

Examining the Affordances of Social Network Sites as a Tool of Military Strategic Communication in a Hybrid Media Environment.

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Thesis submitted for the award of PhD

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August 2021

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Jane Suiter for her guidance and feedback throughout this research project from the time of proposal to submission, her extensive experience and straight talking have kept me on track even through the significant challenges 2020 brought to bear for us all. I wish to thank also my secondary supervisor Dr Eileen Culloty for her advice and enthusiasm for my research topic from the inception of this project. The undertaking of this research would not have been possible without the scholarship generously provided to me by the School of Communications in Dublin City University, a particular thanks to Dr Eugenia Siapera, Dr Jim Rogers and Dr Pat Brereton for their faith in my project and my ability to carry it out.

I would like to thank my fellow doctoral students within the School of Communications for their support and advice throughout my studies, Ricardo, Paul, Seamus, Colin, thank you for being incredible advocates for us within the university. May, I'm so happy to have met you on the first day and to have gone through this entire journey together. Your friendship and positivity have been unwavering, thank you!

Mam, thank you for being an incredible example of strength and resilience. Your unshakable belief in me has given me the confidence and freedom to do what I want in life with the knowledge that you will always be there to support me. This

I know is an amazing privilege. Emma thank you for all your kind words and encouragement. I feel incredibly grateful to have you both as my family.

I would like to thank my partner in all things, Rua, who has always encouraged me to follow my ambitions and has supported me in doing so. The undertaking of this PhD would not have been possible without you and I know it took as much out of you as it did me! I am in awe of your talent, tenacity and hard work and your superhuman ability to calm me down and keep me sane. Our little family (Holly and Scoot) are my comfort and anchor and you all make me incredibly happy.

I would also like to thank all of my wonderful friends. I am very fortunate to be surrounded by smart, confident and compassionate women who have offered their support, their shoulders to cry on and even their homes as a quiet place for me to work. Leah, Laura, Sarah, Shalini, Aoife and Jen, thank you so very much.

I also wish to thank my research participants for taking time out of their lives and schedules to accommodate me and to participate in this research.

Finally, to absent friends, Anne, Pat and Dr Robert Elgie who have shaped my journey along the way.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AI	ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
ARPA	THE ADVANCED RESEARCH PROJECTS AGENCY
ARPANET	THE ADVANCED RESEARCH PROJECTS AGENCY NETWORK
CNN	CABLE NEWS NETWORK
DARPA	THE DEFENSE ADVANCED RESEARCH PROJECTS AGENCY
EU	EUROPEAN UNION
IDF	ISRAELI DEFENSE FORCES
IR	INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
MSM	MAINSTREAM MEDIA
NATO	NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION
NGOs	NON-GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES
PMSC	PRIVATE MILITARY AND SECURITY COMPANIES
SNS(s)	SOCIAL NETWORK SITE(S)
STRATCOM	STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

ABSTRACT

Dissertation title: Examining the Affordances of Social Network Sites as a Tool of Military Strategic Communication in a Hybrid Media Environment.

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In recent years military actors have extensively embraced the opportunities digital networked technologies have presented to communicate directly with target audiences and to engage in sophisticated impression management. This dissertation research project examines how social network sites (SNSs) intersect with and augment strategic military communication practices using a communicative affordances framework. Specifically, the research aims to understand how SNSs are integrated into military strategic communications practices as a means to meet their broader institutional goals whilst situating the research within the complex hybrid media ecology in which this communication takes place.

The project employs a mixed-method research approach of in-depth interviews with communications professionals working within the military and defence sectors across Ireland, Canada, the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, Israel and NATO, combined with a multi-modal thematic analysis of timeline images uploaded to the official Israeli Defense Forces Facebook page over a period of three years. The visual thematic analysis of an active military institution at the forefront of utilising SNSs, compliments the analysis of the semi structured interviews, providing vital context and a more holistic understanding of the potential affordances and limitations of SNSs as a tool of military strategic communication.

The research findings provide in depth insights about how SNSs are perceived and used by military communications actors as a platform to articulate their activities and legitimacy to multiple target audiences and to build public support. The study employs the theoretical framework of social media affordances to conceptualise how SNSs augment practices of military strategic communication. The findings reveal a significant shift in the nature and tone of military strategic communications made uniquely possible by the affordances, norms and vernaculars of SNSs. This empirical study may inform broader theories about the mediatization of the military in a hybrid media ecology and contribute to a conceptual typology for the study of visual military communication practices online.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE.

This dissertation topic stems from an interest in the gradual increase in the use and appropriation of popular social network sites (SNSs) by political, military and defence actors. Militaries across the globe now maintain an online presence across multiple social media platforms which they employ for the purposes of recruitment, to counter enemy narratives and to garner public support. A specific focus on the use of SNSs by military and defence actors are worthy of scholarly attention I argue, as they represent a sea change in the nature of communications available for military strategic communication (StratCom) both in terms of reach and tone. If public perception is essential to success in contemporary conflict (Lind, 2004; Hammes, 2005), the media are essential to military StratCom practices which endeavour to influence and manage the perceptions of multiple and complex target audiences. As Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2010) assert, it is through the media that perceptions of military operations are generated, maintained or challenged. However, military and defence actors are engaged in increasingly sophisticated media strategies not only in times of conflict but also carry out everyday identity work across multiple media platforms. What is new about SNSs as a conduit for military StratCom is that they facilitate direct communication with target audiences, bypassing the traditional filtering and verification processes of mainstream media (MSM) (Banham, 2013). Further, content disseminated on official military SNSs may intervene in conventional

information flows, impacting upon MSM agendas as journalists utilise content directly from official military social media accounts. Ordinary social media users following these accounts may also be encouraged to remediate military strategic messaging to their networks through the traditional online practices and vernaculars of liking, sharing and commenting. All of these elements operating within a complex media ecology may afford military and defence actors with a feedback loop which amplifies their communication in a way not previously possible through traditional MSM alone. This is important as public awareness and perception of militaries and their actions are essential to their ability to operate and achieve their goals. SNSs facilitate a novel avenue within which military actors can engage with target audiences, which may include domestic publics, political elites, journalists, the international community and their own personnel, on platforms whose very architecture is centred around more informal, colloquial forms of communication. The nature of this kind of communication disseminated by state actors engaged in complex realities of violence and defence may at once serve to render them more visible whilst also obfuscating the very nature of the institution and its purpose.

Regarding the question of the military and the media, I argue that current scholarship on the issue of military communications practice is incomplete in the sense that there has been relatively little in-depth engagement with the way in which military and defence actors have integrated social media into their StratCom planning. Filling this omission is important because content disseminated across SNSs can have real world consequences. Fears of

recruitment for terrorism, interference in the integrity of elections and the spread of disinformation on climate and health-related crises all point to the prolific nature of SNSs and their ability to potentially influence and impact societal attitudes. Within the context of the military, on October 10th, 2013 the official Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) Twitter account @IDFSpokesperson posted a tweet marking 40 years since the Yom Kippur War. It contained the sentence “Israel Air Force bombards airports in Syria to prevent Soviet weapons reaching Syrian Army”¹. This tweet was misconstrued by some as a current offensive which might result in conflict across the Middle East and subsequently resulted in the price of oil per barrel increasing by a dollar. This example is illustrative of the authoritative nature attributed to these accounts and of how information disseminated on SNSs by military actors can impact the physical world. The majority of concern in relation to the impact of SNSs upon public perception of important societal issues have been centred upon the appropriation of SNSs by perceived nefarious actors with less focus upon how more official or state actors may utilise these SNSs in an attempt to influence target audiences in service of their own strategic goals. However, as Judith Butler (2010, p. ix) wrote, “if war is to be opposed, we have to understand how popular assent to war is cultivated and maintained”. This research argues that it is critical to engage with both military motivations and practices of communication on SNSs to understand the ways in which they use

¹ <https://www.haaretz.com/israeli-army-tweet-jolts-oil-market-1.5348544>

this conduit of popular culture to attempt to influence perceptions of and garner support for, the institution and state foreign policy.

This project contributes to existing academic debates on the mediatisation of the military and military media management practices by providing an empirically grounded account of the ways in which military and defence actors have integrated SNSs into their StratCom initiatives and the ways in which SNSs have augmented the nature and tone of their communications practice. The research problem is addressed through semi-structured interviews with communications practitioners working within multiple military and defence institutions and through an analysis of the use of popular SNS Facebook by the IDF, to elucidate the way that visuals and the vernaculars of SNSs are used to promote their narratives to networks online. Although SNSs are taken as the main focus of the study, this is situated within the context of the hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013) in which older and newer media formats and logics intertwine and interact in military communications practice. In so doing, the research brings together and expands upon literatures that often exist only as parallel to one another across the disciplines of communications, security studies, and International Relations (IR) to provide a more holistic understanding of the potential affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom.

Military actors engage with the practices and logics of social media in order to access the networked power that resides within these platforms and to leverage

their potential for reputation management and image building (Grewal, 2008; Pauwels, 2019). However, as both Corner and Parry (2017) and Jensen (2014) point out, media and communications studies have not given significant attention to military communication practices and more specifically, how they have integrated SNSs. Research within this discipline has predominantly focused on how the media portrays conflict or upon the nature of the relationship between the military and the media (Carruthers, 1998; Der Derian, 2009; Stahl, 2010). There has been significantly less engagement with how military actors have integrated SNSs into their StratCom practices. In contrast, military and defence academies have engaged in extensive research in how best to effectively utilise the media and in particular, the opportunities offered by new media technologies in meeting military objectives (Caldwell et al., 2009; Deverell et al., 2015; Nissen, 2015). The use of SNSs by military institutions is an important area of research argues Crilley (2016, p 51-52), as military social media sites collapse the gap between the military and the media enabling the military to become media actors in their own right. Military institutions invest significant resources into their use of SNSs and these sites can be seen by large audiences who can engage and interact with it in unique ways (ibid). The nature of the contemporary war environment and the complex media ecology have placed public opinion and perceptions at the forefront of success in conflict. As Nissen (2015, p 10) points out, audience behaviours will be informed by an 'intersubjective understanding of meaning created in social networks (physical or virtual) through arguments (logical and emotional) and communication'. As such the global information environment is a key battlespace in which issues of credibility and legitimacy are

negotiated. These conditions place increased importance on the construction of well-crafted strategic narratives by military actors which can be disseminated across multiple media platforms. A significant amount of research focused on the intersection of military and the media has emerged from disciplines such as IR, security studies, war studies, military sociology, cultural anthropology and critical military studies. What follows is a cross-disciplinary outline of the state of the field of military and the media (and in particular, military use of social media) and an argument for the significance of this study within this context.

1.1.2. MILITARY AND THE MEDIA: STATE OF THE FIELD

This project engages with broader conversations of military media management strategies and the increased mediatisation of the military as an institution. Both Maltby (2012) and Shavit (2016) make significant contributions to the idea that militaries have become increasingly 'mediatised'. The media become an 'interpretive grid' for military activities which they utilise to appeal to and elicit support from multiple audiences and to influence perceptions of conflict (Shavit, 2016, p 1). Both offer empirically grounded accounts of the processes of mediatisation within their respective case studies (the UK and Israel) with Shavit, in particular, discussing the impact of digital media technologies on the communication operations of the Israeli Defense Forces in specific instances of conflict. Maltby, Thornham and Bennett (2015) explore how social media spaces are occupied, utilised and negotiated by the British military through a big data analysis of social media sites across the internet engaging in defence issues.

They find that the role of social media spaces within specific areas of the defence sector is one primarily of public relations. They, however, highlight the limitations of data mining and big data and argue for the continuing need for qualitative methods of analysis that concentrate on the content disseminated in the digital environment, an approach embraced by this research dissertation. They acknowledge that social media is increasingly at the forefront of StratCom as it affords military actors with the opportunity to engage and influence audiences (ibid, p 2). Jensen (2014) explores the broader media management structure and dynamic communications processes of the UK military whilst Crilley (2016) specifically discusses the use of SNSs by the British Ministry of Defence and various branches of the British armed forces to build public legitimacy. He aptly argues that we cannot make sense of military SNSs without consideration of the inherent viscosity of these platforms. Working within the broader EU context, Olsson et al. (2016) explore how armed forces in member states view the opportunities and risks posed by social media through a questionnaire targeted at authoritative figures within the respective institutions. Although identifying points of convergence and divergence across the dataset, their findings indicate that the majority of respondents view social media in terms of the opportunities to facilitate marketing, two-way communication and transparency. Within the context of the US Lawson (2014) has detailed the antagonism within the U.S. military towards the use of social media by individual military professionals whilst Christensen (2008) has analysed the use of YouTube by the U.S. military to spread its messaging on the war in Iraq. Several studies have examined the use of SNSs by military institutions during episodic points of conflict (Kuntsman and

Stein, 2015; Merrin, 2018; Seo, 2014; Shavit, 2015; Stein, 2017), few studies have engaged in a longer-term analysis of the transformative role of communications technologies upon the military as an institution and the ways in which they have integrated popular SNSs into their StratCom practices, a lacuna this research endeavours to fill².

Moving from the institutional level to the individual service member, several scholars have written about the use of SNSs and digital technologies such as helmet cameras by soldiers providing an image of conflict from their perspective (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2009; Kennedy, 2009; Silvestri, 2014, 2015, 2016). Others have examined the personalisation of the soldier or veteran enabled by the unique vernaculars of SNSs (Chouliaraki, 2016; Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2015). The use of SNSs by military members and their families have also been explored elucidating how media technologies intersect with the mundanity of military experience and interrogating how such media practices are implemented in the performance of individual and institutional identities (Corner and Parry, 2017). The blurring and weaving together of the military and the civilian through social media practices have been detailed by Kuntsman and Stein (2015) who term this phenomenon as ‘digital militarism’. The case of Israel is utilised to describe the process by which digital communications platforms and consumer practices have

² Golan and Ben-Ari (2018) ‘Armed Forces, Cyberspace and Global Images: The Official Website of the Israeli Defense Forces 2007-2015’ provides a longitudinal analysis of the Israeli Defense Forces official website from 2007-2015. Although a website does not fall within the definition of a social network site this study provides an in-depth account of the deliberate strategies of a military to manage its public image and representation online.

become militarised tools for both state and non-state actors in military and civilian frameworks (p 6). Jackson et al. (2017, 2020) examine social media content that celebrates militarism in everyday social media usage through a focus on broader industries such as global arms producers, the military video games industry, private military and security companies (PMSCs) and ministries of foreign affairs. Their research fits within perspectives on the ways in which militaristic pleasures are promoted in society through popular culture in what Der Derian (2009) refers to as the military-industrial-media-entertainment network (MIME NET), the military entertainment complex (Lenoir, 2000) and the concept of militainment (Stahl, 2010). Whilst the studies outlined above inform this work and have offered invaluable insights on the nature of the military, media and society in different contexts this research endeavours to contribute to the literature in the following ways.

