RelatedCoverage&pgtype=Article&region=Footer.

[109] Search by author of keywords "boys killed on Gaza beach" on ProQuest, US Major Dailies, with the search restricted to July 2014, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/usmajordailies/results/FC3D6A2BA077437APQ/1?accountid=196094.

[110] Tyler Hicks, "The aftermath of an airstrike on a beach in Gaza City on Wednesday. Four young Palestinian boys, all cousins, were killed." *New York Times*, vol. CLXIII, no. 56,565, late edition, July 17, 2014.

These photographs and photojournalists did not just interact with audiences through the corporate media. Both Hicks and Mohyeldin took to their social media accounts to tell the story. Hicks posted on Twitter, "Witnessed 3 young boys killed by Israeli ordinance on an otherwise empty beach this afternoon in Gaza City."[111] Mohyeldin posted pictures of the boys' grief-struck family on Instagram and Twitter.[112] This interaction shows how emergent events can interact across nearly all aspects of the media terrain immediately.

Twitter reactions to the ceasefire and the civilian casualties showed the complex interaction between audiences, journalists, corporate media, and social media. One pro-Israel Twitter user, @hypersem, succinctly put the two events together as one incident, stating, “Obama blames Hamas for failed ceasefire; laments civilian deaths in Gaza; US supports Egypt ceasefire initiative.”[113] Twitter user Selin Kara’s (@selinkarah) comment represented a far different tone, “can’t make this…up RT @AymanM: US says Hamas is responsible for the 4 boys in killed in Gaza by Israel for not agreeing to a ceasefire [sic]”[114] It was not just individual Twitter users representing the public who interacted with the events. Journalists and editors weighed in with their own opinions. Jeremy Bowen, the BBC Middle East editor, tweeted, “4 Palestinian kids killed on a beach in #Gaza. #Israel can't just blame Hamas. Not credible. And who was telling me a ceasefire was a bad idea?”[115] Mosa’ab Elshamy, an *AP* photojournalist, tweeted, “Sickening. RT @AymanM: US state dept says Hamas is responsible for Israel killing of 4 boys in Gaza shelling

[111] Tyler Hicks (@TylerHicksPhoto), Twitter, July 16, 2014, 10:34 a.m., accessed March 11, 2020, https://twitter.com/TylerHicksPhoto/status/489433015106297857.

[112] Ayman Mohyeldin (@AymanM), Twitter, July 16, 2014, 10:06 a.m., accessed March 11, 2020, https://twitter.com/AymanM/status/489425806591275009; Ayman Mohyeldin (aymanm), Instagram, July 16, 2014, accessed March 11, 2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/qhC9CMHEBX/.

[113] @hypersem, Twitter, July 16, 2014, 4:54 p.m., accessed March 11, 2020,https://twitter.com/hypersem/status/489528469055737857.

[114] Selin Kara (@selinkarah), Twitter, July 16, 2014, 2:51 p.m., accessed March 11, 2020, https://twitter.com/selinkarah/status/489497470280671232.

[115] Jeremy Bowen (@BowenBBC), Twitter, July 16, 2014, 9:49 a.m., accessed March 11, 2020, https://twitter.com/BowenBBC/status/489421477322559488.

by not agreeing to a ceasefire."[116] This interaction indicated two things. It revealed how audiences responded to events as portrayed in the media terrain. It also provided insight into the personal perspectives of individuals in the media terrain.

Analysis: Incident 2

The coverage of the second incident presented some of the same interaction and interdependence of the media terrain as the first incident. Fares Akram's contributions showed the salience of news agencies, such as the Associated Press. The collaboration of journalists and editors covering the ceasefire proposal highlighted the importance of proximity. The *NYT* and *WP* articles cited journalists or editors as contributing from the United States, Egypt, Israel, and Gaza to cover those respective perspectives regarding the ceasefire proposal. In his research about moral reasoning, ethics theorist Joshua Green stated that distance from the subject mattered most in affecting the decision making of an individual.[117] Applied to the coverage of the ceasefire, a relatively abstract and distant concept for some audiences, Green's conclusion explained why proximity mattered and influenced a story's perceived legitimacy. The closer the "source," the better its ability to influence how narrative move through the media terrain.

Despite the similarities with the first OPE incident, there was also a radical departure. The second incident saw the establishment of a reference point, or the earlier state relative to which audiences evaluate future changes – the killing of the four Palestinian children by Israeli bombs.[118] This behavioral phenomenon might be useful for understanding what makes an event decisive in the cognitive dimension. By extrapolation, the interaction of a decisive event with in the media environment could cause it to become key terrain.

[116] Mosa'ab Elshamy (@mosaaberizing), Twitter, July 16, 2014, 1:54 p.m., accessed March 11, 2020, https://twitter.com/mosaaberizing/status/489483230660530176.

[117] Joshua Green, *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap Between Us and Them* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 260 – 264.

[118] Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 281.

