

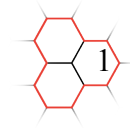
# War In 140 Characters

How Social Media Can Shape Country Image During Conflict



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## **Abstract**

On November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012 Israel announced the launch of *Operation Pillar of Defense*, a widespread campaign attacking terror sites into the Gaza Strip on Twitter. The ensuing 310 tweets that were released over the eight-day campaign provide one of the first case studies in the use of social media communication by a national government during times of conflict. This report analyses how the Israeli government and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) used social media to shape their national image and country brand throughout *Operation Pillar of Defense*. With an understanding of how it was used in the past, this report hopes to inform future planning efforts regarding the integration of a social media strategy into pre-campaign planning, the execution of a social media strategy throughout the campaign, and post-campaign follow through.

## **Company Overview**

The CP Journal is an online education platform that provides training in behavioral analysis and threat recognition to the military, law enforcement and private security industry. This training empowers our nation's protectors to take proactive action against those with violent intentions by learning to observe, classify and communicate the behavior of others. This stops violent events from occurring.

Outside of the security and defense industry, The CP Journal also provides training in behavioral analysis to the private sector. This includes threat recognition to non-security focused companies designed to prevent workplace violence, school violence, and attacks in religious centers. Business professionals can improve the effectiveness of their operations by learning to read and understand the nonverbal behavior of counterparts, especially in sales and negotiation settings.

To learn more about their values and training, visit: [www.cp-journal.com](http://www.cp-journal.com)

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## Which Side Of The Story Have You Heard?

On November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Israel announced their “widespread campaign on terror sites” in the Gaza Strip, dubbed *Operation Pillar Of Defense*,<sup>1</sup> on Twitter. This marked the first time a country’s military force used social media to communicate their actions to the world in nearly real time during an offensive. When the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) opened a second front to their conflict with Hamas on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Flickr, they provided the world with a case study and template for how a country can use social media to shape the narrative of a conflict and to influence how the world judges and remembers their actions.



Israel’s decision to use social media during *Operation Pillar of Defense* was not random, but was one that was shaped by recent events in the world. The decision cannot be fully understood without first putting the relationship between social media and conflict into a historical context. Leading up to *Operation*

*Pillar of Defense* in the fall of 2012, Israel watched as the Arab Spring, an uprising with strong roots in social media, collapsed the government of Algeria in January 2012 after protests that lasted for more than a year. Egypt’s government fell after only seventeen days of protests and Libya’s dictator was overthrown after five months of protests and war in 2011. While these examples showed rebel groups accomplishing their goals, even in movements that were ultimately unsuccessful, such as the Occupy Wall Street protests, the overarching theme across all of them is that the perceived “underdog” in the fight was able to use social media to mobilize large numbers<sup>1</sup> of protestors, shape the narrative of these conflicts and influence how people watching from the outside viewed their actions with a high degree of success.

In preparation for *Operation Pillar of Defense*, Israel’s decision to execute a social-media campaign was also likely a result of the failed attempts by the governments that were in the process of being overthrown in the Arab Spring to mitigate social media’s role. During each of the aforementioned uprisings, the governments chose to not compete in this social-media forum and essentially conceded this online battleground to their opponents uncontested. Instead of trying to communicate with the public, counter false claims, and shape their own narrative of the events, some governments tried to simply shut down the Internet.<sup>ii</sup> These attempts were often unsuccessful. After the Egyptian government blocked access to social media sites, protestors found they could still post to Twitter and Facebook by setting up accounts in Hootsuite,<sup>iii</sup> an online social media dashboard, which allowed them to bypass the technological blockades. Protestors also used a service called @speak2tweet created by Google and Twitter, which allow a person to call a phone number and leave a voice tweet. While shutting down the Internet can reduce the level of social media traffic, it is not guaranteed to have the intended outcome, as protestors will continue to look for creative solutions and workarounds to this problem. Additionally, denying Internet access is a reactive measure, as governments have to continually respond to each breach in their online blockade, which ties up resources that could be better used elsewhere. With time to prepare and plan for military conflict, the “online front” to the battlefield can be used as an asset that can empower a country to communicate directly with the world audience instead of an area to be avoided or controlled.

<sup>1</sup> Operation Pillar of Defense was an Israeli military operation lasting from November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012, to November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012, that targeted Hamas leadership and facilities in the Gaza Strip in order to prevent future rocket attacks on Israel’s cities.

Leading up to the November campaign into Gaza, Israel had clearly considered the strengths and weaknesses of using social media, and had undoubtedly considered the risk of not using social media at all. From the initial tweet and the first YouTube video showing a precision strike on Hamas' military leader, Israel was able to take a proactive and innovative approach to shaping how the world viewed *Operation Pillar of Defense*. The 310 tweets that were sent over the eight-day conflict provide a framework for countries that wish to use social media to influence their national image during times of conflict.