Despite the now ubiquitous use of SNSs by military and defence institutions, this topic remains under-researched within the communications discipline with a particular dearth in the inclusion of military perspectives³. This may be due to issues of access but also perhaps to an inherent impression of these institutions as closed off and secretive. This study offers an empirically grounded account of the perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom through an

³ Exceptions to this are Jensen (2014) who utilises access to field work and doctrinal discussions in her study of the UK military's overall media management structures whilst Crilley (2016) conducts semi-structured interviews with members of the British Army

engagement with military communications practitioners (on record) from across multiple geographic locations, the US, Canada, Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, Israel and NATO to ascertain the ways in which SNSs are perceived and integrated into their broader communication and institutional strategies. This is a gap in the existing literature this research endeavours to fill as it heeds calls from multiple scholars to include military practitioners and their intentions in studies at the intersection of the military and the media (Corner and Parry, 2017; Gerodimos, 2019; Pauwels, 2019). Further, this study contributes to a more holistic understanding of the use of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom by combining authoritative interviews with an empirical analysis of the use of SNS, Facebook, by an active military institution at the forefront of utilising SNSs, the Israeli Defense Forces. Despite the central role of images and visuals in political communication, the majority of research on the role of digital media in politics has privileged text over images as the most potent subject for research. This is indicative of a broader trend in social media research of privileging unimodal approaches - specifically focusing on text (Bruns & Burgess, 2015; Conover et al., 2011) - over multimodal approaches which acknowledge the importance of visual content (Hansen, 2011; Highfield & Leaver, 2016). Highfield and Leaver (2016) have called for a concerted investment in social media visual research, one which takes the role of images seriously. In addition, the majority of studies that have engaged with visual political communication practices online have thus far focused upon episodic instances of protest, political campaigns and elections, highlighting the effects and audience perceptions of social media visuals through an emphasis on engagement metrics. Whilst engagement metrics can offer

important insights into the communication effects of content, this research recognises that it is equally valuable to examine this visual content in an in-depth and rigorous manner (Gerodimos, 2019). This research contributes to digital political communications research in three ways. First, by recognising the importance of the visuals of social media as a potent means of political-strategic communication. Second, by extending visual political communications research to an alternative space of political practice, that of an active military institution online. Third, by providing an empirical multi-modal thematic analysis of the main narrative themes emerging from the timeline images uploaded to the official IDF Facebook page over a period of three years (2015-2018). This time period is one of 'relative' peace and serves to illustrate the everyday StratCom work carried out by a military institution on a popular SNS. This research contributes to studies of the military and the media by illustrating how an active military institution utilises visuals to represent itself on the world's most popular SNS Facebook to its target audiences. Further, this research moves beyond ideas of 'propaganda', recognising that the diversity of the contemporary media environment makes any comprehensive control and regulation of communication largely unachievable. Military actors must negotiate this environment with multiple other players and success in achieving communications objectives is by no means guaranteed.

1.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research is informed by and contributes to theoretical frameworks such as mediatisation, communicative affordances and the hybrid media system to explicate the nature of the military institution that both influences and is influenced by the media, the ways in which technology impacts military communicative practices and to situate their use of SNSs within the broader complex media ecology. Applying the concept of mediatisation to this context facilitates a greater understanding of the ways in which military actors have incorporated the media into their institutional practices. Mediatisation of the military is important as public perceptions of the institution and their activities impact their success and the resources allocated to them. Further, SNSs and the potential visibility they afford do not represent an even playing field. Resources, literacy and expertise matter and military actors invest significant resources in order to gain an edge over the plethora of competing voices online. The use of a communicative affordances framework which highlights the interaction between actors' intentions, the capabilities of the technology and the potential for actions, facilitates an understanding of how SNSs are integrated into military StratCom practices and how they impact upon the nature and patterns of communication. A recognition of the nature of the hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013) is useful in understanding the ways in which new media technologies have reshaped the way military actors communicate whilst recognising that their use of social media does not exist in a vacuum but is integrated into a complex assemblage of both older and newer media strategies. A more detailed overview of the theoretical framework of this project is outlined below.

1.2.1. MEDIATISATION OF CONFLICT

Several scholars have referred to contemporary war and conflict as being 'mediatised' (Cottle, 2006; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; Kaempf, 2013; Maltby, 2012; O'Hagan, 2013) to explicate that its conduct cannot be understood "unless one carefully accounts for the role of media in it" (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010, p 4). Multiple actors engaged in contemporary conflicts from states, militaries, insurgents and publics employ the media in service of their strategic goals. As Cottle (2006) contends,

The collective interests and cultural identities now contending for political legitimacy, social change and cultural recognition do so for the most part in and through available media of communication- whether traditional media of mass publicity, press and broadcasting or new digital and interactive media such as the internet (p 1-2).

For Cottle (2006), the definition, framing, visualisation, deliberation, evaluation, moralisation, amplification, promotion, contestation, reconciliation, performance and enactment of conflict through and within the media is what it means to be mediatised (p 185). Cottle calls for an approach to mediatisation research that is cognisant of the need to enquire into how new media technologies may be reconfiguring both the strategic and symbolic play of mediatised power in the contemporary media environment (p 24). Although throughout history conflict has been mediatised through frescos, panoramas, poems sculptures, paintings, theatre, books, newspapers, photographs, television, radio and cinema, the

emergence of digital new media platforms constitutes a sea change in the nature of the global media landscape (Kaempf, 2013, p 586-587).

The fundamental difference is the nature of the traditional relationship between sender and receiver which has, Kaempf argues, been eroded by digital new media resulting in a structural shift from a “multipolar to a heteropolar global media landscape” in which non-elite actors and individuals can now engage in the production, sharing and archiving of narratives of war (p 587). For Kaempf (2013), central to states’ and governments’ ability to control the mediatisation of their wars was this structural separation between sender and receiver. Previously, the ability to produce and disseminate information rested in the hands of a minority of elite and specialised actors who enjoyed a material and technological monopoly upon the representation of conflict. This has been upended by digital technologies that have given rise to multiple and structurally diverse media actors, heavily impacting upon the traditional relationship between the media and war (2015, p 599). Kaempf’s view of these new technologies and their impact upon contemporary conflict is overall an optimistic one, as he argues that newly “super-empowered” non-state, individual media actors can counter state-sanctioned narratives and more easily avoid control and censorship (ibid). Kaempf does acknowledge however that advancements in digital technologies have also facilitated the ability of states and military actors to produce their own media independent of traditional mainstream media, citing the example of Israel’s 2008 offensive in Lebanon, whereby all foreign media were banned from the theatre of operations, instead conducting its entire media campaign, including

press conferences through social media sites (2015, p 600). Traditional media also have adapted to this contemporary media environment directly incorporating digital tools and user-generated content into their coverage. For Kaempf, the impact of these developments upon the mediatisation of contemporary conflict has been to fragment it. War is now mediated by the voices of multiple actors both professional and non-professional, state and non-state making it increasingly difficult Kaempf argues, for any one party engaged in conflict to generate a uniform perspective on the truth (p 601). Thus, non-state actors and states and militaries now recognise the nature of new media technology as a force multiplier in the conduct of war and thus engage in both a physical conflict but also a virtual one through the medium of media technology.

1.2.2. ARRESTED WAR, THE THIRD PHASE OF MEDIATISATION

Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2015) identify a proactive premeditated approach to the dissemination of imagery and information by the military which they describe as the 'weaponization of media' (p 9). This they argue goes beyond the framing and representation of content already in the public domain but speaks to a more strategic use of the media as a weapon of modern warfare. Hoskins and O'Loughlin do not share Kaempf's (2008, 2013) optimism for the potential of digital technologies to facilitate resistance to state narratives of war but rather posit that 'arrested war' askews these democratising and self-organising prospects (2015, p 9). However, they do question the real impact or effect of this military appropriation of the media upon audiences, arguing that what is at stake

is how militaries *imagine* how influence works (emphasis added, p 12). Here they draw upon Maltby's (2015) ethnographic study of the mediatization of the British military in which she argues that by using contemporary media tools, militaries mistakenly presume they can influence a public who are openly awaiting their narratives. Maltby draws upon Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee to outline this misguided thinking by stating, "Some kinds of communication, on some kinds of issues, brought to the attention of some kinds of people, under some kinds of conditions, have some kinds of effects" (1954, p 356, cited in Maltby, 2015). Nonetheless, military actors harness the affordances of social media such as visibility and virality as a tool of strategic communication that advances their political goals. Hoskins and O'Loughlin utilise the example of a Twitter spat between the official Canada@Nato and Russia@Nato accounts during the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014 to illustrate that high politics is now conducted through social media platforms (2015, p 15). For Hoskins and O'Loughlin, although states and militaries continue to grapple with the initial information chaos wrought by the introduction of digital technologies, they have slowly come to embrace social media and its logics and affordances. This research builds on this perspective by providing an empirical account of the ways in which SNSs have been appropriated by military and defence actors as a tool of military StratCom.

1.2.3. A COMMUNICATIVE AFFORDANCES APPROACH

An affordances approach provides a useful framework for researching how technology impacts communicative practices and to understand how social

media platforms, in particular, are integrated into the StratCom practices of militaries affecting both the dissemination of information and patterns of communication. Majchrzak et al. (2013, p 2) define a technological affordance as “the mutuality of actor intentions and technology capabilities that provide the potential for a particular action”. The origins of the affordance approach lie in Gibson’s (1979) study of what the environment offers or furnishes an animal (p 127). Gibson argues that what we perceive when we look at an object are not their innate qualities but rather their affordances (p 134). An affordance effaces the distinction between subjective and objective being both a fact of the environment and a fact of behaviour, it is both physical and psychical, constituted by both the environment and the observer (Gibson, 1979, p 128). Gibson (1979) conceptualised an affordance as relational, triggered by “the particular ways in which an actor, or set of actors, perceives and uses an object” (p 145). Subsequent scholarship has also taken a relational view of affordances to understand how individuals interact with technology, arguing that affordances exist in the interaction between an individual's subjective perception of utility and objective qualities of a technology (Leonardi, 2011; Schrock, 2015; Evans et al., 2016). In other words, the materiality of technology may influence but does not determine, the possibilities for users (Evans et al., 2016, p 37). An affordance represents a potentiality activated by certain groups, not a latent innate capability of a technology (Majchrzak et al., 2013, p 39). This dissertation follows Evans et al. (2016) clarification of the concept as “the multifaceted relational structure between an object/technology and the user that enables or constrains potential behavioural outcomes in a particular context” (p 36). This approach is cognisant

of the attributes and abilities of users, the materiality of technologies and the contexts of technology in analysing the relationship between all three elements. It is important to recognise that within this approach different choices, action possibilities, goals and outcomes are possible and are contingent upon the actor, the technology and the context. A focus upon communicative affordances has emerged from recent scholarship which applies the affordance approach to social and mobile media to explain the ways in which social platforms and networks alter communicative practices (Earl and Kimport, 2011; Majchrzak et al., 2013; Schrock, 2015). An application of the communicative affordances approach to this research project provides a useful foundation for modelling the affordances of SNSs and digital technology for StratCom and reputation management and may contribute to a broader theory of how these affordances augment military communication practices in a hybrid media environment.

1.2.4. HYBRID MEDIA THEORY

Like Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2015), Chadwick's hybrid media system approach (2013; Chadwick et al., 2016) is concerned with the chaotic nature of the contemporary media environment as a result of the rise in digital media technologies. Chadwick et al. (2016) call for a holistic approach to media studies, one that is cognisant of both traditional and new media, their commonalities, differences, interactions and the ways in which "older" media have adapted to and integrated the logics of "newer" media (p 4). Chadwick et al. (2016) define media logics as the "bundles of technologies, genres, norms, behaviours, and

organisational forms in the reflexively connected social fields of media and politics” (ibid). Actors within this hybrid media system endeavour to steer information flows in service of their own strategic or operational goals and in ways which can either support or undermine other’s agency across both traditional and new media settings, thus creating a communications environment that is characterised by evolving relationships of adaptation, interdependence and diffusions of power. Central to the ‘hybridity’ approach is the rejection of simple binaries of either/or, in relation to older and newer media for example, and a recognition of the constantly evolving and complex nature of the contemporary media environment. In line with the call by Hoskins and O’Loughlin (2015) to identify the emergent fissures and hybrids within the current media ecology, Chadwick et al. (2016) draw attention “to boundaries, to flux, to in-betweenness” of older and newer media logics. This is crucial for the analysis of military StratCom as SNSs do not exist in a vacuum but rather are one tool in the broader StratCom strategies of military institutions who integrate multiple media formats in their communications practices. Political information flows in the contemporary media environment consist of complex assemblages of individuals, groups, sites and media technologies in which the logics of newer online media are hybridised with those of traditional and print media (Chadwick et al., 2016). The ability of citizens to produce, participate and share information facilitated by digital technologies, has, they argue, loosened the grip of political and journalistic elites in the dissemination of information. Chadwick et al. (2016) are cognisant however that the hybrid media system can both empower and disempower actors depending upon the context, thus participation is no guarantee of power nor does

it always imply a more inclusive form of democracy (p 22-23). Although hybridity allows for the opportunity for non-elites to exert some power, political and media elites have adapted to this new environment, often integrating citizen information and content into their own production practices. Power, resources and expertise within the hybrid media system are likewise not equally distributed amongst participants, thus the ability to intervene in information flows is likely to favour powerful elites. Military institutions for their part invest significant resources across multiple media formats in order to gain visibility within this environment and to disseminate their narratives. However, the process of hybridisation is not a static one and as it continues to evolve, Chadwick et al (2016) argue that the agency of citizens and elites remain in flux, highlighting the need to study specific conditions whereby hybridity empowers or disempowers (p 23-24). The hybrid approach once again rejects simple dichotomies of digital media as a force for democracy or as a tool for political elites, of the displacement of old media with new media or the absorption of new media by the mainstream. Rather the focus should be, they argue, upon the “interaction, adaptation and co-evolution” of older and newer media logics” (2016, p 24). A recognition of the nature of the hybrid media system is useful in understanding the ways in which military actors may utilise SNSs as a means to intervene in more traditional information flows.

1.3. PURPOSE OF STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom and to combine this with an empirically grounded

account of the StratCom work carried out by an active military institution (the IDF) on a popular online platform, Facebook. The research makes a theoretical contribution providing a framework for the study of the military and the media which synthesises perspectives from across the multifaceted literature of communications, IR and security studies to elucidate the ways in which SNSs have become integrated into the communications practices of military and defence institutions in a hybrid media environment. In so doing, the study addresses gaps within the media and communications literatures which have not paid significant attention to the use of SNSs by official military actors who may target audiences directly in service of their goals, nor to the ways in which visuals are utilised online to promote state and institutional narratives. In so doing this study contributes to a conceptual typology for the study of visual military communication practices online. The purpose of this research is not to improve the effectiveness of strategic military messaging nor to offer recommendations but rather to explore the nature of how SNSs are utilised by military and defence institutions to promote themselves to their target publics and how these communication strategies may serve to obfuscate the very nature of these institutions. This research captures an important juncture as military and defence actors foray further into digital communications technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), automated bots, virtual reality headsets and voice recognition as tools of potential recruitment and public support.

The study posits the following research questions to be examined:

***RQ 1.** What are the perceived affordances of social network sites (SNSs) as a tool of military strategic communication and what are its limits?*

This first question addresses the motivations and perceptions of military communications practitioners on the use of SNSs as a tool of military strategic communication.

***RQ 2.** How do SNSs fit into the strategic communication practices of military actors in a hybrid media environment?*

This question deals with the ways in which multiple military and defence actors have integrated SNSs into their initiatives and how these displace or interact with more traditional forms of communications.

***RQ 3.** How does a military actor, (The Israeli Defense Forces) in practice, use imagery to promote itself to target audiences on popular SNS, Facebook?*

This third question is aimed at the ways in which visuals were used to construct strategic narratives on popular SNS Facebook by the IDF. This question allowed for an in-depth multi-modal analysis of the prominent themes promoted by an active military at the forefront of engaging digital technologies.

These questions are addressed through the following methodological framework. The method of qualitative interviews seeks to access the motivations and interpretations of the individuals interviewed. Qualitative interviews represent an appropriate method to address the objectives of this research by gaining insights into how multiple stakeholders working within military and defence institutions interpret the affordances of SNSs and how they integrate them into their StratCom practices whilst also illustrating the limits of SNSs for this purpose. The multi-modal analysis of images disseminated by a military, in this instance the IDF, on Facebook assess how an active military institution constructs its image online as part of its StratCom objectives and what narratives were perpetrated by it. The methodological approach undertaken in this research allows for the examination of the issue from different perspectives. The semi-structured interviews provide unique insights into the perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom from practitioners working across different geographical contexts whilst the analysis of social media data from the official IDF Facebook page illustrates the strategic communications work carried out by an active military institution and the prominent narratives disseminated within. The methodological approach taken provides a more holistic understanding of the

affordances of SNSs as a tool for military strategic communication that is greater than the sum of its constituent parts.