According to the Gaza Conflict Task Force's assessment of media coverage during OPE, the media establish this event as a reference point, because if it "bleeds it leads."[119] The human brain has a deeply embedded preference for negative images and information. The research of Daniel Kahneman concluded that one angry face pops out in a happy crowd, however one happy face does not stand out in an angry crowd.[120] He established that the human brain gives priority to bad news.[121] This is why the impact of Tyler Hicks' and Ayman Mohyeldin's photographs of the four Palestinian boys killed by Israeli bombs and quickly overshadowed ceasefire proposals. From that point on coverage of the deaths of the four boys created a heuristic, focusing the media, and led audiences and actors within the media terrain towards a certain impression of the war which colored their understandings of later events.

Time remained a constant feature of the media terrain, but the impact of the decisive event effected the speed events moved through the media terrain. Porter Abbott asserted that narrative is "the principal way in which our species organizes its understanding of time."[122] Through the lens of Kahneman, the killing of the four-Palestinian children created a cognitive reference point on which the features of the media terrain fixated despite the changing context of the new event. Abbott explained why this reference point is enduring in the feature of time as well. He continued to state that unlike watches, "narrative, by contrast turns this process inside out, allowing events themselves to create the order of time."[123] The civilian casualties and the IDF ground offensive, which started the night of July 17, 2014, quickly overshadowed the ceasefire proposal. Between the influences of Kahneman's behavioral theory and Abbott's narrative theory, the temporal aspects of the media terrain became fixed on the tragedy.

[119] Gaza Conflict Task Force, *2014 Gaza War Assessment: The New Face of Conflict*, Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA), March 2015, 51.

[120] Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 301.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 3.

[123] Ibid.

Despite the civilian casualties and the start of the IDF ground offensive becoming constituent events or reference points for any narrative framework, narrative discourse could have framed these events with any other supplementary events to create alternative understandings of reality. A *WSJ* opinion article by an anonymous author, published on July 17, 2014, reporting in the aftermath of the rejected cease-fire, stated "there will inevitably be civilian casualties because that is part of Hamas's political-military strategy."[124] The article noted that there was minimal mention in other narratives of the destruction and fear inflicted on the Israeli population by rocket attacks.[125] The narrator's opinion, in this case, an anonymous author, provided another example of a framing narrative created to exceed or diminish other narratives.

Social media also became a more significant aspect in terms of the circulation of narrative and counter-narrative information. As with corporate media, the same behavioral theory pertained to the social media audience reactions to the ceasefire proposal and the deaths of the Palestinian boys. From Kahneman's theoretical perspective, the audience's reaction imposed punishment as their perception of US and Israeli statements violated the basic rule of fairness in blaming Hamas for the failed ceasefire despite the IDF caused civilian casualties.[126] The social media backlash at the United States Department of State is an example of how the emotion tied to narrative manifested through individual behavior on social media.

As in the first incident, incident two included the interaction of corporate media, journalists, social media, and time. However, it demonstrated how events can change the audience's perspective on existing narratives, causing a corresponding change by the other features of the media terrain. This incident demonstrated that once the reception of emotive,

[124] Wall Street Journal, "Israel's Gaza Offensive; the Country had Little Choice After Hamas Rejected a Ceasefire," *Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 2014, accessed November 21, 2014, ProQuest US Major Dailies, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/docview/1545697815?accountid=196094.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 305.

especially negative, coverage embeds an event in the conscious of the audience, it becomes a reference point to which the features of the media terrain must react. Future coverage should continue to reflect this in the next incident.

How Was It Covered: Incident 3 –Start of the IDF Ground Offensive

On July 17, 2014, Hamas conducted an infiltration through a cross-border tunnel into Israel. Thirteen Hamas fighters emerged from a tunnel near the residential community in Kibbutz Sufa.[127] According to the IDF, airstrikes killed some of the militants, forcing the rest back into the tunnel to Gaza.[128] Given the perception of the increased threat as a result of Hamas' incursion and rejection of the ceasefire proposal, the state of Israel's legal and factual report on the conflict noted the government "ordered the IDF to commence a ground operation in order to neutralize the cross-border assault tunnel infrastructure."[129] That night the IDF started a ground operation that would last until August 5, 2014, ushering in a new phase of OPE and providing a new reference point to influence the media terrain.

The last incident illustrated the continuity of the features of media terrain across incidents. More significantly, it suggested that negative, emotive events will create a reference point that fixated, oriented, and ordered the future interactions of the media environment. While this understanding of the media terrain is still valid. The media's coverage of the Hamas infiltration near Sufa and the start of the IDF ground offensive relied on the same events, information, and even reporting, but the narrative differed because of the target audience. Incident three shows the emergence of another feature of the media terrain – the audience.