### Perception Is Reality – Shaping National Image

In turning to social media during *Operation Pillar of Defense*, Israel hoped that benefit derived from their efforts to shape international perception would be greater than the risks of using this approach, such as incorrect information being released in the pursuit of providing up to the minute updates, accounts getting hacked, or the risk of their message being misunderstood by people around the world. After all, the November 2012 campaign was not an internal uprising like the revolts that characterized the Arab Spring, and Israeli citizens were not upset with the government taking action to ensure their personal safety. One reason that Israel may have embraced a social media marketing plan, despite the inherent risks, is because, as a country, Israel has long faced the need to improve their overall national reputation and the way they are viewed by the rest of the world. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2006, Global Market Insite (GMI) Inc., the company responsible for collecting the data for the Anholt Nation Brands Index (NBI), reported that Israel ranked at the bottom of all six areas of national competence used to evaluate the countries surveyed: investment and immigration, exports, culture and heritage, people, governance, and tourism. The report's author, Simon Anholt, noted that Israel's brand was the most negative ever measured in the NBI and that there is nowhere that the 25,000 survey respondents from 35 countries would rather visit less than Israel,<sup>iv</sup> to include countries such as Iran and North Korea. When looking at the cause for such a negative national reputation, Mr. Anholt commented that the politics of a country could ultimately affect every single aspect of a person's perception about that country. Israel's relationship with their neighboring countries is likely the cause for the findings as even American respondents to the survey, Israel's staunchest allies, ranked Israel only slightly above China in terms of its conduct in the areas of international peace and security.



*Israel's brand is by a considerable margin the most negative we have ever measured in the NBI, and comes bottom of the ranking on almost every question.*

*– Simon Anholt*

When assessing the social media activity during *Operation Pillar of Defense*, the 2006 NBI survey is significant because its reporting period coincided with a 36-day war between Israel and Lebanon in the summer of 2006. Even though Israel claimed to be defending itself in the conflict,<sup>2</sup> their national reputation was influenced by a great deal of news coverage discussing the 1,300 people killed in Lebanon as a result of Israel's strikes. National reputation, however, is not necessarily a true reflection of all of the elements that define a nation. Occasionally a single factor, such as perceived aggression, can stand out over all the others in a person's mind.<sup>v</sup> For instance, Israel is the current tenant of Jerusalem, considered a holy city in three of the world's largest religions (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism), yet they ranked at the bottom of the "culture and heritage" category in the survey. They also ranked below countries with dictatorships, communist and authoritative forms of government in the governance category even though they are ruled by a parliamentary democracy. While the Israeli government was undoubtedly

<sup>2</sup> Israel launched their offensive after a series of rocket attacks in Northern Israel that were used as a diversion to capture two Israeli soldiers from an airfield.

concerned about ensuring the safety of its citizens and considers their national survival as the primary cause to go to war, failing to account for the international perception of a conflict can have a detrimental affect on their national reputation. The weight that the world assigns to Israeli's military action is far greater than any other element of their national image. Israel's negative image can have cascading effects throughout their economy because a positive image in the international community is regarded as a significant part of national interest that leads to increased revenue from investments, tourism, and commerce.<sup>vi</sup> Research has shown that people do not pay attention to the multiple dimensions and factors of national reputation at an individual level because they can't evaluate all of the detailed information that is available.<sup>vii</sup> In order for Israel to influence their national reputation during *Operation Pillar of Defense*, they needed to address two of the factors that shape this: hostility versus friendliness and strength versus weakness.<sup>viii,ix</sup>

The November 2012 campaign reflects the understanding of these concepts at a very high level of the government as notable improvements were made from previous conflicts as Israel set out to justify why they were going to war and influence the way their actions would be perceived. The name chosen for the campaign, *Operation Pillar of Defense*, is the English translation for the Hebrew name for the campaign, *Operation Pillar of Cloud*. This name has a biblical reference to the pillar of cloud that accompanied the Israeli's exodus from Egypt to Israel when they needed protection from the desert, robbers and the people trying to attack them.<sup>x</sup> Both the English and Hebrew names for the campaign reflect the defensive nature that they are trying project, that this was not unwarranted aggression, but something required to defend the Israelis living under fear of constant rocket attacks. This is a change from the most recent conflict between Israel and Palestine that lasted from December 2008 through January 2009 that Israel dubbed *Operation Cast Lead*, a name with a clearly different connotation in a campaign where they were later accused of using disproportionate force in order to accomplish its objectives by numerous human rights groups.<sup>xi</sup> The campaign's name, however, is only one element of shaping a non-hostile and aggressive image, and is not enough to impact perception. To influence people, they would need a second factor that relates to how they would educate the world about their cause for war.

The creation of talking points by a nation's military in preparation for combat is not a new concept, as governments routinely seek to explain their cause for war and to garner popular support during conflict. What made Israel unique during *Operation Pillar of Defense* was their method of delivery and dissemination for their ideas and justification for striking terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip. Historically, the information that the public would hear about in the news media would be second hand information. The government would hold a press conference and release their talking points and information to the media, who would than translate that information into what they believed would be a captivating story. The news media would oftentimes be an uncontrollable filter between the government and their constituents. The IDF's social media plan allowed the government to influence the way the world judged their actions in a manner that traditional and "old media" simply could not. As other countries seek to have an impact on the way the world evaluates their perceived aggression and hostility, the strategy executed by the IDF provides a template for how social media can support these efforts.

### The Social Campaign – The Realized Strategy

The image that the IDF wished to establish through social media during *Operation Pillar of Defense* can be looked at from a "realized strategy" perspective. Realized, or emergent, strategy develops when an organization takes a series of actions that turn into a consistent pattern of behavior, regardless of specific intentions.<sup>xii</sup> As social media use by a national government had been previously unprecedented, realized strategy shows how Israel put their pre-campaign plan into action,<sup>xiii</sup> as opposed to what they set out, or intended, to do before the conflict began.