1.4. DEFINITION OF TERMS

This dissertation utilises the terms social network sites (SNSs) and 'social media' and thus it is important to clarify how these terms are defined. A social network site (SNS) is defined as a networked communication platform in which participants 1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-level data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site (Ellison and boyd, 2013, p 158). For example, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Tik Tok all exhibit these characteristics. The term 'social media' is often used in broader terms to describe not only social network sites but also other social mediums such as chatrooms and discussion fora, online gaming, dating applications such as Tinder, and mobile messaging apps such as WhatsApp. The term 'social media' is understood in this research as the digital platforms, services, and mobile applications built around the convergence of content sharing, public communication and interpersonal communication (Burgess, 2017). This research is focused primarily upon the use of SNSs and in particular Facebook, as a tool of military strategic communication however it also makes reference to 'social media' in the discussions with interviewee participants.

1.5. CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter one provides an overview of the topic, outlining the context from which the research problem arose and the significance of the study. It introduces the research questions guiding this dissertation and the theoretical and methodological frameworks chosen to address them.

Chapter two situates the study within the academic literature, drawing upon research from across communication, international relations and security studies disciplines to examine the contemporary factors influencing the virtual or cognitive dimensions of war. It reviews the complex nature of the military-media relationship and the historical ties between the development of military and communications technologies. It discusses theoretical perspectives on the nature of contemporary warfare and the complex media ecology and the manner in which these two factors have created the need for well-crafted strategic narratives in military StratCom. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the potential of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom.

Chapter three weaves together the theoretical foundations of the study informed by theories of mediatisation and applies the hybrid media system theory and communicative affordances framework to conceptualise the use of SNSs as a tool of strategic military communication in a hybrid media environment.

Chapter four details the methodological framework for the research including the theoretical foundation, the qualitative research design in relation to the implementation and analysis of the semi-structured interviews with military stakeholders and the collection and analysis of Facebook data from the official IDF Facebook account. Along with the research design, the chapter outlines the ethical considerations and limitations of the research and the overall challenges posed by the research topic.

Chapter five presents the findings of the participant interviews with military and defence personnel to explicate the perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom. The findings identify three primary affordances, Building Networks and Advocates, Impression Management and Intervention in Hybrid Information Flows. The findings also highlight several limitations and constraints faced by actors engaged in utilising SNSs as a tool of military strategic communication, which includes tensions within their own institutional culture, the potential risks to reputation and an inability to fully control the environment. The distinct affordances of SNSs for military strategic communication and their limitations are outlined.

Chapter six compliments the stakeholder interviews and contributes to their findings by providing an empirical analysis of the strategic communications work conducted through popular SNS, Facebook by an active military institution at the forefront of utilising SNSs. It outlines the findings of a multi-modal thematic

analysis of timeline images and their accompanying text titles, uploaded to the official IDF Facebook page between August 2015-August 2018. The analysis underscores some of the more salient points of the affordances of SNSs as a tool of strategic communication that emerged from the interviews, providing an in-depth look at the nature of the content that was shared by the military institution and what narrative themes were perpetuated by it. The findings identify five primary themes across the dataset; Legitimacy, Capability, Credibility and Authenticity, Progression and Calls to Action. The findings also highlight a degree of tension recurrent across the dataset, between the images disseminated by the IDF on its official Facebook page and the text that accompanies them. I refer to this as image dissonance, whereby the images presented have an unintentional contrasting effect with the strategic messaging that frames them.

Chapter seven provides a discussion of the main research findings outlining how SNSs are perceived and used by military communications actors as a platform to articulate their activities and legitimacy to multiple target audiences and to build public support. The findings reveal a significant shift in the nature and tone of military strategic communications made uniquely possible by the affordances, norms and vernaculars of SNSs. SNSs provide a unique platform for militaries to promote state strategic narratives but also to support their own institutional objectives. However, the findings also highlight several limitations and constraints faced by military communication actors. The very nature of social media may be viewed as incongruous to the nature of the military institution itself. The chapter rehearses what the dissertation set out to do and the research questions guiding

the purpose of the study. It situates the study within broader theories of the mediatisation of the military in a hybrid media ecology and thus emphasises the significance of the study. It concludes with recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter draws upon literature from across communication, international relations and security studies disciplines to assess the contemporary factors influencing the virtual dimension of war (Betz, 2008). The nature of contemporary warfare and the nature of the contemporary complex media ecology have created challenges and opportunities for the operational and strategic objectives of military actors. This chapter outlines the ways in which military actors have always utilised the media and communications technologies more broadly in service of their goals and charts the manner in which this has evolved over time. With an even greater focus upon the ‘battle for hearts and minds’ which characterises success in conflict in the 21st century, this chapter argues that state and military actors utilise strategic narratives to sell their policies to their publics. Within a military context, strategic communication facilitates the remediation of state strategic narratives simultaneously with the promotion of the military institution itself to target audiences. Although strategic communication efforts are disseminated across multiple media platforms both “new” and “old”, digital communications technologies and in particular SNSs afford military actors with the ability to communicate with their target audiences directly, either bypassing traditional mainstream media (MSM) or impacting upon their agendas in an effort to influence perceptions on the nature of the institution and the validity of state foreign policy.

The expansion of irregular conflicts and the evolution of the contemporary media environment has resulted in an increased focus by scholars and practitioners upon the virtual or cognitive domain of war (Betz, 2008; Freedman, 2006; Rid and Hecker, 2009). Here, perception and persuasion are essential to victory in conflict over time. De Graaf et al. (2015) are in agreement that the unprecedented focus upon the virtual dimension of war may be explained by these two significant factors, the highly asymmetric character of today's wars and a new and pervading global media ecology. Contemporary conflict is often (though not exclusively) carried out by rebels or insurgents whose attacks are often carefully staged media events orchestrated to maximise attention and to undermine western military forces. As these irregular forces or rebels cannot be forced into open battle, there is a shift in focus to the "war of perceptions and ideas" (ibid, p 6). The contemporary complex media ecology and in particular the rise of digital technologies have bolstered the ability of smaller or weaker sides in conflict to access audiences with their messaging and to impact upon mainstream media coverage of war. Thus, the nature of contemporary warfare and the complex media environment necessitates a focus of conflict actors upon the importance of legitimacy building and persuasion in order to sustain support for their activities both domestically and internationally and to undermine their adversaries. These conditions lead to the engagement of states and militaries (and multiple other actors) in the formulation and dissemination of strategic narratives to sell their policies to the public. Within a military context, strategic communication facilitates the remediation of state strategic narratives simultaneously with the promotion of the institution itself to target audiences for the purposes of building public

legitimacy and support. Although SNSs have instigated a sea change in the nature of strategic military communication, it is instructive to acknowledge the dual developments in military and communications technologies and the ways in which military actors have always engaged with the media in service of their mission.

Section one examines the complexities of the militaries' relationship with the media shaped by their dependence upon the media in service of their strategic and organisational goals and their concern for the risks to operational security, reputation management and legitimacy posed by media reportage of their activities. While outlining the main interests that mandate democratic militaries' interaction with the media, the need for militaries to adhere to the media production logics of compelling narratives and visuals in order to effectively communicate with their publics are highlighted.

Section two highlights the historical ties between the development of military and communications technologies, tracing the technological advancements of war that gave rise to media industries such as cinema, television and the internet. Theoretical perspectives on the nature of technology, speed and its impact upon society are also outlined.

Section three examines theoretical perspectives on the nature of contemporary warfare which focus predominantly upon concepts of industrial war versus

information war, the revolution in military affairs (RMA), fourth-generation warfare (4GW) and arguments surrounding the characteristics of 'new wars'. In practice, any binary distinctions between industrial war and information war, old war and new war serve only to obscure the complex, hybrid and overlapping nature of contemporary warfare.

Section four details the nature of the contemporary media ecology and its impact on military communications practices. The challenges and opportunities presented by new media technologies for military actors are highlighted with a recognition that these technologies may be used to counter official narratives whilst simultaneously being appropriated by the military as a tool of impression management and surveillance.

Section five outlines the theoretical concept of strategic narrative to illustrate the importance of well crafted, purposeful communication in the contemporary conduct of war which operates within a complex media ecology. The use of stories or narratives by state and military actors to influence public perception of their activities is discussed, along with a recognition of the importance of images as a tool of strategic narrative, particularly when these narratives are disseminated through SNSs.

Section six explores theoretical perspectives on strategic communication drawing parallels between the concepts of strategic narrative and strategic

communication, particularly within a military context. The potential of strategic communication to be utilised as a means to promote the military institution whilst also remediating state strategic narratives are highlighted. The multi-dimensional nature of the concept of strategic communication is outlined with an understanding that it can be used by a multitude of different actors for purposes good and bad, manipulative or collaborative and inclusive.

Section seven examines the potential of SNSs as a tool of military strategic communication, facilitating an opportunity to engage in a more holistic approach to StratCom that allows for both persuasive and collaborative communication. The ability to reach large audiences with military messaging and to encourage them to become proponents of it through the routine online practices of liking, sharing and commenting are discussed, whilst the risks associated with social media engagement for militaries are acknowledged.

2.2. THE MILITARY AND THE MEDIA

Military actors have always utilised media and communications technologies in service of their institutional goals. It is merely the nature and negotiation of these resources that have changed in different conflicts, contexts and historical periods as a result of the evolution in the nature of warfare and the complexity of the contemporary media ecology. As Limor and Nossek (2006) assert, the relationship between militaries and the media are as old as the press itself. Whilst media observers face many of the same challenges of access, lack of support,

control and censorship by militaries today as they have done over the past 200 years, the military must contend with concerns of operational security being compromised at the hands of the media. As both Hooper (1982) and Snyder (2003) contend, conflict between the military and the media has persisted throughout the history of warfare as military concern for the disclosure of sensitive information potentially useful to the enemy and the press' desire for freedom of information lead to an inevitable point of conflict that has resulted in various forms of censorship and control being applied since the end of the Crimean War (1853-1856). Despite an inherent distrust and the perceived operational risks to the military in conducting relations with the media, there are several operational and strategic goals which may be met through their interaction. In fact, media was utilised by General George Washington during the US revolutionary war for the purposes of legitimacy, the garnering of public support and the maintenance of troop morale (Emery et al., 2000). Limor and Nossek (2006) illustrate this point further by identifying six main interests that mandate democratic militaries interest in the media and the ways in which they conduct these relations: 1) legitimization of armed forces and conscription. They illustrate this point with the example of the press within Israel who act as agents of socialisation consolidating support for both compulsory and voluntary military service. 2) Securing public support for military policy and action, noting that in democratic states public opinion is of vital significance in this endeavour. 3) Rallying public support for maintenance and empowerment of the military systems status, this embodies the militaries struggle to compete with other democratic state institutions for continued allocation of funding and resources. 4) Use of strategic and tactical weapons, for example,

publication of weapons capabilities in an act of deterrence to the enemy or alternatively blocking counterpropaganda. 5) Reinforcing home-front morale taking into account that public morale may also influence the fighting forces. 6) Public relations for the military as a system and development of the military ethos, which endeavours to reflect well upon all uniformed personnel within the military (p 487-488).

Over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries, militaries have made extensive use of the media to communicate with their publics in wartime as perceptions have always been an integral component of warfare (O' Hagan, 2013). The methods of conveying these messages employed by established information bureaus in WWI included the newspaper press, films, leaflets, booklets and books whilst the advances in media technology in the form of radio were extensively used in WWII to communicate with not only domestic and neutral international audiences but also with the enemy, something that had been virtually impossible previously (Schleifer, 2007). The reliance of the military upon the media in the realm of public affairs is echoed by Former Chief of Army Public Affairs, Major General Charles. W. McClain in an article entitled 'Public Affairs in America's 21st Century Army' (1994) in which he states that,

On the battlefield, it [public affairs] is as essential an element of mission success, as important a combat multiplier, and as critical a component of building and sustaining combat power as any of the

Battlefield Operating Systems, especially when the global media is a significant element of the battlespace (p 5).

Within her research of the British military Maltby (2012b) also argues that the media have historically been a 'key enabler' in the dissemination of military themes and messages which may potentially reach and impact upon their intended audiences, concluding that the military are therefore dependent upon the media for this central function of influencing activity. Negrine and Stanyer (2007) identify a tripartite configuration between the military, the media and their intended audiences whilst Altheide and Snow (1979) contend in their book 'Media Logic' that in order for the military within this tripartite configuration to successfully harness the media in the effective communication of their messages they must acknowledge and accept media production logics and rules. Doyle (2003) argues that the more reliant the military become upon media audiences to secure public support for their actions, the more they will incorporate the media logics of drama, compelling visuals and narratives into their public affairs policies. Military communication strategies are increasingly orientated towards media logics to appeal to the general preferences of their intended audiences and to increase the potential for their messages to be disseminated through the media (Mazzolini and Schulz, 1999). Maltby's (2012b) research of the UK armed forces revealed long-standing concerns for the potential of the media to speculate and engage in rumours should they be devoid of information and so the military endeavour to fill any information vacuum with a constant flow of positive newsworthy material that meets the media's requirements for compelling stories and visuals. Despite a continued reticence to engage in media relations due to concerns for operational

security, inaccuracies and potentially unfavourable coverage of their activities, it is necessary for militaries to do so if they are to communicate effectively with their publics in service of continued support and legitimation (Rai, 2000; Rid, 2007). With a recognition by militaries that the media plays a significant role in this process they endeavour to exert some control over the information environment and to utilise communications technologies in service of their goals.

2.3. THE MILITARY AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES, DUAL DEVELOPMENTS

The communications technologies that military actors attempt to employ in service of their goals originate from the technological developments of war. For cultural theorist Paul Virilio (1989) the question of technology is the key question of our time and his work has provided a particular focus upon the development of military and information technologies (Kellner, 1999). In his book 'War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception' (1989) he traces the dual development of military weaponry and camera equipment from the American Civil War through to World War II revealing the chronophotographic rifle as the precursor to the Lumiere brothers camera and the work of optics professor Henri Chretien on naval artillery telemetry during WWI as laying the foundations for what would later become the Cinemascope 36 years later, thus facilitating, he argues, a "deadly harmony that always establishes itself between the functions of the eye and weapon" (p 86). Virilio charts the technological developments of war that gave rise to media industries from the development of panoramic telemetry (wide-

screen cinema) to the progress of radar (television) to targeting systems (computers) to encryption (software codes) (Virilio, 1989; Der Derian, 2009). Virilio distinguishes between warfare in the 19th century characterised by hand-to-hand combat conducted by the naked eye with handheld weapons and conflict in the 20th century which became a 'camera obscura' in which face to face combat became supplanted by pictures and computer interfaces which more closely resembled cinema and television rather than war (p 90). The very origins of contemporary internet technologies were born out of a collaboration between MIT scientist J.C.R. Licklider's vision of a "man-computer partnership" and the US Department of Defense who were keen to use data analysis in the escalating war in Vietnam (Rid and Hecker, 2009, p 26). The Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), a computer research program created by the Department of Defence (later renamed Darpa in 1972 to encompass the word Defense) created ARPANET, the precursor to the internet thus continuing the long historical ties between the development of military and communication technologies (ibid). One of the most significant contributions of Virilio's work is his interrogation of the importance of speed and its effects upon politics, society, transportation and communication. In his book 'Speed and Politics' (1986), Virilio describes the technologies of speed such as the steam engine, combustion engine, nuclear energy and instantaneous forms of communication and warfare as altering our sense of space and time having a destructive impact upon social, political and human life. This he argues results in a decline in the public sphere and political engagement. For Virilio, those groups that control the means of speed, information, communication and destruction within society wield significant

societal power and he singles out the military as a key force in politics whose importance he claims is often underestimated (Kellner, 1999). The military, information and communication industries are characterised by technologies of speed, he argues, which replace democratic participation and human understanding and dramatically transform everyday social life (Virilio, 1986).