Corporate media, quickly picked up coverage of Hamas' attack. The *WSJ* mentioned thirteen Hamas gunmen attempted an attack in Sufa through a tunnel, citing an IDF statement that

[127] The State of Israel, *The 2014 Gaza Conflict,* 38.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Ibid., 2.

the attempt was stopped with an airstrike while Hamas stated the fighters were on reconnaissance and safely returned to Gaza.[130] The *WP, NYT,* and *Newsweek* all published articles containing similar themes.[131] These included the end of the ceasefire and that the threat from the tunnels to Israel, prompting the ground invasion. Notably, the coverage did not mention the civilian casualties that overshadowed the initial ceasefire reporting from just a day before.

In contrast, the corporate media coverage for non-US or Israeli audiences contained similar themes but also referenced back to the killing of the four Palestinian boys. Similar to the US Major Dailies, *Al Jazeera* noted Gaza fighters attempted to tunnel into Israel. It also contrasted the IDF response with Hamas.' Additionally, *Al Jazeera* cited the US State Department's concern that Hamas did not abide by the proposed ceasefire.[132] In contrast to the US Major Dailies, it included discussion about the four children killed.[133] The BBC mainly covered the ceasefire, only briefly mentioning the infiltration of the Hamas militants into Israel."[134] The article cited IDF spokesperson, LTC Peter Lerner, as the source for the information on Sufa.[135] As with *Al Jazeera*, the BBC's article focused on the "tragic outcome" of the deaths of the four

[130] Nicholas Casey, Joshua Mitnick, and Tamer El-Ghobashy, "Cease-Fire between Israel and Hamas Ends; Efforts in Egypt to Establish a Lasting Truce," *Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 2014, accessed November 21, 2014, ProQuest US Major Dailies, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/docview/1545787409?accountid=196094.

[131] William Booth, Sudarsan Raghavan, and Ruth Eglash, "Israel launches ground invasion of Gaza," *Washington Post*, July 17, 2014, accessed November 21, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/gaza-residents-scramble-to-make-most-of-five-hour-truce/2014/07/17/e5485fce-0d7e-11e4-8341-b8072b1e7348_story.html; Isabel Kershner, "Trouble Underfoot on Israeli Kibbutz Near the Border," *New York Times*, July 18, 2014, accessed December 5, 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/19/world/middleeast/hamas-gaza-strip-tunnels-led-to-israels-invasion.html; Marc Schulman, "The View From Tel Aviv As The Gaza Ground Offensive Commenced," *Newsweek*, July 17, 2014, accessed December 6, 2019, https://www.newsweek.com/why-gaza-ground-offensive-was-ordered-259638.

[132] Al Jazeera, "Gaza Fighters Attempt to Tunnel into Israel," *Al Jazeera*, July 17, 2014, accessed December 6, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/gaza-fighters-attempt-tunnel-into-israel-20147175552384416 7.html.

[133] Ibid.

[134] BBC, "Gaza ceasefire between Hamas and Israel begins," *BBC*, July 17, 2014, accessed December 9, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28334219.

[135] Ibid.

Palestinian children discussed in incident two.[136] Unlike *Al Jazeera*, the BBC also reported the Israeli government's response to the incident, quoting a statement from Israeli President Shimon Peres apologizing for the deaths from the strikes and noting an ongoing IDF investigation of the incident.[137]

Israel based media coverage of the Sufa placed less emphasis on the conflicts' humanitarian concerns and centered on the threat posed by the tunnels to civilians and the military challenges facing the IDF. The *Times of Israel* covered the "thwarted" tunnel infiltration near Kibbutz Sufa on July 17, 2014, highlighting the possibility of abduction and the success of the IDF's defense.[138] Similar to the *Times of Israel, Haaretz's* analysis of the Sufa attack examined the military problem facing the IDF without mention of previous civilian casualties.[139] *Haaretz* did mention the growing Israeli and Palestinian casualties, specifically citing incidents of Israeli deaths, while only referring to the Palestinian casualties generally.[140] As with the US and non-Israeli international coverage, the events remained the same; however, the coverage differed for different audiences.

Analysis: Incident 3

The third incident served as a natural transition to reporting on the IDF's ground offensive. To cope with the pace of events, major international news sources, like the *NYT*, the *Guardian*, the BBC, and domestic Israeli sources, like the *Times of Israel* and *Haaretz,* included daily summaries of coverage to catch events. They each consistently published articles on the day

[136] BBC, "Gaza ceasefire between Hamas and Israel begins."

[137] Ibid.

[138] Mitch Ginsburg, "Tunnel infiltration thwarted near Kibbutz Sufa," *Times of Israel*, July 17, 2014, accessed December 5, 2019, https://www.timesofisrael.com/tunnel-infiltration-thwarted-near-kibbutz-sufa/.

[139] Amos Harel, "Operation Protective Edge Advances with No Exit Strategy," *Haaretz*, July 20, 2014, accessed January 14, 2020, https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-operation-protective-edge-advances-with-no-exit-strategy-1.5256069.