As a social media and micro-blogging platform, Twitter offers a government with a unique benefit and an empowering capability when creating an effective strategy to influence international perception about their country. Twitter is a tool that can be used on a recurring basis throughout the length of a conflict and provides policy makers with a short feedback loop to determine how effective they are at disseminating information and shaping their national reputation. Instead of having a government make decisions based on inconclusive insights from “old media” channels or relying on assumptions made before the conflict began, social media provides quantifiable data in real time about how consumers are engaging with each posted tweet. The tweets that a reader chooses to favorite or re-tweet shows the strategy-makers which type of message resonates and which type of message falls short, thus requiring that the plan be modified. In addition to providing real time feedback to the government, social media also facilitates post-mortem analysis by outsiders because it reveals how the government is adapting and refining their plan throughout the conflict or responding to specific factors leading to their national reputation.

The following analysis reveals the image that the IDF sought to shape throughout *Operation Pillar of Defense*. The analysis of Israel’s social media activity begins by assigning each tweet from the IDF’s English speaking Twitter account<sup>3</sup> to one of six distinct categories to assess the IDF’s intentions. We can use the following six categories to assess the purpose behind each of the IDF’s tweets that in turn show how Israel sought to influence the two foundational elements of national image: hostility vs. friendliness and strength vs. weakness. The following table outlines the six categories and provides an explanation of the requirements for a tweet in this group.

Category	Explanation Of The Category
<b>The Cause for War</b>	The focus of these tweets is on the reason and justification for Israel needing to go to war. The goal was to show that they were not being overly aggressive, but were responding to Hamas' attacks. These tweets showed that they were under fire and that they had a right to defend themselves. Tweets in this category included statistics about the number of rockets fired and the impact they had in Israel, video footage of rockets landing, video footage of rockets being launched, and images of buildings destroyed by rocket fire.
<b>A Focused and Humane Offense</b>	The focus of the tweets in this category is to show that Israel was going after Hamas terrorist targets (buildings, command and control, leadership) in the Gaza Strip in order to prevent further strikes, and served as a warning to Hamas militants. This category <i>also</i> reassured those concerned about collateral damage and civilian casualties. By using video, they could show that they were precise in their strikes and were even able to show how they were avoiding strikes on terrorist leaders when civilians were nearby. By using video footage of the strikes, the IDF was able to disprove false claims by Hamas about civilians casualties.
<b>An Effective Defense</b>	The tweets in this category discuss the effectiveness of the Iron Dome (the weapon used to intercept incoming rockets) defense capabilities. The intention was to build confidence and reassure Israeli citizens about the IDF's ability to protect them.
<b>Facts About Pillar of Defense</b>	The tweets in this category highlight specific facts about the operation, correct incorrect reports earlier reports, correct miss-information spread by Hamas, summarize information about the day's successes, and highlight humanitarian missions and relief efforts into Gaza.
<b>Facts About Hamas</b>	The tweets in this category are focused on educating Twitter followers about Hamas, their leadership, their terrorist activities, the capabilities of their weapon systems, and their tactics.
<b>Social Media</b>	The focus of the tweets in this category is to direct readers to other IDF social media accounts, in different languages, to the IDF blog, YouTube account, and Facebook account.

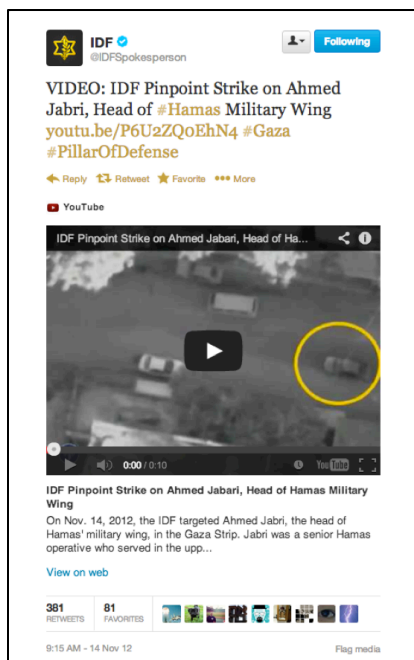
<sup>3</sup> The IDF’s Twitter activity on their English speaking account is being used as a representative sample for all of their social media activity during Operation Pillar of Defense.

Note that the “Social Media” category will not be discussed in this paper as the tweets were administrative in nature and don’t directly impact the analysis of the English-speaking account.

On tweets that could have been assigned to multiple categories, the author made a determination based on the perceived intention of the message.



At the onset of *Pillar of Defense*, a great deal of the news reports in America and Europe discussed not only Israel's strikes, but also the novelty of the IDF's social media use during war. In particular, one of Israel's initial tweets, pictured below, that drew a high degree of commentary



was a YouTube video of an airstrike on the leader of Hamas' military wing, Ahmed Jabri. This was one of the initial tweets (tweet number ten) and the shocking uniqueness and audacity of releasing this footage was sure to garner more attention and drive readers to the IDF's various social media accounts to see for themselves. Knowing that viewership and international media attention is greatest at the start of a military operation, the IDF initially focused on explaining and justifying why they were going to war.