Kellner (1999) although acknowledging the relevance and usefulness of Virilio's work on speed, technology, politics and culture, is critical of what he describes as his 'excessively hypercritical and even technophobic tendencies' which are driven by his intense focus upon war and military technology (p 103). For Kellner, Virilio with his concentration upon the state and military fails to take account of several other aspects of new technologies, that of the political economy and capitalist dimension of modes of information and the potential for individuals and social groups to use these technologies for their own purposes in a way that may potentially increase political communication and democratisation rather than eradicate it (p 121). Virilio has, he argues, failed to adequately conceptualise the significant changes wrought by 'an infotainment society' and the emergence of the new 'multimedia-information-entertainment technology' (p 120). Cubitt (1999) is also critical of Virilio's excessive attention on production and transmission technologies and his neglect of the significance of distribution processes that are key to the 'massification of the media' (p 126). Through Virilio's critique of state power, any analysis of the global capitalist system as a key component of new media technologies is largely absent. For my part, Virilio's focus on the dangers of technology also fails to address the active role of the citizen/viewer in their

consumption and use of information technologies. Technological advancements may favour not only military and political actors but also smaller more irregular groups which represent key actors in the complex environment of contemporary conflict.

2.4. “NEW” WARS, THE NATURE OF CONTEMPORARY WARFARE

The complex nature of warfare in the 21st century is characterised by a shift from the mass mobilisation of publics in the 20th century to one of citizen support, significant technological advancement and the incremental advance of information war in tandem with traditional processes of industrial warfare. Shaw (2007) states that the industrialised total warfare of the first half of the 20th century facilitated by the rise of industrial capitalism in the 19th century, can be identified by the direct large scale mobilisation of publics through mass conscription, “labour-intensive war economies, state direction and totalising ideologies” in which the mass media (newspapers, radio and then television) played a significant role as instruments of mobilisation that were often under state control (p 132-133). Shaw states that the significant shift in warfare from the 20th to the 21st century characterised by advances in high tech weaponry and specialist forces and the decline of conscripts is from the direct mobilisation of the public for the production of war towards a more indirect participation enacted through citizen support which is materialised through voting, elections and opinion polls. Thusssu and Freedman (2003) point to the unravelling of industrial warfare and the incremental yet accelerating emergence of information warfare

in the 21st century. They caution, however, against conceiving this transition through the narrow technological lens of the revolution in military affairs (RMA), highlighting that beyond the technological features of satellites, drones and computer-aided weapons systems that characterise information warfare there has indeed been a shift from the mass mobilisation of publics towards relatively small numbers of professional soldiers referred to as 'knowledge warriors' (p 62). Downey and Murdock (2003) are also critical of the enthusiastic support of the RMA concept within military and security communities as being unduly focused upon the innovations in technology as revolutionary, a position they argue obscures the strong continuities with past conflict conditions. They are also critical of any over-simplistic paradigmatic shift between industrial warfare of the 20th century and information warfare from the mid 21st century arguing that there has been no decisive shift from one to the other but rather this process is a complex and dynamic one. They highlight the approach of Robins and Webster (1999) who, although acknowledge that information has historically been important in the conduct of war, focus their analysis on human intelligence rather than on intelligence mediated by technologies such as writing, telegraphy, photography, radio and radar. Downey and Murdock contend, as this research does, that industrial war was also always information war (p 74). They illustrate their point through the examples of the use of maps and written orders in the Napoleonic Wars of the 18th century, the expansion of the transcontinental telegraph network at the end of the 19th century whose strategic importance was solidified in WWI and the complicated distanced command and control systems of WWII (ibid). Downey and Murdock (2003) are also critical of the contention of the first Gulf

War in 1991 as the 'first information war' highlighting the persistent features of industrial warfare employed in the mass US mobilisation of 500,000 soldiers, and the continued use of 'dumb bombs'. They do, however, acknowledge the significant and unprecedented use of satellite technologies in this conflict and so contend that rather than a decisive rupture between industrial war and information war there are complicated evolutions, transitions and continuities that continue to coexist between the two (p 75). Thus, any discussion of a binary shift between industrial war and information war, old war and new war serves only to obscure the complex, hybrid and overlapping nature of contemporary warfare.

The concept of 'new war' is one that exhibits significant debate amongst scholars. Kaldor (2006), one of the most pervasive advocates of the 21st century 'new war' thesis describes the characteristics of these new conflicts as an increase in civil war and the mobilisation of identity politics based on exclusive definitions of ethnicities and religions, decentralised violence carried out by militias and directed towards citizens, increased involvement by non-state actors such as mercenaries and private armies and by transnational interests such as peacekeepers and NGOs. Kaldor's argument is critiqued by Hirst (2001) however who posits that 'new wars' aren't really new at all, illustrating his point through the examples of the Spanish civil war and the 1948 Israeli-Arab war in which Israeli militias forced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes. Downey and Murdock (2003) also argue that the concept of 'new wars' has been undermined by the realities of the Gulf War, the Arab-Israeli war and the Iran-Iraq war (p 72). They instead identify 'new wars' as characterised by a globalisation

of guerrilla warfare as illustrated by the attacks of 9/11, car bombings in Bali and Mombasa and the US led War on Terror. Webster (2003) for his part argues that the post-cold war era of 'new wars' is characterised by the triumph of neoliberalism, the accelerated speed of globalisation with its integration and fragmentation of the world and radical reduction in time and space constraints, a saturation of information and communications technologies and a special concern for the media (p 57). Within this milieu he states that the media play an integral role in both the conduct and even the commencement of war. Webster argues that the historical association between war and the media was one characterised by the willing conscription of the media to the war effort in support of the state. In contrast, he posits that 'new wars' or 'information war' represent a radical change in the role of the media which he argues is much more ambivalent and ambiguous.

Freedman (2006) argues that the shift to more irregular and asymmetric forms of warfare has consequences for thinking about the role of information and in particular the "cognitive domain" of conflict (p 19). In irregular warfare, he argues, physical superiority is of little value without an advantage in the information environment and a recognition of the importance of managing and influencing perceptions. Ronfeldt and Arquilla (2001) developed the concept of 'netwars' which focuses on the ability of multiple actors, individuals and organisations to communicate and coordinate their campaigns online and in dispersed form with no central command (p 6). Drawing on these perspectives of the importance of information in contemporary conflict, the concept of fourth-generation warfare

(4GW) developed by William Lind (2004), highlights the loss of a monopoly on war by the state as they increasingly fight irregular opponents in a war of cultures rather than territory (p 13). Within this context, Freedman argues, the cognitive domain takes on increasing significance with a greater appreciation for the role of established belief systems and preconceived views of the world upon the interpretation of information. Freedman is critical of the concept of 4GW however for ignoring history and like the concept of RMA, creating a binary between regular war and irregular warfare rather than recognising them as parallel developments. However, he concedes that its prescriptive aspects should not be neglected entirely. Hammes (2005) in discussing 4GW notes that it spans the spectrum of human activity - political, economic, social and military delivering different messages to different target audiences. These messages he states, serve three purposes; to break the enemy's will, maintain the will of its own people and ensure neutrals remain neutral or provide tacit support to the cause (p 190). The concept of 4GW recognises culture as a strategic factor that can influence the cognitive dimension with a recognition of the importance of established worldviews in making sense of events (Freedman, 2006). Culture as Freedman reminds us, is not a fixed entity however, but rather an amalgamation of language, traditions, religions, social structures and political values and so the question becomes, to what degree is culture or some element that constitutes it, politicised, differentiating one group from another (p 22). Culture and any cognitive influence it might elicit is always in a process of flux and is shaped by everyday beliefs and experience, and by competing information and explanations

as disseminated by multiple media platforms across a hybrid media ecology (ibid).

2.5. THE CONTEMPORARY MEDIA ECOLOGY

The hybrid advancement of communications technologies in the 21st century have had a significant impact on military attempts at impression management and upon strategic communications practices more broadly. Schleifer (2007, p 160) posits that the messages conveyed by governments and militaries over the past 100 years have remained largely static, it is merely the means by which they can be disseminated that have been altered significantly by technological advances which facilitate communication with much wider audiences and individuals. Shaw (2007) contends however that “media as a whole can no longer be mobilised as vehicles for one-sided propaganda, as they often were in the 20th century” (p 133). Although propaganda efforts may still continue through military and state sources, the public, Shaw argues, now has greater access to copious and divergent sources of information to counteract this. Whilst military weapons capabilities may reflect a significant asymmetry between combatants, Matheson and Allan (2009, p 18) argue there can be no corresponding assumption that this will engender long term success in the waging of modern information war. As Brown (2002) posits,

Although the literature tends to place weight on the ability of military and governmental actors to shape news media access to information, it should be recognised that these efforts at

management are happening in an environment where technology is working against that control (p 5).

Thus, within this hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013) in which new technologies, new media and mainstream media coincide, militaries are now increasingly concerned with developing sophisticated media strategies to legitimate wars to their publics (Maltby and Keeble, 2007).

New communications technologies have presented both challenges and opportunities to the strategic communications strategies of military organisations. Communications technologies which have the potential to allow journalists greater independence from the military and which have cemented their ubiquity in the theatre of war have created significant concerns amongst the military, namely the increased potential for the compromise of operational security through the release of sensitive information and the destructive nature of graphic images of casualties which may erode public support and jeopardise their ability to fight and win wars (Rid and Hecker, 2009). Whilst new media technologies have presented new challenges in the militaries' ability to censor and control the flow of information, Rid (2007) argues that this information revolution, although exerting significant pressure upon the military to act, has also provided it with a new means to *react* (emphasis added). Maltby (2012b, p 36) takes this point further, arguing that rather than the media being influenced by their interaction with the military, the military have ordered and structured their media operations in response to the nature of the media environment. This may be illustrated by

the incorporation by modern democratic militaries in the US, Canada, Europe, Israel and Australia to name but a few, of new media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and blogs into their communication strategies in order to communicate directly with both their publics and the media. Thus, the strategic communications practices of the military are not merely reactive to media reportage but rather proactive in an effort to guide and control their impression management and the communication of their activities to their audiences and publics alike. The affordances of new communications technologies in tandem with the emergence of user-generated content, eye witness reports and soldiers accounts, have served to undermine military attempts to control information and definitions of their activities in the media, placing an onus upon the military to orientate their strategic communications strategies towards one characterised by “proactive, rapid and open engagement in order to avoid the generation of suspicion and mistrust among journalists” (Maltby, 2012b, p 35). Maltby highlights a cognisance within the British military that the historical antagonism towards the media and the lack of funding and importance placed upon media engagement in the past have been instrumental in creating an impression of the military as secretive and uncooperative (ibid). Thus, new media technologies which can facilitate direct communication between militaries, their citizenry and the mainstream media alike may represent an opportunity for them to build trust and legitimacy with their audiences.

Whilst some scholars herald the unique potential of new media technologies to counter official military narratives others highlight the appropriation of these

technologies by states and militaries as tools of both impression management and surveillance. Kaempf (2016, p 19) argues that states and militaries over the course of the 21st century have maintained significant influence over the dissemination of information on their activities in the mainstream news media, a practice that is most evident he argues, in times of conflict. This influence is enacted through a variety of mechanisms also evident throughout the 20th century, that of censorship, denial of access to the theatre of war and embed programs (Carruthers, 1998). Kaempf (2016) highlights however that the diversification of media and information sources have empowered non-state actors and citizens to become producers of content which may challenge official state or traditional narratives. New media technologies, he argues, prove significantly more difficult for state actors to influence and control and can be a strategic tool with which non-state actors may counter state influence and framing efforts, citing the examples of protesters in Iran, Egypt and Tunisia who used these tools to organise support and mass protests against their governments (p 22). Kaempf does acknowledge however that states may also take advantage of these new media affordances in order to produce their own content independent of traditional media verification and gatekeeping processes (p 23). He cites the example of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) who, during its military campaign in Lebanon in 2008 banned all foreign media from the theatre of war and conducted the entirety of its campaign, including press conferences through social media platforms (Bennett, 2013 in Kaempf, 2016). Several scholars have expressed their concern about how quickly powerful actors such as militaries have appropriated digital media within their field of control (Deibert, 2003; Hoskins and

O'Loughlin, 2015). The increase in the use of new media technologies for the purposes of surveillance by states and militaries have also been highlighted, such as the monitoring, identification and arrest of protesters in Iran and Syria through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Kaempf, 2016; Deibert, 2003).

The emergence of the internet has more broadly been viewed as a threat to the monopoly of public monologues previously held by both states and militaries and large media institutions. Rid and Hecker (2009) have stated that “the emergence of the internet is arguably the most significant technological development in communication in human history” (p 25-26). They highlight the transition from a communications environment characterised by mass monologue and digital monologue at the turn of the century to one characterised by ‘interactivity’ and ‘user-generated content’ from 2002 onwards (p 6-7). Shepherd and Hamilton (2016, p 14) propose that digital new media technologies have resulted in a structural shift from a multipolar to a heteropolar global media landscape whilst Kaempf (2016) contends that the transformation of the global media landscape has had a fundamental impact upon the relationship between the media and global politics “creating a more multifaceted, complex, diverse, hyper-mediated reality through which world politics are acted out” (p 14). The internet affords the ability for new independent media outlets to enter the media environment, who, argue Limor and Nossek (2006), are not governed by the traditional and ethical codes that govern traditional professional journalism. This they contend may create a

challenge to military organisations who must engage with these channels of unknown operators free of such constraints (p 497). From the military perspective the development of new technologies which facilitate citizen production and debate represents a further complication in their endeavours to control information about their activities. Eyewitness footage, on the ground citizen journalists and indeed individual soldiers with smartphones may undermine their official narratives and challenge operational and strategic goals through the release of sensitive information. For the media, these developments may challenge their ability to set the media agenda or highlight any gaps or inaccuracies in their reportage of events leading to questions of legitimacy and professionalism on their part. Chris Cramer, CNN International president (2004) is quoted in Matheson and Allan (2009, p 122) as referring to a kind of 'digital anarchy' in which the demand upon the media to be the first to break a news story results in news organisations reproducing and broadcasting both 'terrorist videos' and also state-sanctioned violence such as the spectacle of the Shock and Awe campaign at the outset of the war in Iraq in 2003, thus allowing both violent insurgents and militaries to set the news agenda as a result of the contemporary pressures for immediacy, compelling visuals and dramatic events.