[140] Ibid.

of the event or at least the next day. But, the coverage was not uniform during the transition to reporting on the attack at Sufa and the start of the IDF's ground offensive. International corporate media examples from the BBC and *Al Jazeera* returned to the reference point established in incident two. The international corporate media's return to the reference point followed the strong cognitive reasons discussed before. However, it is interesting that the US and Israeli coverage departs entirely from the reference point. While US and Israeli coverage mentioned the humanitarian costs in more general terms and focused on the emergent threat posed by the tunnels and the IDF's response.

This apparent disregard of the decisive media event is due to the power of narrative over individuals or audiences is not commensurate with the text or the content itself. Another critically important feature of the media terrain is the audience. As stated by H. Porter Abbott, without the audience's willing collaboration, "the narrative does not come to life."[141] In this incident, the defining feature of the media terrain was the target audience.

The difficulty for the media and military planners alike is the very concept of a target audience. As described by Dr. Shai, one of the changes of the "CNN International model" and subsequent models of public diplomacy, it is no longer possible for the media or government entities to mediate or separate audiences from the target.[142] It is in the power of the individual members of the audience to choose how they interact with the media terrain, picking from a menu of options.

The audience's variety of options returns the discussion to Matti Friedman's assertion that editors get to decide what is newsworthy.[143] Friedman asserted editors saw their role and political not explanatory, therefore, "coverage is a weapon to be placed at the disposal of the side

[141] Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 86.

[142] Shai, *Hearts and Minds*, fig. 14.3, Kindle.

[143] Friedman, "What the Media Gets Wrong About Israel."

they like."[144] *WSJ* editor Gerard Baker provided a counterpoint. He wrote, "neither the reporters themselves nor any editors would in any way censor our journalism out of fear or favor."[145] Baker asserted that the *WSJ's* "portrayal of the issues" was fair and factual despite the risks and attempts at censorship by authorities.[146] In conclusion, Baker stated, "we are beholden to no-one but our readers."[147] Taking Baker at his word, then the audience is king.

How Was It Covered: Incident 4 –The Kidnapping of Staff Sergeant Oron Shaul

Three days into the IDF ground operation, one of the threats posed by Hamas's tunnels came true. On July 20, 2014, Hamas fighters kidnapped the body of Staff Sergeant Oron Shaul through a tunnel. During the bitter overnight urban conflict in the Gaza City district of Shuja'iyeh, anti-tank missile destroyed Staff Sergeant Shaul's armored personnel carrier, killing him and six others.[148] Initially declared missing in action, the IDF scrambled to determine if Staff Sergeant Shaul was dead or alive, terrified that a Hamas captured an Israeli soldier.[149] With one of the worst fears of the IDF and Israeli public realized, this incident reinforced the importance of the audience as a feature of the media terrain and the lack of diversity in reporting.

The *NYT*, *WSJ*, *Chicago Tribune,* and *WP* covered the incident. The *NYT* reported Sergeant Shaul missing during the fighting in Shuja'iyeh focused on the international efforts to

[144] Friedman, "An Insider's Guide."

[145] Richard Behar, "The Media Intifada: Bad Math, Ugly Truths About New York Times In Israel – Hamas War," *Forbes*, last modified August 21, 2014, accessed October 21, 2019, https://www.forbes.com/sites/richardbehar/2014/08/21/the-media-intifada-bad-math-ugly-truths-about-new-york-times-in-israel-hamas-war/#4ab631214b15.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Hirsh Goodman and Dore Gold, eds., *The Gaza War 2014: The War Israel Did Not Want and the Disaster It Adverted* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2015), 157; Isabel Kershner and Jodi Rudoren, "A Blast, a Fire and an Israeli Soldier Goes Missing," *New York Times*, July 22, 2014, accessed December 9, 2019, ProQuest US Major Dailies, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/usmajordailies/docview/2213141396/81B5810BEA534A36PQ/1?accountid=196094.

[149] Prime Minister's Office, "Staff Sergeant Oron Shaul," accessed February 25, 2020, https://www.gov.il/en/Departments/memorialization/vicoronshaul.

reach a ceasefire. [150] The *WSJ* identified the missing Shaul as a supplementary event in a larger article about the growing toll of the conflict on Israel.[151] It also noted the continued bombardment of Israel by Hamas' rockets.[152] Despite this, the coverage cited the continued public support in Israel. [153] Notably, the *WSJ* article did not cite contributions by other reporters or news agencies.

The *NYT* article theorized why Hamas claimed to have details proving possession of Sergeant Shaul's body, yet did reveal the body itself. Relying on information from an anonymous Israeli official, the article speculated Hamas "obtained the soldier's details form part of his kit, or had simply retrieved his information from social networks."[154] It further quoted the official stating that "all the friends knew, everybody is following the Twitter or the Facebook…Hamas very easily sees our networks." [155] The global audience's appreciation for the tragedy and mystery of Shaul's fate was only possible because of the interaction of corporate media, social media, and plausibility of an anonymous source.