In the very beginning of the conflict, the IDF focused their social media activity on justifying their "Cause For War." In case newsreaders only came to their Twitter page once upon first hearing that the Twitter account existed, the IDF ensured that people would at least see videos, images and messages that explained what led their country to this point. A prime example of a tweet from the "Cause For War" category is pictured below and was posted on the third day of operation. With the image of the Statue of Liberty, the Eiffel Tower and St. Steven's Clock Tower (better known as

Big Ben) being bombarded with incoming rockets, Israel was looking to generate an emotional response from the citizens of Israel's allies abroad. The personalized nature of the image and the bold question, "What would you do?" ensures that people consider how they would react if they were in this situation. If these attacks were no longer isolated to a foreign country but were occurring closer to home, what would a reasonable response look like? As this graphic is designed to influence international perception, it also is likely to remind readers of the way that the United States and their allies responded to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001 and the 2005 subway bombing in London. While offensive military action is often considered an aggressive gesture, the IDF's early emphasis on the "Cause For War" tweets attempted to establish Israel's position as having no other choice but to attack Hamas terrorist targets as a means to ensure their national survival and the safety of their citizens.

In addition to establishing their military and political position as being defensive in nature throughout the campaign, Israel also sought to educate their Twitter followers with background information about their enemy and "Facts About Hamas." To accomplish this goal, the IDF dedicated 43 tweets, roughly 14% of their messages, to highlight the goals, weapons, and tactics that Hamas uses and their status as a terrorist organization, not the charitable political party that they claim to be. This category also shows one of the tactics that the IDF used to tailor their message and the amount of information presented to different types of



audiences following their Twitter activity. For the followers who were watching the IDF's Twitter account and only looking for information "headline deep," they would get the basic gist of the information and would be able to recognize that Hamas was a terrorist organization attacking civilian targets within Israel. For readers who were intrigued by the headline and wanted to learn more about the topic, the IDF often provided a link to their blog where viewers could read articles or watch YouTube videos providing more in-depth information. Roughly 70% of the tweets categorized as having "Facts About Hamas" contained a link so readers could continue learning. For example, in the tweet pictured to the right, the linked webpage contains four videos with written commentary as well as more links for those seeking additional information.<sup>4</sup> By incorporating multiple social platforms and layers of information, the IDF was able to let readers determine their own level of engagement. This empowered readers to decide which topics were important to them, to take control over which category of information they wanted to learn more about and ignore the topics



that were inconsequential to shaping their personal perception of the conflict. As mentioned earlier, this is a level of personalized engagement in the consumption of news information during wartime that had not been previously attainable through "old media" channels.

In addition to the greater control that a newsreader has over the information they consume when using social media, these platforms facilitate a higher degree of transparency between a government and their constituents than has been previously attainable during wartime. Knowing that many people around the world now turn to social media to get up-to-the-minute information about current events, the IDF dedicated close to 20% of their Twitter messages to providing "Facts About Pillar Of Defense." These tweets were designed to keep the public informed and updated about the progress of the campaign. This category contained tweets with pre-packaged

quotes and figures for reporters around the world to provide their audiences with, such as "*@IDFSpokesperson: Some numbers from the last 5 days: 570 rockets fired from #Gaza hit #Israel + 307 Iron Dome interceptions = 877 rockets fired at us.*" This category was also used to correct misinformation in earlier reporting that is inherent when attempting to provide updates before all of the facts have been confirmed. For instance, on November 18<sup>th</sup>, the IDF reported that they had targeted Hamas training and communications facilities overnight. They realized their error and quickly tweeted: "*@IDFSpokesperson: Correction: Overnight, a communications antenna was targeted, not a communications facility.*" In addition to correcting their own inaccuracies, they also used tweets in this category to contradict and correct Hamas propaganda as well, with tweets such as "*@IDFSpokesperson: Contrary to #Hamas claims, no Israeli drone was downed. #Gaza.*" Since the "Facts About Pillar of Defense" category was mostly used for recent updates, only 23% of these tweets contained links for further reading, the lowest

<sup>4</sup> The follow-on link can be found at: <http://www.idfblog.com/2012/11/15/what-gives-israel-the-right-to-defend-itself/>



percentage among all six categories. This statistic shows the degree of customization and transparency that a country can establish in their communication through social media.

While the first two categories, the “Cause For War” and “Facts About Hamas,” were designed to establish the perception that Israel was not being overly aggressive and hostile, the “A Focused and Humane Offense” category was designed to ensure that Israel was perceived as being strong, but tempered throughout the conflict. This category was meant to highlight how the IDF was taking action to prevent future rocket attacks and Israeli casualties. The first way to prevent future attacks is to convince the attackers to stop firing their rockets either through diplomatic means or through the active targeting of those individuals when diplomacy has failed. From the very beginning of the operation, the IDF made it clear to Hamas that they were going to target