Public expectations for live and immediate information have been heightened by digital technologies and present a challenge to both the military and the media in effectively meeting their institutional objectives. Curtis (2007, p 189) states that

there is an increasing link between the military and entertainment industries. He argues that research needs to take account of the ways in which imagery and products of the culture industry are regularly used by militaries and that individual actors within the military-industrial-media-entertainment network (MIME-Net) system are now losing their relative autonomy and are combining in one networked system (p 189). In support of this argument, Kaempf (2016) cites the example of the US State Department's 2008 partnership with Google, Facebook, YouTube, MTV, Flowcast, CNN, NBC, MTV and Columbia Law School in founding the 'Alliance of Youth Movements', an initiative which trains youth groups to promote freedom and justice against authoritarian regimes (Louw, 2013, cited in Kaempf, 2016). Traditional mainstream media in the 21st century continue to utilise the military as a significant source of information both through traditional military channels but also through the incorporation of images, footage and text directly from military social media feeds. Maltby and Keeble (2007) argue that if journalistic information about war is contingent upon geographical, technological and political access, then "the use of military and government institutions as news sources remains fundamental to the production of war news" (p 5). Advances in communications technologies throughout the 21st century have resulted in heightened visibility of military activity and the need for these institutions to engage in effective media management despite the risks posed. Maltby (2012b) acknowledges that militaries remain open to risks of unpredictable actions occurring and a fluctuating control over information being released. A stark example of this is the release of the photos from the US controlled Abu Ghraib prison of prisoners being abused in 2003. Thus, by facilitating access to

and promoting some of their activities they lose autonomy and control of information released about *all* of their activities (p 96). In the contemporary communications environment, militaries must balance the benefits of enhanced media engagement both through MSM and SNSs with these risks. It is not possible to exert full control over information in the contemporary communications environment. There will always be seepage in the form of unfavourable visuals and content disseminated by both citizen and mainstream media. In this climate, formulating careful, deliberative and strategic messaging is essential in gaining support and legitimacy in the eyes of target audiences.

2.6. STRATEGIC NARRATIVE

As outlined in the previous sections, the contemporary nature of warfare which operates within and through a highly complex media ecology requires the acquisition and preservation of public support and the simultaneous undermining of one's adversaries. The concepts of RMA, 4GW and counterinsurgency all acknowledge the importance of persuasion and perceptions in winning "hearts and minds" and as essential to success in contemporary conflict (Lind, 2004; Hammes, 2005). De Graaf et al. (2015, p 3) argue that one of the ways in which governments and policymakers achieve this is by "creating stories" to help both domestic and international audiences to comprehend their actions. O'Tuathail (2002) also refers to the assemblage of storylines but combines this with the concept of narrative. "Storylines are sense-making organisational devices tying the different elements of a policy challenge together into a reasonably coherent

and convincing narrative” (p 617). The concept of ‘strategic narrative’ was outlined by Freedman in his 2006 monograph in which he described narratives as “compelling storylines which could explain events convincingly and from which inferences could be drawn (2015, p 19). Success in contemporary conflict for Freedman lies in strategic narrative.

What is essential to acknowledge about strategic narratives is that they are products of significant deliberation and design. They are often nurtured by political elites to provoke a particular response, opinion or feeling which is beneficial to their goals (Freedman, 2006, 2015; De Graaf et al., 2015). Strategic narratives are employed by political actors to legitimate themselves and their actions and to delegitimise their adversaries. Betz (2008, 2015) is in agreement that strategic narratives are purposeful and deliberately constructed. He describes them as multi-layered, interlocking and coherent, drawing upon current ideas and thoughts, they “express a sense of identity and belonging and communicate a sense of cause, purpose and mission” (2008, p 515). The key underlying premise in the concept of strategic narratives is that humans make sense of war and conflict through stories. Actors reflexively formulate and project these stories to make intelligible and legitimise the use of force. They may draw both upon rational argument but also may appeal to emotion. In order for these stories to resonate with publics and be convincing, they must reflect the national culture of norms, values and experiences of the intended audience (Freedman, 2015; De Graaf et al., 2015, p 8). In short, context and content are imperative to successful strategic narratives.

The concept of strategic narrative may be extended beyond its use by solely political actors within the domain of war and conflict. Miskimmon et al. (2015, p 58) distinguish their approach from that of Betz (2008, 2015) and Freedman (2006, 2015) through a broader conceptualisation of strategic narrative which includes a consideration of three different forms of narratives: 1) system narratives which refer to the past, present and future of the international system as a whole, 2) identity narratives that set out the identity and character of actors within the system and 3) policy narratives which set out specific domains such as war, climate change and the economy (see also Roselle et al., 2014). Essential for Miskimmon et al. (2015) are the ways in which these narratives intertwine or diverge, arguing that war should not be treated in isolation but rather the focus should be upon how political actors and others bring the concepts of identity, ethics, and interests together to influence people's understanding of the world and to mobilise support. The three key elements which define strategic narratives are first, that they do not emerge naturally but rather are designed by actors with an intention or goal in mind, second, their temporal dimension, in that they invoke the past to make sense of the present and to make predictions of the future, and third that these narratives offer a shared meaning of the past and present and a definition of who 'we' are, creating a shared identity often created through reference to culturally significant images and texts (Miskimmon et al., 2013; Manor and Crilley, 2018). Further, as acknowledged by Miskimmon et al. (2015) and Roselle et al. (2014) the contemporary complex media ecology influences the construction and projection of these narratives.

The complexity of the contemporary media landscape marked by the emergence of new media technologies has had a significant impact on global politics and political communication. The proliferation of smartphones, SNSs, and interactive media formats create an increased need for actors to employ strategic narratives for the purposes of support and legitimacy. Digital communications technologies afford political actors with the opportunity to project their strategic narratives to a much broader audience in real time, in a two-way flow of communication. Miskimmon et al. (2013) highlight the importance of the type of media utilised to project strategic narratives and how this may impact upon the construction of the message. This research provides an empirical account of the novel opportunities SNSs provide for the formation and dissemination of strategic narratives on popular social media platform Facebook, contributing to an understanding of the ways in which the medium and its unique characteristics, impacts upon the nature of the narrative.

Essential to any study of the projection of strategic narratives on a social media platform is a consideration of the role of images. In their discussion of the concept of strategic narratives Betz (2008, 2015), Freedman (2006, 2015) and De Graaf et al. (2015) do not extend their analysis to an in-depth discussion of images. As Crilley (2015, p 331) rightly asserts, contemporary processes of communication have an inherently visual element. This is especially true of digital communication and in particular, SNSs. Miskimmon et al. (2013) for their part acknowledge the

nuanced relationship between images and narratives, arguing that in an increasingly visual media ecology we must account for the role of images in sustaining or challenging narratives in international relations. Swimelar (2018) identifies four primary reasons why images can effectively communicate strategic narratives. 1) 'images can visually tell a story, through communicating the causes and effects of a particular action', 2) 'images can make important claims about power, who holds it, who does not and how we should respond to it', 3) 'they can also provide evidence for claims and actions that are crucial for an actor in telling a story and in trying to convince an audience' and 4) they can elicit an 'emotional force or resonance' for the viewer (p 182). Gow and Michalski (2008, p 2) highlight the importance of images and the types of narrative they determine, arguing that "they are shortcuts to understanding and so at the heart of the competition for hearts and minds in different quarters in modern war". Hansen (2011) in her study of visual securitisation also refers to the ability of the visual to 'cut short rational deliberation' and to mobilise the support of citizenry. There is broad consensus across the literature on the ability of images to provoke an emotional response in the viewer (Hansen, 2011; Gow and Michalski, 2008; Miskimmon et al., 2013; Lilleker, 2019). However, no image exists in a vacuum. As Campbell asserts, the meaning of visuality is always delivered through 'mixed media' as an image is significantly affected by title, caption and the text that surrounds its presentation as read within a particular historical, political, and social context (2004, 2007). Any response elicited by an image relies upon the interaction between the image and the nature and values of the person viewing it (Lilleker, 2019, p 47). Further, this research project concurs with the theorisation of the image set forth by

O'Loughlin (2011) and Miskimmon et al. (2013), that it is not simply the content of an image that is significant but rather the broader narratives they represent. Images are embedded in narratives and thus the study of images must take into account the images themselves, their accompanying text and the 'explicit as well as implicit linkages to a larger political story' (Freistein and Gadinger 2019, p 224) What the content represents will affect how the image is interpreted and understood by the viewer. This research project understands narrative as stories told through visual media such as photographs, infographics and memes which link and give meaning to actors, their intentions, and motivations as well as the activities they are involved in (Crilley et al. 2020). This project contributes to the literature by providing an empirical study of the projection of strategic visual narratives by a military actor on Facebook, taking into account in the analysis, the content of the image, their accompanying text titles and their linkages to the larger political story whilst being sensitive to the architecture of the platform through which they are disseminated. Although SNSs may provide political actors with new and novel avenues upon which to project strategic narratives, success is by no means guaranteed. Actors are constrained by the historical and cultural contexts within which they operate (Miskimmon et al., 2012). The new media environment has provided a platform for smaller actors to challenge and counter established narratives, and as the audience online has grown exponentially, it is increasingly difficult to craft messages that will be agreeable to all those that see it. Thus, narratives need to be purposeful and carefully planned. Within the military context, strategic narratives may be practiced and remediated through strategic communication.

2.7. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

The concepts of strategic narrative and strategic communication share several similarities. They both represent purposive, intention driven efforts by actors to persuade and/or influence target publics in service of their goals. They seek to identify and build legitimacy with audiences and are bound by the environments within which they operate (Ihlen and Verhoeven, 2015). Whilst strategic narratives centre upon the broader international system and the state and its aims, strategic communication, in contrast, relates to how an organisation identifies and promotes itself in service of its organisational goals. As argued by Hallahan et al. (2007), strategic communication is about “informational, persuasive, discursive, as well as relational communication when used in a context of the achievement of an organisation’s mission” (p 17). Within a military context, however, this distinction between strategic narrative and strategic communication becomes less defined as the military institution seeks not only to legitimate itself in the eyes of its public but also to support national objectives and to enact the states’ foreign policy. From a military perspective, Halloran (2007) describes strategic communication as a means to persuade the nations’ citizens to support state policy “so that a national will is forged to accomplish national objectives” (p 5). Paul (2010) is in agreement that military strategic communication should serve not just organisational goals but rather should be a whole of government approach to the challenges faced by a nation (p 12). Thus, StratCom within the military context can act as a tool to remediate state strategic narratives, communicating, defending and legitimating policy to its target audiences.

Critical to both strategic narratives and strategic communication is an emphasis on influence, legitimacy building and meaning making (Hallahan et al., 2007; Iheln and Verhoeven, 2015). Within an organisational context, strategic communication describes a process whereby an actor intentionally attempts to communicate or create meaning and to impact upon public debate (Rosengren, 2000; Hallahan et al., 2007; Iheln and Verhoeven, 2015; Holtzhausen and Zerfass, 2015). In order to gain a deeper understanding of strategic communication and its impact upon society, it's essential to inquire as to how its practitioners reinforce certain dominating realities or truths and how these processes have implications for issues of power (Heide, 2009; Iheln and Verhoeven, 2015). van Ruler & Verčič (2005) in their reflective model of communication management, describe strategic communication as being “engaged in constructing society by making sense of situations, creating appropriate meanings out of them and looking for acceptable frameworks and enactments” (p 266). It is however, also important to acknowledge that strategic communication is a rich and multi-dimensional concept. The term ‘strategic’ often provokes negative connotations and has attracted criticism of the ability of powerful actors and organisations to utilise their resources to manipulate their environments and to skew public debate (Habermas, 1979) However, strategic communication can be utilised by a multitude of actors, not only the powerful and political but also by non-profit organisations, activists and social movements challenging the status quo (Holtzhausen and Zerfass, 2015; Iheln and Verhoeven, 2015; Hallahan et al., 2007). Further, strategic communication may not necessarily be manipulative or

be reduced to simple binaries of good or bad. It is the manner in which it's used that will determine these judgements. Hallahan et al. (2007) further qualify, that communications practitioners may determine that being inclusive and collaborative may better serve their goals than being entirely manipulative or propagandistic, whilst also rejecting the idea that 'strategic' necessarily implies asymmetric communication (p 14). Although persuasion remains critical to strategic communication, this inclusive and collaborative approach may be considered as a prudent one in the conduct of strategic communication efforts, particularly across new media platforms.

2.8. MILITARY USE OF SNSs AS A TOOL OF STRATCOM

Within the complex contemporary media ecology characterised by a plurality of information sources that can facilitate two-way communication, any comprehensive control and regulation of communication is largely unachievable. This is particularly true of liberal democratic societies. Where in the past propaganda efforts were facilitated by more homogenous societies shaped by mass media, efforts to control how a message is shaped, used and interpreted have been greatly undermined by the growth and diversity of the media system and in particular by the rise in digital technologies (Gow and Michalski, 2008, p 4). As Halloran (2007) asserts, there is no such institution as "the media", it is too diverse, unpredictable and competitive to be characterised as an institution (p 14). Contemporary communication is a two way, dialogic and participatory process. Within this climate, organisations such as the military compete for

visibility, attention and support from their target publics whilst their messaging may also reach unintended audiences on a national and international scale. As such, it has become increasingly important to formulate deliberate and thoughtful strategic communication (Hallahan et al., 2007) and to adopt hybrid media strategies whereby messaging is disseminated across multiple channels such as traditional mainstream television, radio, newspapers, outdoor advertising and of course on the internet and social network sites. For Holtzhausen (2008), social media affords strategic communications practitioners with the opportunity to engage in a more holistic approach that allows for both persuasive and collaborative communication in service of their mission.

The public will decide whether or not to bestow legitimacy and credibility upon their government and their military. One manner in which to promote these perceptions is through the proactive sharing of information. SNSs afford the military with a unique platform upon which to promote their actions and the policies of the state, directly engaging with their target audiences whilst bypassing traditional mainstream media and geographical limitations. It further allows the military to potentially reach much larger audiences with its strategic messaging and to encourage them to become proponents of it through routine social media practices of liking, sharing and commenting upon their content. As argued by Lewis and Nichols (2015), the goal of utilising social media as a tool of strategic communication is to encourage positive communication about the organisation from individuals from *outside* the organisation (p 551, emphasis added). In other words, SNSs facilitate the potential to acquire advocates for the military who will

in turn share their strategic messaging with friends, family and colleagues on its behalf. Speaking from a military perspective, Veerasamy and Labuschagne (2018, p 5) argue that the aim of social media within the military is to “affect the perceptions, attitude and behaviour of certain target groups” (public, troops, opposing forces) “in order to communicate; exchange, coordinate and complete activities”. They describe social media as a ‘weaponisation tool’ that can shape the human mind and affect cognition, beliefs and behaviours of benefit to military objectives. In contrast to this perspective, this research project recognises that audiences are not necessarily easily manipulated or influenced, however, what is of interest here is what the military *perceives* as the potential affordances of social media for their strategic communication efforts.

Nissen (2015) argues that social media should be viewed within the broader framework of StratCom and be employed in line with strategic narratives (p 47). Communicative actions taken as part of a strategy or operation are ‘storied’ and feed into the broader overarching strategic narrative. Each micro story disseminated through SNSs by the military can project a core element of the overall narrative either explicitly or implicitly (ibid). Veerasamy and Labuschagne (2018) too, point to the utilisation of social media to create narratives that can influence and manage perceptions. Thus, the military can remediate the states strategic narrative through its own strategic communication online with its audiences. Both Nissen (2015) and Veerasamy and Labuschagne (2018) acknowledge that disseminating narratives on military SNSs involves risks as they can never maintain full control over the narrative. Content may be reworked

or edited in ways unintended by the military by adversaries online, its narratives may be contested and different audience groups may interpret the narratives in complex and different ways that impact upon their sense-making capabilities. Another key question is how the military might gain and sustain audience attention across a multitude of fragmented platforms and to have an effect. What strategies might they employ? This project seeks to make an empirical contribution to these questions through an examination of the perceived affordances of social media as tool of military strategic communication and of the strategic communication practices carried out by a military institution on popular SNS, Facebook.