The *Chicago Tribune* published an article with similar themes to those from the *NYT* and the *WSJ*. The *Chicago Tribune* also used Shaul's incident as a supplementary event compounding the larger narrative of increasing violence that led to the cancelations of international flights to and from Israel, and the difficulty of diplomatic efforts to reach a ceasefire. [156]

[150] Kershner and Rudoren, "A Blast, a Fire and an Israeli Soldier Goes Missing."

[151] Joshua Mitnick and Asa Fitch, "Support in Israel for Gaza Operation Remains Strong, Despite Soldiers' Deaths; Continued Rocket Volleys and Threat of Infiltration Has Sustained Public Backing," *Wall Street Journal*, July 22, 2014, accessed December 9, 2019, ProQuest US Major Dailies, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/usmajordailies/docview/1547347883/81B5810BEA534A36PQ/2?accountid=196094.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Kershner and Rudoren, "A Blast, a Fire and an Israeli Soldier Goes Missing."

[155] Ibid.

[156] Sudarsan Raghavan, Anne Gearan, and Ruth Eglash, "Kerry pushes for cease-fire: Canceled flights, missing soldier change Gaza dynamics," *Chicago Tribune*, July 23, 2014, accessed December 9, 2019, ProQuest US Major Dailies, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/usmajordailies/docview/1547509730/EA30A1DB7734546PQ/3?accountid=196094.

In fact, the *WP* and *Chicago Tribune* published the same article with different titles. While the title of the article, "Potential shift in Gaza Strip Conflict," was different from the *Chicago Tribune's*, "Kerry pushes for ceasefire: Canceled flights, missing soldier change Gaza dynamics," very little else was dissimilar.[157] This shows a lack of diversity from two different major US media corporations.

NBC covered Shaul's capture in a short article without authors or contributors, other than an included screenshot of a tweet by journalist Ayman Mohyelidn. Mohyeldin's tweet stated, "2 days after #Hamas said it captured an #Israeli soldier, #Israel confirms Sgt Oron Shaul is missing in #gaza though not clear dead or alive."[158] Possibly, without this tweet from Mohyeldin, the article would have lacked credibility.

From an international corporate media perspective, Sergeant Shaul's capture received even less attention. The BBC primarily covered events driving the need for a ceasefire to stop the conflict's growing casualties, limiting discussion of Shaul's capture to the end of the article.[159] The BBC article was like the US Major Dailies. Its themes focused on the move towards a ceasefire, rising casualties, the US Federal Aviation Administration suspending flights, and finally, Shaul's claimed capture by Hamas and their attack near Shej'aiya, resulting in IDF causalities.[160] The BBC reported very little on the capture of Shaul's remains and its impact. A search of their digital articles revealed two articles related to Shaul. One when the IDF reported

157 Raghavan, Gearan, and Eglash, "Kerry pushes for cease-fire: Canceled flights, missing soldier change Gaza dynamics."

158 NBC, "Israel Hunts Remains of Missing Soldier Sgt. Oron Shaul," *NBC*, July 22, 2014, accessed December 9, 2019, https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/middle-east-unrest/israel-hunts-remains-missing-soldier-sgt-oron-shaul-n162036.

159 BBC, "Gaza conflict: UN chief Ban urges end to fighting," *BBC*, July 22, 2014, accessed December 9, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28416221.

160 Ibid.

Shaul's capture on July 22, 2014, and another when the status of the return of remains between Hamas and Israel changed on January 1, 2017.[161]

In stark contrast to the BBC *'s* brief report on the fate of Sergeant Shaul, Israeli based media devoted a great deal of reporting to this event. The event echoed in other reporting. In a similar event the following day, the *Jerusalem Post* highlighted the fear of the residents of Kibbutz Nir Am during an attack from tunnels on July 21, 2014.[162] The relationship between a feature of the media terrain and its audience determines its narrative tendency.

Analysis: Incident 4

The *NYT* report on Staff Sergeant Shaul exposed the difficulty of Israel's official channels to interact with the media terrain feature of time. For example, the article stated "Israeli officials said they were uncertain whether the soldier had been captured by Palestinian forces in Gaza or killed in combat."[163] While the same article reported Hamas' statement asserting their capture of Shaul and provided his serial number as proof.[164] In this incident, the discrepancy of the actors' response concerning time was notable.

Israel's inability to provide a timely response ceded the initiative to Hamas. The delay cast doubt on the credibility of Israel while enhancing Hamas' stature in the information environment, even if relatively little changed tactically. Internal procedures and verification put Israel's response two days behind Hamas' allegations. The attack happened on July 20, 2014, Israel released the information to the press on July 22, 2014. However, corporate media published their reports on July 22, 2014. The delayed publication implied a lack of credibly on the part of Hamas and the importance of the Israeli government statements, even if initially anonymous, to

161 BBC, "Gaza conflict: UN chief Ban urges end to fighting."

162 Tovah Lazaroff, "We're waiting to discover another tunnel," *Jerusalem Post*, July 22, 2014, accessed December 10, 2019, https://www.jpost.com/Operation-Protective-Edge/Were-waiting-to-discover-another-tunnel-368397.