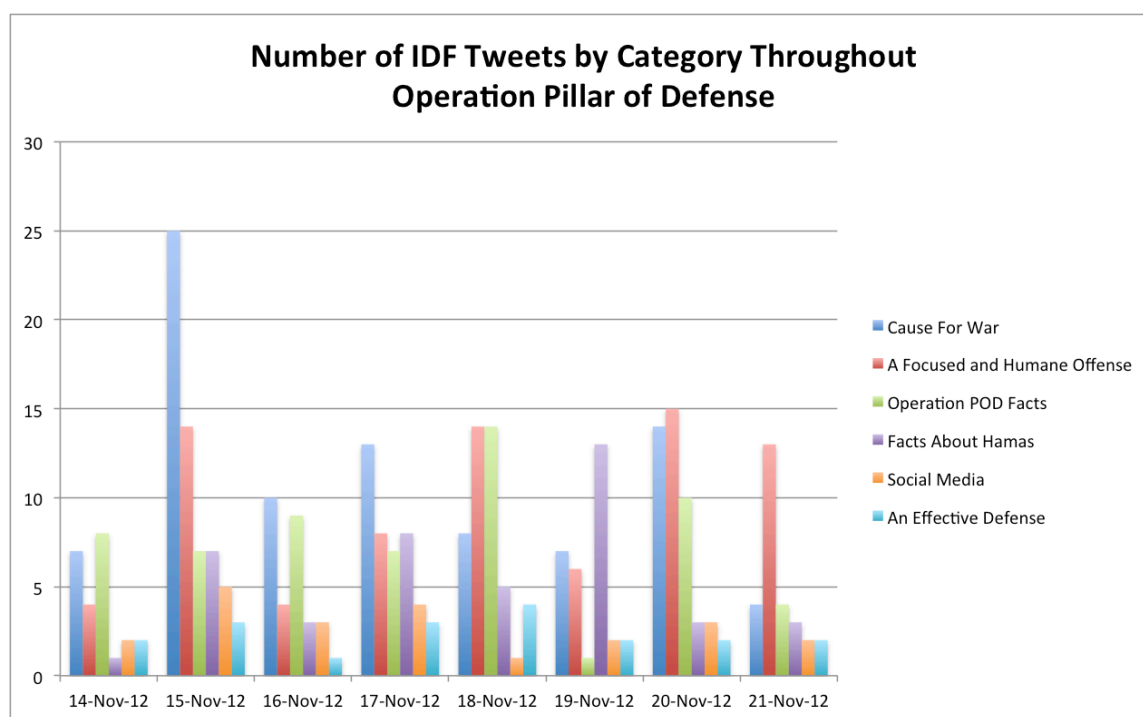


their leadership and facilities relentlessly until the rocket attacks were no longer a threat to the Israeli population. However, in addition to the tweets such as the aforementioned YouTube video of the targeting of Ahmed Jabri pictured earlier, the IDF made it a point to show how they were doing everything in their power to avoid civilian casualties and collateral damage. This category is titled “A Focused and Humane Offense” because Israel used it to demonstrate that they were applying lessons learned in their previous conflicts and understood how detrimental it would be to their national reputation if there was a perception that they were targeting and killing civilians. Their goal of being seen as strong yet controlled in the international community was important enough that the IDF dedicated 25% of all of their Twitter activity to this category. Numerous tweets were released that talked about the IDF calling off airstrikes when civilians were nearby or being so precise in their strikes that they could target one section of a building while leaving other sections unharmed, such as the series of tweets pictured to the left. Another element of the tweets in this category is that twelve of them had YouTube videos embedded in them as proof to show the exact amount of damage done during their strikes. This was done to mitigate the risk of Hamas claims that the IDF was targeting civilians or that there was a high degree of collateral damage.

When it came to shaping international perception about Israel’s strength and their ability to protect their citizens from rocket attacks, the IDF complemented the “Focused and Humane Offense” with tweets from the “Effective Defense” category to show the capability of their defensive systems. Throughout the campaign the IDF dedicated an average of two tweets each day to highlight the work of their Iron Dome Defense System and the soldiers manning the equipment. The Iron Dome system is designed to fire missiles to intercept the rockets fired from the Gaza Strip towards Israel’s major cities.<sup>xiv</sup> As the intended audience for the IDF’s English language Twitter account were predominantly in America and England, these tweets were likely designed to reassure viewers who have families or friends inside the reach of Hamas’ rocket launchers. By showing that the IDF was taking multiple paths to ensure the safety of their

citizens, such as offensive strikes on the sites where rockets were launched from and the defensive coverage provided by Iron Dome, the likelihood of a family member being killed by rocket fire would be minimized as much as possible. Even though the goal of military action is to achieve a decisive victory, the pervasiveness of social media allowed the IDF to establish themselves as being the stronger side while also being able to show their humanity by releasing videos and details about how they were doing their best to minimize the impact the war had on non-combatants.

The 310 Twitter messages that the IDF released during the eight days of *Operation Pillar of Defense* allowed Israel to be flexible and responsive to international perception while continually reinforcing the image that they sought to instill. The table below shows the frequency of tweets by category on each day of the offensive. In the early days of the campaign, the IDF heavily weighted their social media efforts on justifying the “Cause For War.” These accounted for 38% of their tweets over the first two days of combat. By the end of the conflict, the focus had shifted to positioning themselves as the stronger party in preparation for the post-hostility negotiations, as 37% of their tweets were from the “Focused and Humane Offense” category during the final two days.<sup>5</sup> As nearly three quarters of their total tweets came from these two categories and “Facts About Pillar Of Defense,” Israel’s social media activity reveals the strategy and the image that they sought to establish. While the daily mixture of the tweets changed throughout the campaign to address specific changes in the conflict, respond to critiques from abroad, and further establish their position, each of the categories were reinforced throughout the campaign to influence the way the world viewed Israel’s actions.