This chapter has served to illustrate the long-standing complex and interdependent nature of the military-media relationship as both endeavour to meet their institutional goals whilst also tracing the historical ties between the development of military and communications technologies. It outlined perspectives on the nature of contemporary warfare and the complex media ecology and the ways in which these conditions have altered military communications practices. It highlighted the importance of well-structured strategic narratives in order to garner public support for the military and the manner in which strategic communication may be used to remediate state strategic narratives. Although there are continuities in the manner in which military actors have attempted to utilise the media in service of their goals over the past 100 years, their use of SNSs represent an augmentation to the nature of military StratCom. This is not to suggest that SNSs can in and of themselves

influence an awaiting naive audience. They do not exist in a vacuum but rather their use as a tool of military StratCom is complex and nuanced as they interact and intertwine with more traditional forms of communication. StratCom efforts are disseminated across multiple media platforms both “new” and “old”, however, digital communications technologies and in particular SNSs afford military actors with the ability to communicate with their target audiences directly, either bypassing traditional MSM or impacting upon their agendas in an effort to influence perceptions on the nature of the institution and the validity of state foreign policy. The following chapter grounds these developments within the theoretical conceptions of mediatisation, the relationship between technology (and in particular, media technologies) and society, the hybrid media system and a communicative affordances approach to the use of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom.

CHAPTER THREE: BUILDING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This research project addresses concepts such as the interactions between humans and technology, the mediatisation of society and of the military as an institution and the contemporary hybrid media environment. It is thus essential to address the foundational thinking underlying these concepts and their relationships, as it impacts upon the researcher's application of these theoretical approaches, the interpretation of the empirical data and the conclusions drawn from the findings. This chapter outlines the theoretical framework which informs the examination of the potential affordances of social network sites (SNSs) as a tool of military strategic communication (StratCom). The theoretical concepts of mediatisation, the hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013) and communicative affordances connect the manner in which military institutions adapt their thinking and practices to the existence of media in a complex media ecology where both old and 'new' media intertwine and multiple actors compete to control the flow of information with an understanding that the potential affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom will be dependent upon not just human action but the technological infrastructures of social media platforms in highly specific contexts. The theories were chosen to provide a more holistic understanding of the military, the contemporary media environment in which they operate and the factors which may impact upon their ability to appropriate SNSs as a tool of military StratCom.

Section one summarises the two main theoretical perspectives in the study of mediatisation, institutionalist and social constructivist, before situating this study between both approaches. The concept of mediatisation allows for an understanding of how military institutions have been altered by the media with a recognition that the media itself may in turn be influenced by the norms of military institutions. Further this approach recognises the process of mediatisation as one which reshapes the nature of communication and social interaction as older and newer media interact and intertwine. It is cognisant not only of one medium of communication, TV, mobile, print, social media but rather the hybridity and complexity of different forms of media, comprised of both human actions and technological affordances that impact socio-cultural institutions, in this instance that of the military.

Section two outlines Chadwick's Hybrid Media System Theory (2013) to illustrate the nature of the contemporary media environment in which traditional and new media co-exist and where multiple actors compete and attempt to steer information flows in service of their own strategic goals. This theory contributes to an understanding of the hybrid communications strategies of military communications practitioners which incorporate both mainstream media (MSM) and SNSs in a battle for information control that is always in flux. Finally, this section details Van Dijck and Poell's (2013) conception of social media logics to describe how social interactions have been fundamentally altered by social media which permeates all areas of public life from MSM to activism to politics.

Section three highlights the utility of an affordances approach to understanding how technology impacts the communicative practices of military institutions and the ways in which SNSs have been integrated into StratCom practice, effecting the dissemination of information and patterns of communication. An affordances approach recognises the interaction between the subjective perception of utility and the objective qualities of a technology that can alter communicative practices with a recognition that SNSs offer both high-level and low-level affordances across different platforms in highly specific contexts. This theory is useful in understanding how the technological capabilities of SNSs and military actors' intentions combine to provide the potential for a particular action or outcome.

3.2. CONCEPTUALISING MEDIATISATION

The concept of mediatisation has been utilised by various different authors in social science and cultural theory. Ernst Manheim (1933) who wrote about the changes of social relations within modernity wrought by the mass media, referred to this as the “mediatisation of direct human relationships” (p 11); Jean Baudrillard (1976, p 98) who described information as mediatized, as there exists no level of reality behind its mediation; and Jurgen Habermas (1984) who utilised the term mediatization to describe a “colonization of the life world” through power and money (in Couldry and Hepp, 2013). The term ‘mediatisation’ can be an ambiguous one, exhibiting multiple definitions and perspectives that have been used in different contexts to explicate the influence of the media upon a variety of phenomena. Lundby (2014) posits however, that the common denominator for most mediatisation research today is an emphasis on long term media related social change. In support of this, Ekström et al. (2016, p 1093) state that the mediatisation concept applies to “long-term transformations of sociocultural practices and institutions, assumed to be related to an increase in the spread and implications of media as technologies, institutions and cultural forms”. This section outlines the two significant traditions of mediatisation research, that of the institutionalist and constructivist perspectives before highlighting areas of commonality between the two, and the application of the concept of mediatisation to the study of the military adopted by this research.

3.2.1. THE INSTITUTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE

Stig Hjarvard (2008) is a key figure in the institutional approach to the study of mediatization. This approach suggests recognising the duality of media as an autonomous independent institution with a logic of its own that other social institutions must adhere to, while media also become an integral part of other social institutions such as politics, religion and militaries as more of these institutional activities are performed through the media (p 105). Hjarvard defines the mediatization of society as a process “whereby society to an increasing degree is submitted to, or becomes dependent on, the media and their logic” (p 113). The term ‘media logic’ for Hjarvard, refers to “the institutional and technological modus operandi of the media, including the ways in which media distribute material and symbolic resources and operate with the help of formal and informal rules” (ibid). Key then for Hjarvard are the relationships between the media as an institution and other social institutions and the influence of media logic upon social relations. This perspective is useful to the study of military StratCom as it conceptualises the ways in which military actors must orientate their communication strategies towards media production logics such as compelling visuals and narratives in order to increase opportunities for their messages to be disseminated through the media and to reach the widest possible audience.

Hjarvard (2008) identifies Swedish researcher Kent Asp (1986) as the first to apply the concept of mediatization to the media’s impact upon political communication as he describes a process whereby “a political system to a high degree is influenced by and adjusted to the demands of the mass media in their coverage of politics” (quoted in

Hjarvard 2008, p 106). Asp credits Norwegian sociologist Gudmund Hernes (1978) who coined the term 'media-twisted society' to elucidate a broad perspective which argues that social institutions and their relations with one another are fundamentally impacted by the media. For Hernes, from an institutionalist point of view, the key question was how the inner workings of social entities such as political institutions and schools are altered by the media (1978, p 181). As western democratic militaries are increasingly reliant upon public support in order to operate, this question underscores the ways in which these institutions and their activities have been altered by the media who act as an essential conduit for this objective. One of Hernes' key points is somewhat prophetic of the contemporary media environment as he argued 40 years ago that society has been transformed from a situation of information scarcity to one of information abundance, creating an environment where attention is a strategic resource that must be competed for (ibid).

Hjarvard draws a parallel between Hernes' perspective and that of Altheide and Snow's "ecology of communication" (1979,1988) which calls for an "analysis of social institutions transformed through the media" (1979, p 7). Through their concept of 'media logic' Altheide and Snow endeavoured to capture the ways in which the media, as a form of communication and social action, transform our perception and interpretation of the social (Hepp, 2013, p 617). They argue that this 'media logic' is not imbued in the content of media but rather in the form communication takes. The concept was utilised to highlight the media's formatting power which determines how material in the media is categorized, presented and how it portrays social experience

(Couldry and Hepp, 2013; Hjarvard, 2008), thus they posit the primacy of “form over content” (Altheide and Snow, 1988, p 206).

Hjarvard is critical of their analyses as although they mention other aspects of media logic such as technology and organisational norms, they do so superficially and as their research focus is an American one, the logic they employ is largely a commercial one (2008, p 107). Further Hjarvard’s approach to the concept of mediatisation understands the resources that the media controls as even more crucial to the process of mediatisation than the “logics’ they obey. Hjarvard posits that the impact of media influence upon institutional change remains under theorised as their primary focus rests upon the format media impose on political communication in an American context (2008, p 107). However, Altheide (2013) revisits the original concept of ‘media logic’ arguing that an inattention to the later development of the ‘ecology of communication’ has led to the existing confusion in relation to the term ‘media logic’ which now encompasses the power of emerging communication formats that have accompanied new technologies and an analysis of the media’s role in processes of social control (in Couldry and Hepp, 2013, p 198).

Hjarvard acknowledges that mediatisation is not in and of itself a universal process characterising all societies but rather it is a development primarily within modern, highly industrialised and chiefly western societies since the end of the 20th century (Hjarvard, 2008, p 113). Globalisation he argues, is related to the concept of mediatisation in that globalisation presupposes the existence of the technical means to extend

communication and interactions over long distances and also, it propels the process of mediatisation by institutionalising mediated communication and interaction in various new contexts (ibid). What is not addressed by Hjarvard's analysis are the ways in which the media itself as an institution may also be influenced by technology, globalisation and the norms and practices of other social institutions such as the state, military or non-governmental organisations. This research project in contrast, is cognisant of the complex and often interdependent nature of the relationship of institutions such as the military and the media which may impact upon one another's institutional activities. The social constructivist tradition is one that is concerned with a more holistic view of mediatisation and its impact upon the communicative construction of society.

3.2.2. THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST PERSPECTIVE

In contrast to this institutionalist perspective in mediatisation research, the social constructivist tradition sets its primary focus not upon the (mass) media as an autonomous institution but rather is concerned with everyday communication practices, particularly those related to digital media and personal communication and the changing communicative construction of culture and society (Krotz, 2009; Hepp, 2012; Hepp, 2013). This approach is one highly useful to this research which takes as its focus an empirical analysis of the use of SNSs by military institutions operating within a hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013) in which both mass media and digital media intersect and intertwine simultaneously. Within this perspective, the term mediatisation refers to the process of a communicative construction of socio-cultural reality manifested in and through various media communication (Krotz, 2009; Hepp,

2012; Hepp, 2013; Couldry and Hepp, 2013). Friedrich Krotz (2007) is a key figure in the development of an approach to mediatisation research that has a greater orientation towards communication-based action theory and cultural studies. Krotz describes mediatisation as a 'meta process' of change on par with individualisation and globalisation, it represents for him, a comprehensive frame to describe the change of culture and society in a theoretical way. Krotz posits that "mediatisation, by its very definition, is always bound in time and to cultural context" (2007, p 39). This long-term perspective conceives of mediatisation as an ongoing process throughout the history of humankind whereby the media alter human relations and behaviour and thus society and culture (Hjarvard, 2008; Hepp, 2013). Krotz argues that it is essential to reflect upon the change in communicative forms that happen in tandem with media change, rather than to consider the media institution as an isolated phenomenon. For Hepp (2013), the approach taken by Krotz to mediatisation research is in line with the argument that context free definitions of mediatisation are not appropriate and the distinction between various mediatisation processes in different contexts and time periods in a concrete descriptive manner are of vital import to mediatisation research (p 618). Although arguing from an institutionalist perspective Hjarvard also identifies the need for mediatisation research to provide concrete empirical analysis which elucidate overall developmental trends within society across different contexts (2008, p 113) thus pointing to areas of commonality between the two mediatisation research traditions.

3.2.3. BRIDGING THE INSTITUTIONALIST AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST PERSPECTIVES

In line with other scholars, this research positions itself between the institutionalist and social constructivist approaches to mediatisation research. (Schulz, 2004; Ekstöm et al., 2016). It reflects upon the ways in which military institutions have been altered by the media (and vice versa) whilst recognising the process of mediatisation as one that alters the nature of communication and social interaction as older and newer media forms interact in a hybrid media ecology. Within this context, military communications practitioners orientate their communications strategies to incorporate the affordances of new media technologies and to become media actors in their own right who can define their own socio-cultural realities. Schulz (2004) adopts the concept of mediatisation to specify in a broader sense the role of the media in social change emphasising the complexity of the mediatisation process through his description of four sub processes whereby media change human communication and interaction (Hjarvard, 2008; Hepp, 2013). These moments of mediatisation are that of 'extension', of growing capabilities due to media, 'substitution' of former non media related action becoming dependent on media or when new media takes the place of older ones, 'amalgamation', of non-mediated face to face communication and mediated communication, and 'accommodation', whereby actors adapt their thinking and practices to the existence of media. (Schulz, 2004; Hepp, 2013; Hjarvard, 2008; Ekstöm et al., 2016). Hepp (2013) identifies the complex and contradictory nature of the mediatisation concept arguing for a more social constructivist approach to mediatisation research stating that,

The aim of this kind of research is to investigate the interrelation between the change of media communication and sociocultural change as part of everyday communication practices and how the change of these practices is related to a changing communicative construction of reality. Under consideration here is not one 'classical' mass media but especially the so-called 'new' media of the internet and mobile communication. (2013, p 618)

This perspective of the construction of socio-cultural reality through specific media emphasises the complexities of both media as an institution and the role of technologies and thus is more open than the concept of "media logic". However, Couldry and Hepp argue that although the institutionalist and social constructivist research positions coexist, they have in recent years come closer to each other (p 196). As Hepp (2013) posits,

Both traditions concur in their understanding of mediatization as being a concept to capture the interrelation between the change of media and communication on the one hand, and the change of culture and society on the other hand (p 615).

Recently those within the institutionalist tradition have begun to re-evaluate the concept of 'media logic' whilst exponents of the social constructivist tradition are now emphasising the importance of the investigation of the institutional dimension of mediatisation (Hepp, 2013).

Hjarvard writing from an institutionalist perspective in 2008 in fact states that his concept of the mediatisation process shares several of the perspectives of Krotz (2007) and Schulz (2004) recognising that extension, substitution, amalgamation and accommodation are important processes of mediatisation as is empirical validation through historical, cultural and sociological analysis of mediatisation (p 110). He deviates through an institutional perspective which applies the concept of 'media logic' to analyse the interplay between the media and other social institutions. Writing several years later however in 2012, Hjarvard defines mediatisation as 'the process through which core elements of a social or cultural activity (e.g., politics, religion and education) become influenced by and dependent on the media' (p 30). This definition argues Hepp (2013) replaces the significance of 'media logic' with the institutional aesthetic and technological affordances of the media in the theorisation of mediatisation (p 618). Krotz and Hepp (2013) call for the necessity to reflect upon institutions and organisations from a social constructivist perspective arguing that mediatisation functions by what happens with communication when individuals and institutions use media and if and when society as a whole is dependent upon specific media (p 123). This point is echoed by Lundy (2009) who cautions against concentrating on one overarching 'media logic' but rather highlights the benefits of specifying how "various media capabilities are applied in various patterns of social interactions" (p 115).

Hepp (2013) attempts to theorise the concept of mediatisation by integrating both the institutionalist and social constructivist traditions offering a definition he argues, that stretches across the two. He thus defines mediatisation as,

a concept used to analyse the (long term) inter-relation between the change of media and communication on the one hand and the change of culture and society on the other hand in a critical manner (2013, p 619).

What is essential in applying the concept of mediatisation argue Ekström et al. (2016) and Hepp (2013) is both the specificity of certain media in the change of society and culture and the increasing temporal, spatial and social spread of communication in society (ibid). Ideas of nuance and complexity are essential within this conceptualisation of mediatisation as what specific kind of media and for what kind of communication are highly significant. This idea of specificity for Hepp is what separates the two traditions of mediatisation research, the institutionalist approach defining media specificity as 'media logic' and the social constructivists more openly defining this specificity as a highly contextual moment of altering communication (p 619). In an attempt to bridge this theoretical gap Hepp (2013) suggests the concept of 'moulding forces' of the media to capture the specificity of a particular media in the process of communication, cognisant of the fact that a general context free 'effect' of certain media cannot be presumed but rather we must recognise that different media shape communication in unique and different ways (p 619).