163 Kershner and Rudoren, "A Blast, a Fire and an Israeli Soldier Goes Missing."

164 Ibid.

provide a legitimizing embedded narrative. Even with the corporate media delay, the elapsed time in responding ceded the initiative on the matter to Hamas's narrative and helped their strategic position.

NBC's use of social media to support their digital article provided evidence of two key points. First, social media added legitimacy to more traditional corporate media. Mohyeldin's tweet was possibly a credibility tool given Mohyelidn's popularity on social media because of his involvement with the second incident of the case study. The 209 retweets of Mohyelidn's original post additionally highlights gray area between personal and professional narratives interacting with media.[165] Second, like Farah Baker in incident one, Mohyelidn's tweet provided proximity to the event. Perhaps social media technology, coupled with the effect of time, has provided an alternative to traditional reporting from the conflict zone.

Due to the danger of reporting in Gaza, as cited by the AP, reporters relied on social media and the lines between social media commentary and reporting became blurred. As with the NBC article, it was difficult for the audience to separate the perspectives of corporate media from the corporation's official social media, from the personal views of the journalists themselves.[166] For those journalists close to the war zone dealing with the effects of intimidation, censorship, and conflict, social media can provide an instantaneous yet controversial method for relaying their experience to a global audience. One example of this issue was CNN journalist Diana Magnay's coverage of the conflict, during which she tweeted, "Israelis on hill above Sderot cheer

[165]Ayman Mohyeldin (@AymanM), Twitter, July 22, 2014, 7:10 a.m., accessed March 11, 2020, https://twitter.com/AymanM/status/491555810086895617?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E491555810086895617&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nbcnews.com%2Fstoryline%2Fmiddle-east-unrest%2Fisrael-hunts-remains-missing-soldier-sgt-oron-shaul-n162036.

[166] Glenn, *Short War in a Perpetual Conflict*, 68.

as bombs land on #gaza; threaten to 'destroy our car if I say a word wrong.' Scum." She deleted the tweet twenty minutes later, and CNN reassigned her to Moscow.[167]

The theme of legitimacy by proximity continued as the *WP*, and *Chicago Tribune* cited sources such as Yoram Cohen, Palestinian Affairs reporter for Israel's Channel 1, and IDF spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Lerner.[168] Porter Abbott described the use of a given source's direct discourse, or description of the event, as a framing tool that allowed the implied author to include and exceed the sources' narrative in support of their own.[169] Abbott continued, "the details we get, if not invented, are nonetheless chosen from a great number that were left out. They are privileged details that strongly color how we see the central figure in the journalists' story."[170] The choice of sources by journalists is essential, and the ability to choose makes journalists and editors important features of the media terrain. Regardless of the event, their selection of which facts and perspectives to relate carefully constructs the audience's reality.[171]

Re-enforcing legitimacy by proximity, the article's editors made sure the audience knew that *NYT* reporters were contributing from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.[172] Additionally, the article also relied on the contribution of Fares Akram from Gaza City. His continuing contribution is indicative of the salience stringers and the AP in the media terrain.[173]

As noted above, the US Major Dailies and the BBC had many similarities in their coverage of the events around Staff Sergeant Shaul's body going missing. The lack of diversity in

[167] Glenn, *Short War in a Perpetual Conflict*, 68; Reporters Without Borders, "Journalists' Lives on the Line in Gaza Conflict," *Reporters Without Borders*, July 22, 2014, last modified January 20, 2016, accessed October 30, 2019, https://rsf.org/en/news/journalists-lives-line-gaza-conflict.

[168] Ruth Eglash, "Israel takes Gaza war underground by targeting tunnels," *Washington Post*, July 18, 2014, accessed December 10, 2019, ProQuest US Major Dailies, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/usmajordailies/docview/1547292117/D4BE2B54579E4E8EPQ/1?accountid=196094.

[169] Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 50 -52.

[170] Ibid., 52.

[171] Ibid.

[172] Kershner and Rudoren, "A Blast, a Fire and an Israeli Soldier Goes Missing."

[173] Ibid.

the origin of the content and, indeed, a lack of difference in the editorial perspective suggests the canalization of information through a press agency. Notably, the BBC digital article contained no author and identified no contributors to the online version accessed.[174] Leaving no certainty on why these similarities exist. Whether it is from a distinct interpretation of the event itself, the same stringers or journalists used, or news agencies reported.