<sup>5</sup> To view the full tweet analysis in table and chart form, view the Appendix at the end of the report.

### The Targeted 60% and The Availability Heuristic

For the Israeli Defense Force's social media efforts to produce the intended results and change the way the world would judge Israel's military action in the Gaza strip, the IDF would have to clearly define their intended Twitter audience. Because of Israel's polarizing nature as a country and the heavily rooted beliefs and preconceived opinions that many have toward the country, it would be unrealistic for the IDF to believe they could convince everyone around the world to support their cause. To identify the people who would be receptive to the IDF's message, as well as those who are not the targeted audience, the entire population of social media readers can be assessed using the 20-60-20 principle. The 20-60-20 principle is a focused application of the Pareto 80-20 rule that is widely applied in business environments and assumes that 80% of a company's profits are going to come from 20% of their customers, or that 80% of a company's time should be spent communicating with the 20% of the market that is most supportive of their efforts. When the 80-20 rule is assessed using a normal distribution resulting in a bell curve shape, the profitable and supportive 20% has a counterpart on the other side of the bell curve reflecting the 20% of market that is going to be the least supportive of their marketing efforts. With these two segments representing the extremes of the market, that leaves 60% of the potential customers somewhere in the middle and undecided about how supportive they will be towards a company.

When the 20-60-20 principle is applied to the Israel-Gaza conflict, it implies that people can be divided into three distinct groups based on their perception of Israel's reputation. The first group is made up of 20% of the population that is going to dislike Israel regardless of how clearly the IDF tweets about their "Cause For War" or blogs about how the "Facts About Hamas" justify military action. This group sees Israel through a negative lens and is unlikely to change their image of Israel. The second group represents another 20% of the population that sits on the opposite end of the spectrum. This 20% shows strong support for Israel and, because of their beliefs, they don't require justification or explanation from the IDF about why they are starting another campaign in the Gaza Strip. Since the beliefs of both of these groups are so strong, neither of them are the intended audience for the IDF's social media activity. The categories and Twitter messages that the IDF crafted were designed to address the concerns of the remaining 60% of the population that falls in between these two extremes. This segment of the population is unique because they don't have a set opinion about Israel one way or the other, but will judge Israel's actions on a case-by-case basis. Because this group has the ability to tip the scales of total support in one direction or the other, this group is the intended audience that the IDF is attempting to earn the support of during *Operation Pillar of Defense*.

For Israel to effectively influence the unbiased 60% of the population, they would need to overcome one of the same challenges that Simon Anholt faces when conducting his Nation Brands Index survey. The challenge that Israel and Anholt face is that the respondents are evaluating countries where they don't have any personal experience and are left to judge them based on their perception of that country. When this is the case, respondents oftentimes have their opinion shaped by mass media.<sup>xv</sup> As the respondents decide how they are going to respond, they likely fall victim to what decision-making researcher Daniel Kahneman defines as the availability heuristic. The availability heuristic reflects how people make decisions and assessments based on the "ease with which instances come to mind."<sup>xvi</sup> This leads people to make decisions about a country using and relying upon the most recent news they heard and can remember about that country in particular. What the availability heuristic means to a country seeking to shape their national reputation is that the ubiquitous nature of social media can open a channel of communication where a country can control the frequency in which their message is seen by the audience they are looking to influence. In corporate marketing campaigns, frequency reflects the number of times a person is exposed to the ad,<sup>xvii</sup> and is an important statistic as

brands attempt to cut through the thousands of marketing and advertising messages a person is exposed to every day. Throughout *Operation Pillar of Defense*, the IDF tweeted with an average frequency of 38.75 tweets per day on their English-speaking Twitter account. With an average of 1.6 tweets per hour, the IDF hoped that this would increase the number of times each user would see their message at the top of their Twitter feed throughout the day. By ensuring that their information was being seen regularly, the IDF was able to have an impact on how readily available their message would be for the 60% of the population that they wanted to influence.

An additional benefit that Twitter offers a country seeking to reach the undecided 60% segment is the ability to design each tweet to facilitate sharing and improve Twitter-based search results through the use of hash-tags. Hash-tags allow a person searching Twitter to view all public tweets about a topic by adding the # symbol before any keywords that are being used in the search, and facilitates the effective placement of an organization's message. For instance, during *Operation Pillar of Defense* Israel added 360 hash-tags to their tweets, over 60% of which included #Gaza and #Israel. The use of hash-tags can also empower the supportive 20% of the

population to assist in the efforts to draw attention to the conflict from newsreaders who would typically be indifferent. For instance, throughout *Operation Pillar of Defense*, Israel used the hash-tag #IsraelUnderFire 43 times in tweets like the one pictured to the right to draw attention to their cause. With provocative and attention-grabbing hash-tags, the IDF provided supporters with pre-packaged social media content that could easily be shared with their followers. As shown in the tweet pictured above, that particular message was re-tweeted over one thousand times, greatly enhancing the typical reach of the IDF's message. With the spread of social media, many consumers of content have essentially crowd-sourced the job previously held by newspaper editors to the people that they trust. They rely on friends and selected online connections to filter through all of the news available and determine what is worth reading by re-tweeting it. As brands, whether it is a company or a country that seeks to capture attention for their cause and shape their reputation, the impact of an engaged social media audience is significant. As online analytic tools continue to evolve, the quantifiable feedback that a country can use to evaluate success or failure will likewise continue to improve to capture the impact that an engaged audience provides. With tools such as TweetReach and MentionMapp, it has become fairly simple for a country to determine which hash-tag, which category of content, and which style of message is best received by the unbiased and open 60% of the population. This real time feedback facilitates a flexible strategy that removes the rigidity of pre-campaign plans by ensuring structure without preventing the spontaneity of opportunities that present themselves. By letting consumers and Twitter users determine the best way to influence the people who can shift their support to the cause, the likelihood for success increases dramatically.