Ultimately within mediatisation research each medium is reliant upon a highly complex institutionalisation of human action both from complex organisations and individuals (Hepp, 2013, p 620). The 'moulding forces' of the media are constitutive of the technologies, infrastructures and interfaces of media communication in tandem with the actions of human actors and this has important implications for how power is

exercised and stabilised (2013, p 620). An important element of mediatisation and one particularly relevant for this research project, is the recognition of the complexity of the contemporary media environment. Throughout history there has not been a binary shift from one medium to another but rather this is an overlapping and cumulative process whereby a variety of media 'mould' the construction of reality simultaneously (Hepp, 2013). Contemporary mediatisation is characterised by various fields of culture and society communicatively constructed across a variety of media, TV, print, and the internet simultaneously. This broader understanding of mediatisation is conceptualised through the notion of 'mediatized worlds' (Hepp, 2013; Krotz and Hepp, 2013).

The conceptualisation of 'mediatized worlds' by Krotz and Hepp (2015) mirrors those of 'small life worlds' (Luckmann, 1970) or 'social worlds' (Shibutani, 1955; Strauss, 1970) which rely continually on an articulation through the media and are marked by a binding of intersubjective knowledge inventory, specific social practices and cultural thickenings (cited in Hepp, 2013, p 622). This is the level at which, Hepp argues, mediatisation becomes concrete and can be empirically studied as although it is not possible to research the mediatisation of society as a unified whole, one can investigate a mediatised world, for example a school, the stock exchange or for the purposes of this research project, a military institution. Hepp posits that such an empirical analysis can explicate the ways in which 'mediatised worlds' communicative construction is institutionalised and reified by various media and in turn how their communicative constructions also result in a change of the media themselves (ibid). Hepp (2013) identifies three aspects of 'mediatised worlds', 1) A communication network beyond the territorial, 2) various scales on a macro and micro level, and 3)

mediatised worlds are intertwined with each other and intersect. Hepp's approach is one cognisant of the hybrid and heterogeneous nature of people, media and the different uses of media across various social worlds. He utilises the term 'communicative configurations' to capture the processes of communicative interweaving that exist across various media (Hepp, 2013, p 623). Thus he posits that "a single communication network already constitutes a specific communicative figuration involving interwoven communicative actions articulated in mediatized interaction by the use of media" (ibid). Each 'communicative configuration' is characterised by a specific constellation of actors (its structural basis), thematic framing (an action guiding topic), forms of communication (communicative practices, reciprocal, produced or virtualised media), and a specifically marked media ensemble (the entirety of the media through which or in what the communicative figuration exists). These four processes Hepp states assist in the description of the ways in which existing and new media influences the communicative construction of a mediatised world (Hepp, 2013, p 624). This research project adopts Hepp's transmedial approach to mediatisation, one that is cognisant not only of one medium of communication, TV, mobile, print, social media but rather the hybridity and complexity of different forms of media, comprised of both human actions and technological affordances that impact socio-cultural institutions, in this instance that of the military. His concept of 'moulding forces' to formulate a bridge between the institutionalist and constructivist traditions offers a broader approach to 'media logic', one that recognises the nuanced and complex processes through which core elements of social or cultural activity (e.g., politics, religion and even war) become influenced by and dependent upon the media and the manner in which various kinds of media (both old and new) are applied in

various contexts for specific kinds of communication. Military communications practitioners orientate their StratCom initiatives to incorporate the affordances of new media technologies and to become media actors in their own right who can define their own socio-cultural realities. The concept of mediatisation is useful in conceptualising a process of change over time in the way military actors have altered their modes of interaction and communication. This links with Chadwick's Hybrid Media System theory (2013) which articulates how different actors from institutions to average users, (particularly within the fields of media and politics) compete to steer information flows across both traditional and newer media platforms in service of their own strategic goals.

3.3. THE HYBRID MEDIA SYSTEM

This research project recognises that SNSs do not exist in a vacuum but rather intersect and intertwine with a wide variety of media formats, all of which military actors attempt to harness to meet their institutional objectives. Chadwick et al. (2016) call for a holistic approach to media studies, one that is cognisant of both traditional and new media, their commonalities, differences, interactions and the ways in which "older" media have adapted to and integrated the logics of "newer" media (p 4). Chadwick's conceptualisation of 'media logics' resonates with Hepp's concept of the 'moulding forces' of the media (2013) as it recognises them as constitutive of the technologies, infrastructures and interfaces of media communication in tandem with the actions of human actors. Chadwick et al. (2016) define media logics as the "bundles of technologies, genres, norms, behaviours, and organisational forms- in the reflexively

connected social fields of media and politics” (ibid). Actors within this hybrid media system endeavour to steer information flows in service of their own strategic or operational goals and in ways which can either support or undermine other’s agency across both traditional and new media settings, thus creating a communications environment that is characterised by evolving relationships of adaptation, interdependence and diffusions of power. The ontology of hybridity, Chadwick argues, has a significant presence within the social sciences across a range of research highlighting the importance of examining relations between social actors and media technologies in order to understand the dynamics of power. Central to the ‘hybridity’ approach is the rejection of simple binaries of either/or, in relation to older and newer media for example, and a recognition of the constantly evolving and complex nature of the contemporary media environment. In line with the call by Hoskins and O’Loughlin (2015) to identify the emergent fissures and hybrids within the current media ecology, Chadwick et al. (2016) draw attention “to boundaries, to flux, to in-betweenness” of older and newer media logics. This is crucial for the analysis of military StratCom as military communications practitioners adopt a hybrid media strategy, one that incorporates both traditional MSM and SNSs to reach multiple audiences in service of their institutional goals. Further, the emergence of digital new media technologies has created both opportunities and challenges for military communications practitioners who compete with multiple actors to control the flow of information about their respective institutions.

Chadwick et al. (2016, p 7) also draw upon Altheide and Snow’s (1979) concept of “media logic” to examine the ways in which older and newer media logics shape politics

and the media's interactions in the political field. They argue that the "media logic" approach is useful as it attempts to explicate the norms that emerge in the everyday practice of media and politics and opens up avenues for in-depth qualitative analyses. However, they too highlight the limitations of the approach in its concentration on mass communication which assigns significant power to traditional media organisations and a singular media logic. In contrast, the contemporary media environment is more polycentric, or as Kaempf (2013) described it, more heteropolar, which calls, they argue, for a more expansive approach of hybrid media *logics* (emphasis in original). Media *logics* take account of the norms that develop across and between different types of media taking account of both disruptive media logics that have emerged from online networks and the enduring prestige and influence of older elite media and their adaptation to newer media logics (p 8).

Political information flows in the contemporary media environment consist of complex assemblages of individuals, groups, sites and media technologies in which the logics of newer online media are hybridised with those of traditional and print media (Chadwick et al., 2016). The ability of citizens to produce, participate and share information facilitated by digital technologies, has they argue, loosened the grip of political and journalistic elites in the dissemination of information. Chadwick et al. (2016) are cognisant however that the hybrid media system can both empower and disempower actors depending upon the context, thus participation is no guarantee of power nor does it always imply a more inclusive form of democracy (p 22-23). Although hybridity allows for the opportunity for non-elites to exert some power, political and media elites have adapted to this new environment, often integrating citizen

information and content into their own production practices. Power, resources and expertise within the hybrid media system are likewise not equally distributed amongst participants, thus the ability to intervene in information flows is likely to favour powerful elites. This is important when considering militaries as we know that they invest significant resources both human and financial into their communication strategies in this complex media ecology. However, the process of hybridisation is not a static one and as it continues to evolve, Chadwick et al. (2016) argue that the agency of citizens and elites remain in flux, highlighting the need to study specific conditions whereby hybridity empowers or disempowers (p 23-24). The hybrid approach once again rejects simple dichotomies of digital media as a force for democracy or as a tool for political elites, of the displacement of old media with new media or the absorption of new media by the mainstream. Rather the focus should be, they argue, upon the “interaction, adaptation and co evolution” of older and newer media logics” (2016, p 24).

3.3.1. SOCIAL MEDIA LOGIC

The conditions of social interactions have been fundamentally altered by social media and its logics which permeate all areas of public life impacting upon traditional print and broadcast news, activism, politics and law. Van Dijck and Poell (2013, p 2) describe social media logic as the norms, strategies, mechanisms and economies underpinning its dynamics, highlighting the complex connections between social media platforms, traditional mass media, users, technology, economies and social institutions. They argue that social media logics, rather than being separate from mass media logics are deeply entangled and mutually reinforcing whilst also being succinctly

different as they originate from a differing technological and economical lineage (p 2-3). Van Dijck and Poell also draw upon Altheide and Snow's (1979) notion of 'media logic' which posits that,

In contemporary society, every institution has become part of media culture: changes have occurred in every major institution that are a result of media logic in presenting and interpreting activity in those institutions (quoted in Van Dijck and Poell, 2015, p 4).

Implied within this notion of mass media logic, they argue, was the appearance of neutrality and independence from state or commerce by the media although in reality they gave voice to some whilst marginalising others. The power of the mass media was primarily exercised through discursive strategies and performative tactics that became naturalised within many different institutional contexts (ibid).

However as highlighted previously in this chapter, the problem with 'media logic theory' is that it does not reflect significant changes in the media environment such as the proliferation of cable television in the 1980s, the emergence of the web in the 1990s, mobile computing and interactive social media platforms at the turn of the century, and the increasing commercialisation of culture where news and information have become fused with advertising practices (Van Dijck and Poell, 2013, p 5). For Van Dijck and Poell the rise of social media platforms are just one element of a more networked society in which information and communication are increasingly defined by the affordances of web technologies. As with mass media logic, they posit that social media have the ability to transport their logic outside of the platforms that generate

them whilst at the same time naturalising their distinctive technological, discursive, economic and organisational strategies (p 5). Van Dijck and Poell (2013) identify four grounding principles of social media logic; programmability, popularity, connectivity and datafication, highlighting that rather than being distinctly separate from mass media logic they are deeply entwined.

Their definition of programmability is one partly grounded in technology as it pertains to computer codes, algorithms, interfaces and platform organisations. Van Dijck and Poell argue that social relations are reshaped and redefined by the coded instructions of algorithms employed by social media platforms, citing the examples of the “like’ function in Facebook and the LinkedIn strategy of suggesting potential social connections based on gathered data (p 5). These algorithms are thus capable of steering user experience, content and relations on these platforms. The other element to this notion of programmability refers not to technology but to human agency. This is distinct from traditional mass media logic they argue, where programmability referred to the editorial selection of scheduled content. Within the social media logic of programmability, the algorithm is programmed not only by a central agency (although they recognise this retains significant control) but it may also be shaped and steered by the users themselves who can either contribute to or resist coded instructions and algorithms. Users have the ability to manipulate information flows for example through a strategy of massive retweets to force an item to trend and gain traction across different media platforms. This notion is important to the study of the potential affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom as it recognises the way in which

communication practices online are influenced by both technology and human agency and that control of visibility and information flows online can never be guaranteed.

The social media affordance of 'popularity' is one determined by both algorithmic and socio-economic components (Van Dijck and Poell, 2013, p 6). On the one hand, each social media platform employs its own strategies for foregrounding popular items and people whilst devaluing others, whilst on the other, users can engage in concerted efforts to boost certain individuals or topics. Military communications practitioners for their part have the resources to both produce compelling content and to pay for reach. Social media platforms have identified means to boost the popularity of people or ideas, for example through Facebook 'like' scores and promoted tweets and these platforms, argue Van Dijck and Powell, become weighted towards a few users with large followings. Those that gain visibility online may also cross over to more traditional mainstream media with tweets often utilised as direct quotes by journalists (p 7). One of the most potent examples of this practice may be the discussion of former US President Donald Trump's tweets across all mainstream print and news media networks. However, the official SNSs of military institutions have also become important sources of information for journalists who may directly embed their tweets in their reportage. Thus, both mass media logic and social media logic become entangled in defining the visibility and influence of individuals and topics. They differentiate between the two however by highlighting that social media has the unique ability to track and quantify popularity whilst simultaneously attempting to influence these ratings. The ability to both measure and manipulate popularity they argue, reflects both platform affordances and user ability to push certain issues into public consciousness

such as a widespread protest movement or charity event. The logic of both mass media and social media become intertwined in the larger cultural arena where multiple discourses engage in a struggle to be made visible (ibid, p 8). This notion is important when considering the use of SNSs by military actors who garner significant online followings and utilise the affordances of these platforms to track user engagement and sentiment towards their communications efforts.

In outlining the social media affordance of 'connectivity' Van Dijck and Poell (2013) state that social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter promote their sites as enablers of networked human connections (p 8). They define 'connectivity' as a socio-technical affordance of networked platforms to connect content to users and advertisers arguing that although users can significantly contribute to content on these platforms, their "connectedness" is always mediated and defined by the platform's own apparatuses. Van Dijck and Powell distinguish their concept of 'connectivity' from the notion of "spreadability" proposed by Jenkins and Ford (2013), arguing that although recognising the importance of social connections between individuals, "spreadability" accentuates the power of audience agency at the expense of a recognition of the power of platform agency in shaping social relations. They further differentiate between mass media logic and social media logic in this context, arguing that whilst traditional mass media deal with geographically or demographically delineated audiences, social media expedite human connections, contributing to the formation of networks through automated group formation, personalised recommendations and user initiatives. As such, there is a bipolar dimension to social media logic, one that enables human connectivity whilst also pushing automated connectivity (ibid).

Van Dijck and Poell reject a binary perspective on the liberating potential of social media versus platforms' predisposition towards targeted advertising to users, instead arguing for a more holistic understanding that social media logic does both simultaneously. Sociality on social media platforms revolves around the individual rather than a specific group or location as it affords the ability to customise ones' networks based on connections with like-minded users. This is confounded, they argue, by the algorithmic strategies of social media platforms to deeply personalise and customise user experience based upon assumptions of their needs and the interests of the platform and/or advertisers (p 9). This blurs the line they argue between genuine human connections and technologically and commercially driven activities, citing the example of the ability of advertisers to target one's "friends" with products on Facebook (ibid). Military communications practitioners are also acutely aware of the benefits of micro-targeting their online communications to their specific target audiences. Although Van Dijck and Powell recognise that different platforms employ different techniques for enabling connections, they argue that their various strategies have a coherent logic and that "connectivity" within the context of network individualism and customisation are significant tools in the redefinition of boundaries between public and private and commerce and state.

In explicating the fourth element of social media logic, that of 'datafication' Van Dijck and Poell (2013) argue that within mediated communication, all content, books, music and videos are data and within social media platforms, social relations, (likes, shares, trends) all become datafied. They cite Mayer-Schonberger and Cukier (2013) who consider 'datafication' as the ability of networked platforms to render into data many

aspects of the world that have not previously been quantified, for example the metadata from mobile phones such as timestamps and GPS locations. Online social platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have developed their own strategies to monitor and predict user needs and increasingly mine user data for trends, sentiments and opinion (Van Dijck and Poell, 2013, p 10). Military strategic communications practitioners may also utilise their official SNSs as a means to track public sentiment towards the institution and its activities. Van Dijck and Poell reject the idea that social media platforms represent neutral unmediated spaces quoting Gitelman (2013) who states that “raw data is an oxymoron” to highlight that data always becomes reconfigured through social media platform mechanisms. The ability of social media platforms to track, gather and utilise user trends, mirrors, they argue, the polling strategies of traditional mass media citing the example of Twitters claims that they have now equalled Nielsen in their measurements of TV audience responses.