The contrast in reporting surrounding the civilian casualties from incident two and the reporting on Staff Sergeant Shaul illustrates the ultimate importance of the audience to understanding the media terrain. The BBC, a reputable international news source, twice reported on the drama around Shaul. In contrast, the US Major Dailies published forty-nine media accounts about the deaths of the four Palestinian boys in newspapers, blogs, podcasts, or websites in July 2014 alone.[175] The same database search reveled only fourteen media accounts regarding Staff Sergeant Shaul.[176] Meanwhile, Israeli based media sources *The Jerusalem Post* and *The Times of Israel* continue to provide extensive coverage regarding the fate of Staff Sergeant Shaul. As of March 1, 2020, the two Israeli media corporations published 115 and 243 articles respectively on the event.[177] Without trying to compare the tragedy of either event to the other, the reaction of the media certainly reveals how influential the target audience is to any given feature of the media terrain. Therefore, understanding target audiences could be the most critical feature of the media terrain in terms of shaping the narrative. While editorial decisions,

[174] BBC, "Gaza conflict: UN chief Ban urges end to fighting."

[175] Search by author of keywords "boys killed on Gaza beach" on ProQuest, US Major Dailies, with the search restricted to July 2014, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/usmajordailies/results/FC3D6A2BA077437APQ/1?accountid=196094.

[176] Search by author of keywords "Oron Shaul" on ProQuest, US Major Dailies, with the search restricted to July 2014, https://0-search-proquest-com.mwrlibrary.armybiznet.com/usmajordailies/results/AC476319775E41E8PQ/1?accountid=196094.

[177] Jerusalem Post, "Oron Shaul," *Jerusalem Post*, accessed March 1, 2020 https://www.jpost.com/Tags/Oron-Shaul?#/; Times of Israel, "Oron Shaul," *Times of Israel*, accessed March 1, 2020, https://www.timesofisrael.com/topic/oron-shaul/.

journalists, news agencies, time, and social media affect how incidents travel through the media terrain, the target audience is the anchor.

Summary and Findings

The features of the media terrain that had an impact on the ability of Israel and Hamas to leverage narrative and information during OPE, were corporate media, journalists, editors, social media, time, and audiences. The case study of OPE, broken down into four key incidents, illustrated these features. All features of the media terrain were present in all incidents and their relative importance changed, given the context. Comparative analysis identified how information moved through the media terrain and under what conditions one feature was relatively more important than another.

Corporate Media

The first feature present was corporate media. It was impossible to analyze corporate media independent of the other features. To work, corporate media needed events, journalists, editors, sources, and audiences. All four varieties of corporate media this project examined, the US Major Dailies, international, Israeli domestic corporate media sources, and news agencies, spanned all four incidents. No one corporation dominated the corporate media feature; however news agencies like the AP emerged as powerful, canalizing, sub-features of corporate media. Each corporate media article relied on a combination of witness interviews, journalist contributions, and spokesperson statements from Hamas and the IDF to provide analysis of the events. Together with editors, journalists framed the corporate media narrative around the discourse or embedded narratives from events, witnesses, and spokesperson statements. Through this process, corporate media performed the framing role described by Abbott, including and exceeding the narratives they represented.[178] The framing narrative would differ across the four

[178] Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 50-52.

corporate media categories depending on the audience and the unique combination of journalists and editors crafting the content.

Time and creditability were a challenge to corporate media. Early during OPE, major corporate entities like the *NYT* relied on stringers to provide timely reporting from the conflict zone. For example, the *NYT'* use of stringers, like Fares Akram, traded objectivity and credibility for access and bias.[179] The challenges of stringers and corporate media's dependence on the other features of the terrain led it to integrate social media as an alternative to quoting event witnesses or spokesperson commentary. The *NYT, Times of Israel*, and *WP* either quoted or embedded social media to create a sense of proximity or add the same credibility that a witness or spokesperson otherwise would.[180] Despite the challenges and dependence on other features, corporate media loomed large in the media terrain. As in Dr. Nachman Shai's CNN model of public diplomacy, corporate media during OPE tried to control the mediation of narrative to audiences.[181]

Journalists

Journalists were a fundamental content creating and canalizing features of the media terrain during OPE. This study distinguished between four types of journalists as staff journalists, authors, contributing journalists, and stringers. Staff journalists worked for their corporation before the conflict and often provided color to the article rather than authorship.[182] The second category of journalists was the anonymous or corporate author. Not all the articles covering OPE revealed an author. About half of the articles examined had authors specified, while all cited witnesses, sources, and even other journalist contributions. In these cases, the corporate media

[179] Behar, "The Media Intifada."

[180] New York Times, "Israel Calls Up 1,500 Troops as Tensions Mount with Hamas."

[181] Shai, *Hearts and Minds*, chap. 14, Kindle.

[182] NPR, "In Jerusalem, And Caught In A Crossfire Of Thrown Stones."; Al Jazeera America, "Hamas threatens revenge after Gaza air raids."

entity itself became the narrator of the narrative discourse. The problem of attribution suggested that content originated with very few people.