## The Undeniable Benefit Of Social Media

As people around the world begin demanding that their governments improve the transparency of their activities and expose more of what is happening “behind the scenes,” countries that fail to use social media to communicate to the masses risk alienating the very people that could be supporting them. Those who are seeking information will find a source for it online, and the governments who choose to remain behind the filter of traditional and “old media” companies and allow other people to determine the headline-worthiness of their cause will fail to connect with and move this available audience. Of all of the functions that a national government is responsible for, there are few events that are as permanent as acts of war. As the well-known military strategist Carl von Clausewitz has been quoted, “The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and the means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.” A country can overpower their enemies and win the battle, but without communicating to the world that military action was only used when all other options had been exhausted, and has made your country more stable, is a less-risky investment and a place to do business, the political objective that von Clausewitz highlights can never be attained. As social media platforms continue to become even more pervasive and influential in the daily lives of people around the world, a government who concedes this “online front” of the battle to their enemies will fail to shape the narrative of the events and regardless of the reason why military action was taken, they will pay the price associated with having a negative national reputation.

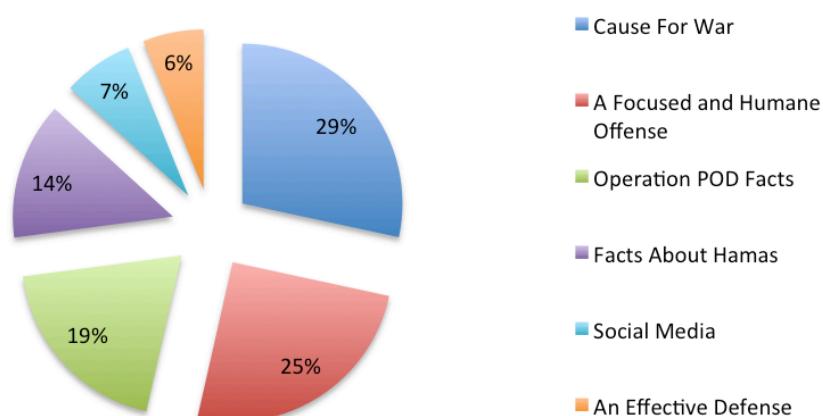
This report highlighted how one country employed social media during wartime because the impact of perceived aggression and hostility far outweighs many of the other factors that shape national reputation. While only history will show the impact that a social media strategy had for influencing Israel’s national reputation, their decision to engage with the undecided 60% of the population through social media channels reveals their commitment to be active participants in shaping their image abroad. Social media planning does not have to result in an overly complex strategy, but by having a pointed and meaningful plan that reflects the message a country wishes to establish, by selecting and implementing the tools needed to measure the effectiveness of the tweets and by possessing a willingness to adapt as the situation changes, countries, governments and militaries can become proactive in the shaping of their nation’s reputation.



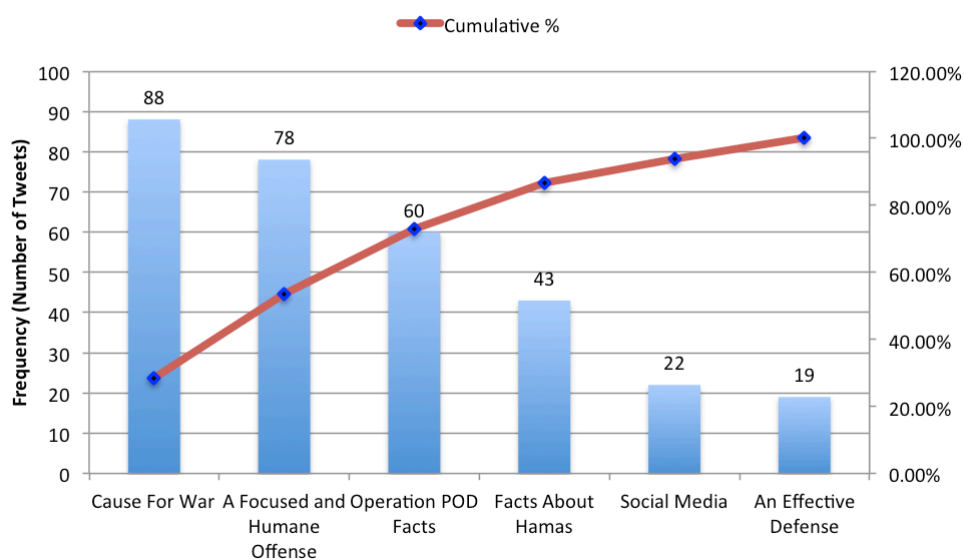
## Appendix A – Tweet Category Analysis

Categories	14-Nov-12	15-Nov-12	16-Nov-12	17-Nov-12	18-Nov-12	19-Nov-12	20-Nov-12	21-Nov-12	Grand Total
Cause For War	7	25	10	13	8	7	14	4	88
A Focused and Humane Offense	4	14	4	8	14	6	15	13	78
Operation POD Facts	8	7	9	7	14	1	10	4	60
Facts About Hamas	1	7	3	8	5	13	3	3	43
Social Media	2	5	3	4	1	2	3	2	22
An Effective Defense	2	3	1	3	4	2	2	2	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>310</b>

**Percentage of Tweet By Category During Operation Pillar of Defense**



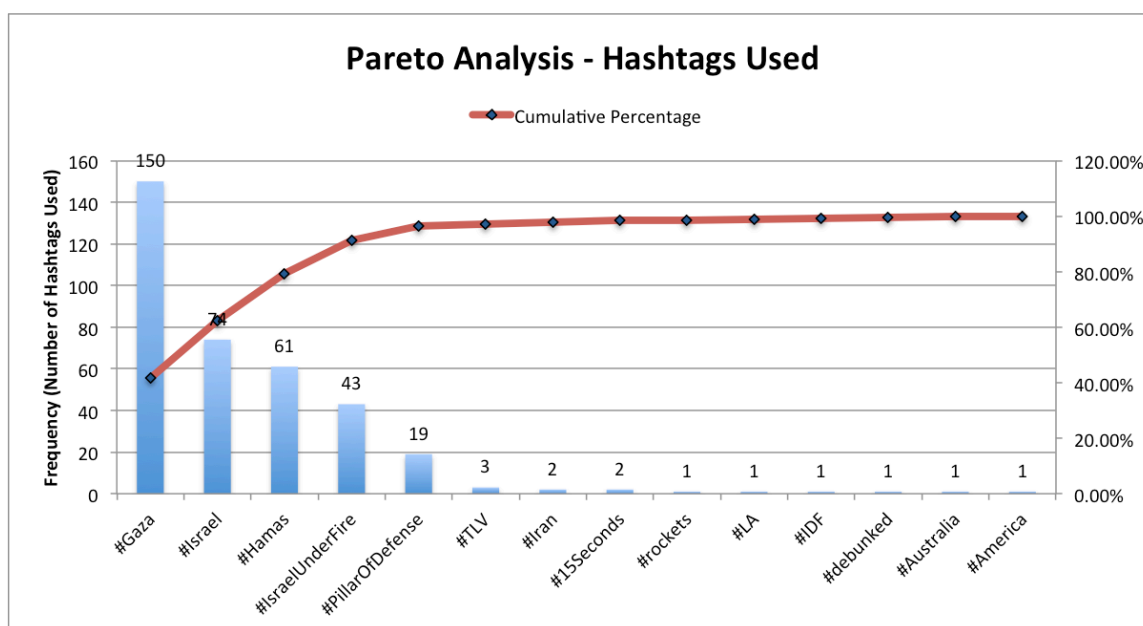
**Pareto Analysis - IDF Tweets By Category**



## Appendix B – Hash Tag Analysis

Hash-Tag	Cause For War	An Effective Defense	Operation POD Facts	A Focused Offense	Facts About Hamas	Social Media	Grand Total
#Gaza	47	11	30	41	21	0	150
#Israel	34	5	17	7	9	2	74
#Hamas	8	1	12	23	17	0	61
#IsraelUnderFire	27	4	8	0	3	1	43
#PillarOfDefense	3	0	6	3	0	7	19
#TLV	0	2	0	0	1	0	3
#15Seconds	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
#Iran	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
#America	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
#Australia	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
#debunked	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
#IDF	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
#LA	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
#rockets	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	123	23	76	74	54	10	360

Hash-Tag	14-Nov-12	15-Nov-12	16-Nov-12	17-Nov-12	18-Nov-12	19-Nov-12	20-Nov-12	21-Nov-12	Grand Total
#Gaza	11	35	11	21	25	18	20	9	150
#Israel	4	18	10	9	8	9	12	4	74
#Hamas	9	10	3	13	7	3	9	7	61
#IsraelUnderFire	0	11	8	7	4	3	8	2	43
#PillarOfDefense	3	7	4	1	1	0	3	0	19
#TLV	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	3
#Iran	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
#15Seconds	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
#rockets	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
#LA	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
#IDF	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
#debunked	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
#Australia	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
#America	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	29	84	37	54	47	34	53	22	360



## Appendix C – Percentages and Averages

Hash-Tag	Cause For War	An Effective Defense	Operation POD Facts	A Focused Offense	Facts About Hamas	Social Media	Grand Total
Total Hash-Tags Used	123	23	76	74	54	10	360
Avg. Hashtags Per Tweet In Category	1.40	1.21	1.27	0.95	1.26	0.45	1.16

Embedded Links	Cause For War	An Effective Defense	Operation POD Facts	A Focused Offense	Facts About Hamas	Social Media	Grand Total
Total Links Embedded	48	6	14	26	30	14	138
Percentage Of Tweet In Category w/link	54.55%	31.58%	23.33%	33.33%	69.77%	63.64%	44.51%

Misc. Facts	
Avg. Tweets Per Day	38.75
Avg. Tweets Per Hour	1.61

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