Other journalists worked for wire services or struck up working relationships with corporate media entities as stringers once the civil unrest transitioned to full conflict during incident one. The volume of articles citing Fares Akram and Said Ghazali showed that stringers had a disproportionate impact across the media terrain. Part of the power of stringers like Akram and Ghazali was their proximity to the events they covered. Journalists like Tyler Hicks' and Ayman Moheyldin's proximity and photographs of the deaths of the four Palestinian boys on a beach in Gaza City brought the conflict directly to audiences with all the associated horror. So powerful was their role that one subsequent article stated that Israel was losing the media war in Gaza. [183]

Editors

Editors' interaction with other features of the media terrain hid the extent of their involvement. During OPE, editorial decisions decided on the tone, title, and final presentation of the content created by journalists. An example of editorial impact was the different narratives established across the articles from the US Major Dailies, international, and domestic Israeli corporate media sources after the Sufa tunnel attack during incident three. The exercise of editorial control decided which representation of reality a media entity presented to their audience.

Social Media

During OPE, social media either provided supporting evidence to corporate media, provided voice to the audience, or bypassing traditional forms of media altogether. The discussion of corporate media highlighted the use of social media in a supporting role. Social

[183] Colin Daileda, "Israel Is Losing Control of the Gaza Media War," *Mashable*, July 22, 2014, accessed on November 1, 2019, https://mashable.com/2014/07/22/israel-losing-media-war-gaza/.

media allowed audiences and journalists to interact directly and nearly instantaneously. As a wholly independent feature, social media bypassed all other features of the media terrain and interacted directly with actors and audiences. Individuals like Palestinian Farah Baker and actors like @IDF provided direct representation of events outside of the established network or corporate media. Through social media, audiences could bypass corporate media or the actors' framing narratives and engage in direct discourse with the perceived source of information.

Time

Porter Abbott's Primacy Effect, where in the first information is nearly always most important and lasting to the audience, describes time's relationship to the media terrain.[184] An example of this effect was the social media posts of false pictures from Iraq or Syria.[185] Social media was able to provide content instantaneously, establishing a lasting narrative even if it was factually incorrect. Additionally, corporate media often could not keep up to events, compensating by relying on stringers or social media. For example, Fares Akram's salience across incidents. The sooner other features of the media terrain were able to interact with events, or an audience, the better.

Audiences

Audiences ultimately decided not only what was newsworthy, but also what events and coverage shaped the narrative. This explains the divergence of coverage after the deaths of the four Palestinian boys. The impact of the four boys' deaths on the media terrain, and the exponential growth of Farah Baker's social media following to 200,000, suggest that the emotional connection to the audience was key. The interaction between a feature of the media terrain with its audience determines its potential to become key terrain in the information environment.

[184] Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 88.

[185] Meads, "#BBCtrending: Are #GazaUnderAttack images accurate?"

The Key Features of the Media Terrain

The key features of the media terrain during OPE were those that given their proximity, access, and connection, to audiences were able to frame an emotive narrative most rapidly. The case study demonstrated that with the occasional exception of social media, no single feature of the media terrain operated independently. The case study also indicated that neither media corporations nor governments could control the mediation of information. The factor that made a feature key was the relative position of a given feature to connect important events with audiences first, establishing an entrenched narrative. Other features of the media terrain could only deviate from this narrative if an event with similar emotional gravity occurred. This is why the Sufa tunnel attacks and the kidnapping of Staff Sergeant Oron Shaul shifted the narrative for domestic Israeli corporate media. Given proximity to an emotion provoking event, rapid access, and connection to audiences, any features that can first establish the framing narrative of the event provides a marked advantage to the actor favored by the narrative.

Conclusion: How to Use the Features of the Media Terrain

The information environment and its cognitive domain are critical to succeeding in conflict or competition, and the United States' adversaries are already investing and operating in this environment. Commanders and staffs should use the findings above as a description of how to conduct intelligence preparation of the battlefield in the information environment. The Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment (JIPOE) calls on planners to describe the impact of the information environment and its dimensions.[186] It suggests that planners can represent the significant characteristics on a combined information overlay to "identify strengths and/or vulnerabilities of the information environment that can be exploited by friendly or

[186] US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 2-01.3, *Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), III-19 – III - 25.

adversary forces."[187] Similar to determining mobility corridors and deducing avenues of attack from terrain analysis, it is possible to determine the same categories of constraints within the information environment. Since the information environment is a complex adaptive system itself, and not just physical features, this task is a difficult one for commanders and planners.

The features of the media terrain will differ across operational environments and even within the same operational environment as the context changes. The use of the information environment is ultimately about the use of power and is one of a multitude of options for policymakers and commanders to understand and integrate into their operational approach. The current operational environment and doctrine requires the United States to contest the information environment. By looking for the same latent features described in the OPE case study, planners will have an actionable mental model and framework to proactively map the media terrain rather than passively cede this terrain to a deliberate foe.

[187] Joint Staff, JP 2-01.3, III-23.

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