Van Dijck and Poell highlight that the ability to track users of social media platforms is utilised not only by the platforms themselves but also by other corporate and state entities for the purposes of real time surveillance (2013, p 10). One important aspect of this logic of ‘datafication’ is the neutrality or invisibility of its mechanics which serve as important tools in the prioritisation of certain public, private, and corporate values over others (p 11). Interactive real time interfaces, whilst empowering user participation and freedom at the same time empower social media platforms to track and exploit user activities (Chun, 2011). Van Dijck and Poell argue that within contemporary society, no institution can avoid social media logic as they have become implicated in the same media culture. As mass media adjust to new logics wrought by social media

and their impact upon communication processes, other actors, states, activists, law enforcement, and militaries can hardly escape the social media logic of programmability, popularity, connectivity and datafication as every major institution, they argue, is part of this transformation in which the social gets infiltrated by an altered media logic. Van Dijck and Poell identify the double-edged sword of empowerment of both users and platforms as a recurrent trope in the evolving joint socio-technical logics of social media (2013, p 11).

3.4. AN AFFORDANCES APPROACH FOR UNDERSTANDING THE USE OF SNSs AS A TOOL OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

An affordances approach provides a useful framework for researching how technology impacts communicative practices and to understand how SNSs in particular are integrated into the StratCom practices of militaries affecting both the dissemination of information and patterns of communication. What an affordance approach offers to this research is a consideration not only of the ways in which military actors may perceive and approach social media but also the impact of the technology of the platforms and non-human actors such as algorithms on the potential affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom. Majchrzak et al. (2013, p 2) define a technological affordance as “the mutuality of actor intentions and technology capabilities that provide the potential for a particular action”. The origins of the affordance approach lie in Gibson’s (1979) study of what the environment offers or furnishes an animal (p 127). Gibson argues that what we perceive when we look at an object are not their innate qualities but rather their affordances (p 134). An affordance effaces the distinction between subjective and

objective being both a fact of the environment and a fact of behaviour, it is both physical and psychical, constituted by both the environment and the observer (Gibson, 1979, p 128). Gibson (1979) conceptualised an affordance as relational, triggered by “the particular ways in which an actor, or set of actors, perceives and uses an object” (p 145). Subsequent scholarship has also taken a relational view of affordances to understand how individuals interact with technology, arguing that affordances exist in the interaction between an individual's subjective perception of utility and objective qualities of a technology (Leonardi, 2011; Schrock, 2015; Evans et al., 2016). In other words, the materiality of technology may influence but does not determine, the possibilities for users (Evans et al., 2016, p 37). An affordance represents a potentiality activated by certain groups, not a latent innate capability of a technology (Majchrzak et al., 2013, p 39).

An affordance approach is also one which bridges the theoretical gap between technological determinist perspectives which view technology as a medium with intrinsic qualities capable of altering “patterns of perception steadily and without any resistance” (McLuhan and Lapham, 1994, p 18) and that of social constructivism which focuses upon the influence of social and cultural forces upon the development and use of technology (Schrock, 2015, p 1231). The affordances approach in contrast focuses upon the relational actions that occur between individuals and technologies to better explicate the ways in which technology impacts upon communication practices (Faraj and Azad, 2012; Schrock, 2015). The concept of affordances is one with multiple definitions and is, rather than a theory, considered to be a process concept useful for depicting the specific way things vary (McLeod and Pan, 2005; Evans et al., 2016). In

exploring the affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom, this dissertation follows Evans et al. (2016) clarification of the concept as “the multifaceted relational structure between an object/technology and the user that enables or constrains potential behavioural outcomes in a particular context” (p 36). This approach is cognisant of the attributes and abilities of users, the materiality of technologies and the contexts of technology in analysing the relationship between all three elements (ibid).

Evans et al. (2016) argue that critical to this affordance approach is understanding the multidimensionality of affordances and recognising their role in mediating the object-outcome link so one does not make a deterministic argument whereby an object leads to an outcome without any indication of the processes that led to this relationship (p 39). An affordance may invite a particular outcome but should not be considered as an outcome itself. Evans et al. (2016) offer clarification of this point by stating that social media affordances such as visibility and searchability make certain actions possible for instance, locating a photograph. This is the goal or outcome whilst visibility and searchability reflect the means through which this goal was achieved, or in other words they reflect the relational link among the object, user and outcome (p 40). It is important to recognise that within this approach different choices, action possibilities, goals and outcomes are possible and are contingent upon the actor, the technology and the context. The affordances approach offers a valuable high-level framework for researching how technologies such as mobile media are integrated into the StratCom routines of militaries affecting their subsequent patterns of communication.

A focus upon communicative affordances has emerged from recent scholarship which applies the affordance approach to social and mobile media to explain the ways in which social platforms and networks alter communicative practices (Earl and Kimport, 2011; Majchrzak et al., 2013; Schrock, 2015). The term communicative affordances for Bucher and Helmond (2017) emphasises how affordances are functional in the sense that they can both enable and constrain actions and are relational in that the affordances of an object may be different for one species than for another (p 151). An application of the communicative affordances approach to this research project provides a useful foundation for modelling the affordances of SNSs and digital technology in the context of strategic military communication and reputation management and may contribute to a broader theory of how these affordances impact upon and augment military communication practices. Schrock (2015, p 1232) defines communicative affordances as “an interaction between subjective perceptions of utility and objective qualities of the technology that alter communicative practices or habits”. He argues that communication has been implicit in definitions of social affordances that describe perceptual cues which enable individuals to interpret and act differently on their social networks (ibid). This is in line with the relational perspective of affordances which are focused upon coordinated actions, guided by information in service of a goal/outcome. A communicative affordances framework provides a way of examining the habitual use of SNSs by military StratCom practitioners in service of their goals, in particular to garner visibility and sustain support from multiple audiences for their activities.

A communicative affordances approach is one that not only recognises that affordances are highly context specific but also that there are both high-level and low-level affordances that emerge for different actors within these contexts. Bucher and Helmond (2017) describe high-level affordances as the kind of dynamics and conditions that are enabled by technical devices and SNSs whilst boyd (2011) argues that higher-level affordances introduce new opportunities for communication and interaction. Evans et al. (2016) suggest a number of high-level communicative affordances such as anonymity, persistence and visibility, boyd (2011) offers persistence, replicability, scalability and searchability in her study of networked publics, and Treem and Leonardi (2012) highlight visibility, editability, persistence and association in their study of the impact of social media on organisational communication. For Schrock (2015) communicative affordances are more than 'buttons, screens and operating systems' (p 1233). They exist on this higher level in the kinds of communicative practices they enable or constrain (Bucher and Helmond, p 240). In contrast to these more abstract high-level affordances, research into low-level affordances focuses upon the materiality or technical features of a particular social media platform, its interface, screens, and buttons (Bucher and Helmond, 2017; McVeigh-Schultz and Baym, 2015). A consideration of the technical features of a platform are worthwhile argue Bucher and Helmond (2017), as a feature such as the 'like' button is not just a feature, it mediates and communicates and thus has meaning. It both suggests and affords different things to different users in different contexts. For a traditional end user, it may be a means to express solidarity and support, for a military communications practitioner it may be a means to quantify engagement and gauge sentiment. Ellison and Vitak (2015) also advocate for an approach that considers the

high-level affordances of social media in conjunction with a consideration of specific platform features such as the profile in their study of social capital processes. For Schrock (2015), the power of the affordances approach is in the “fit” between real world practices and the qualities of technologies, as interpreted by different users in particular contexts (p1239).

An emphasis on users’ own perceptions and accounts of technology are central to a communicative affordances approach. Naggy and Neff (2015, p 6) assert that affordances are not only related to the material design features of a particular device or social media platform but also to the psychological characteristics of human-technology interaction. They coin the term ‘imagined affordances’ to explicate how affordances emerge between users’ perceptions and expectations, the materiality and functionality of technologies and between the intentions of designers (p 2). Although this research project is not concerned with the intentions and perceptions of designers of social media technologies, this concept is useful in examining the perceptions and attitudes held by military communications practitioners and how these may shape their approach to SNSs as a tool of StratCom. For Naggy and Neff (2015), it is imperative to address the cognitive and emotional processes as constitutive of the communicative affordances of technologies. McVeigh-Schultz and Baym (2015) also argue that both the materiality of social media platforms and the sense-making processes of users should be considered when conceptualising affordances. They propose the term ‘vernacular affordance’ to illustrate ‘how people themselves understand affordances in their encounters with technology’ (p 1). They utilise interviews or ‘vernacular accounts’ as indicative of the ways in which people make sense of and negotiate technology in

their everyday lives. The key point for McVeigh-Schultz and Baym (2015) is that the action possibilities afforded by technologies are not static but are grounded in individuals' own experiences and perceptions and their interactions with the materiality of SNSs.

The communicative affordances of social media platforms are thus never predetermined and are contingent upon human action and perception as well as non-human factors such as algorithms and automated bots all operating within a complex media ecology. Bucher and Helmond (2017) advocate for a relational and multi-layered approach to the concept of affordances while retaining a sense of platform sensitivity by taking the specificities of different platforms into account (p 242). They highlight the 'multi-directionality' of agency and connectivity at work in approaching the concept of affordances through an emphasis on the complex assemblage of different users both human (designers, end users, researchers, platform owners, advertisers, and within the context of this research, militaries), and non-human (bots, AI and algorithms). Van Dijck (2012, p 142) also highlights that SNSs are at the heart of a shifting dynamic where multiple agents human and non-human of various sizes (individuals, groups, collectives, societies) are sharing this environment and building a connective space for communication. The technologies themselves are learning, adapting, and changing along with users they share this environment with (Naggy and Neff 2015). Thus, a relational and multi-layered approach to communicative affordances takes account of both human perception and action and the materiality of the environment in creating a complex set of opportunities or constraints for communicative action.

Affordances are neither stable nor uniform. They may afford differently based on the individual users and amid a diverse set of circumstances facilitating an array of possible outcomes (Evans et al., 2016). Davies and Chouinard (2016) demarcate the mechanisms of affordance as 'artifacts that request, demand, allow, encourage, discourage, refuse and allow particular lines of action which take shape through interrelated conditions: perception, dexterity and cultural and institutional legitimacy' (p 241). That is, different users of social media platforms will perceive a range of functions and constraints presented by these technologies, they will have varying levels of skill, (and one might argue, resources) and will be exposed to differential levels of support in relation to their engagement with these technologies due to cultural norms and institutional regulations (Davies, 2010, p 12). This relationship between both the mechanisms and conditions of affordances is particularly complex in the context of military use of social media. And context is important when considering affordances, they are not universal.

For Davies (2020) a crucial advancement in affordances theory is to shift the perspective from questions of what objects afford to questions of how, for whom and under what circumstances. This perspective inevitably raises questions of power and privilege. Davies (2020) argues that technologies embody human values and politics in their design, implementation and use and thus are imbued with the politics of the powerful, which if left unchecked may reinforce inequality and arc towards privilege and normality (p 14-15). Naggy and Neff (2015) are in agreement that affordances are a form of power and that communication scholars should question who or what kinds of people are most likely to recognise and take advantage of potential affordances.

Arguably the diverse array of those utilising SNSs, from average users to advertisers, developers, researchers, terrorist groups, states and in the context of this project, military and defence institutions will recognise and derive different affordances from these platforms. How military actors utilise a SNS such as Facebook is likely to be significantly different to the average end user. The latter to keep in touch with friends and family and participate in special interests, the former to utilise its resources to micro-target audiences, pay to boost content and to track engagement with it. The architecture of social media platforms which incorporate complex algorithms in structuring the information users see and facilitate tracking and back-end analytics for certain users in particular contexts may be referred to as 'hidden affordances' (Gaver, 1991) as they can be largely invisible to the average end user but are recognised and utilised by other actors such as those engaged in military StratCom. Bucher and Helmond (2017) argue that these generative potentials should be taken into account when considering the affordances of social media platforms.

The theory of affordances is a complex one. As outlined above there are both high-level and low-level affordances that emerge for different actors which are highly context specific, but they are also platform specific. Every social media platform although they may share some similarities (such as the 'like' button and hashtags) has its own unique architecture and vernacular which both enable and constrain communicative practice, developed over time through design, appropriation, and use (Gibbs et al., 2016). The term 'platform vernacular' is utilised by Gibbs et al. (2016) to refer to 'the specificities of individual platforms, its material architecture, and the collective and cultural practices that operate on and through it' (p 258). In his discussion of platform

affordances and vernaculars Manovich (2016) proposes that 'if Google is an information retrieval service, Twitter is for news and links exchange, Facebook is for social communication and Flickr is for image archiving, Instagram is for aesthetic visual communication' (p 41). Although this may be considered somewhat of an oversimplification particularly as visuals have become fundamental to the vernaculars of multiple SNSs, it is instructive to recognise that affordances vary across social media. The platform vernaculars of each individual social media platform are influenced by an array of affordances such as front and back-end analytics, platform cultures/norms and commercial interests which produce online spaces which lend themselves to different styles of interaction and discourse tailored to their respective online contexts (Pearce et al., 2018; Papacharissi, 2009). For example, the technological affordances inscribed in a platform that has a strict real name policy (Facebook), in comparison to one which actively encourages aliases (Reddit) will result in different notions of engagement, community and group formation (Van Dijck, 2012). The genres of communication emerge from the affordances of individual platforms and the manner in which different users' approach and appropriate them in practice (Gibbs et al., 2016). One way to contribute to an empirical analysis of affordances in SNSs is by being sensitive to platform specificities (Bucher and Helmond, 2017). This research focuses on the perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom whilst also engaging in an empirical analysis of Facebook to examine how the platforms architecture and cultures afford certain things to an active military institution, in this instance the IDF, and how these affordances may influence the nature of content they disseminate on the platform.

Individual platform architectures operate as affordances, invite participation, and suggest the normative nature and purpose of the platform (Sauter, 2013). For example, Burgess (2015) argues that Twitter's 'what's happening?' strapline indicates a preference for less personal or self-absorbed and more externally focused information uses of the platform. Twitter as a platform is commonly studied in relation to news production, citizen journalism, activism and politics and as contributing to a new public sphere (Papacharissi, 2010; Hermida, 2010; Kliger-Vilenchik et al., 2020). However, the technological architecture of the Twitter platform which imposes a 280-character limit affords only brief expressions of support or contestation relying on linked content for further elaboration (Kliger-Vilenchik et al., 2020, p 4) thus it constrains larger deliberation and contextual discussion on individual posts. This feature also contributes to a greater fragmentation in discussion (ibid). Instagram affords photo-taking, the application of photographic filters and the sharing of these images along with a textual description across its own platform but also across other social media including Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr (Gibbs et al., 2016). The technological architecture of Instagram is also orientated towards more decentralised conversations as connections to other users and discussions are made through @user labelling and hashtag features. As is the case with Twitter, users are restricted to posting content solely on their own profiles, a space other users cannot directly post to. Interaction with individual posts comes through liking, commenting and sharing directly on the posts, there are no shared spaces (ibid). In contrast, Facebook's group application affords users the ability to join and coalesce around public pages of interest. Once a member of these group pages, users can post, comment on, like and share content directly on these pages. Facebook groups can provide a locus for 'networked publics' and its

ability to carry complex multi-media messages facilitates more substantial posts and interwoven discussions than Twitter and Instagram (Varnelis, 2008; Kliger-Vilenchik et al., 2020). Facebook's platform architecture actively encourages its users to join groups which may be in line with their interests whilst profiles of Facebook members that show even vague connections are automatically invited to join one another's group (Van Dijck, 2012, p 147). Administrators of these group pages whether they are celebrities, companies or militaries can acquire members and disseminate their messaging easily on the platform. Further, Facebook's strapline, 'what's on your mind, (name of user)' promotes an engagement with the site that has a more personal, community like feel (Sauter, 2013) and as such Facebook has been identified as a platform that can afford informational and social support exchanges that contribute to the building of social capital (Ellison and Vitak, 2015), civic engagement (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012), and online political deliberation (Mor et al., 2015). Facebook has had a significant impact upon the orientation of other prominent SNSs and is the most used social media platform globally despite the more recent controversy around some of its practices (Papacharissi, 2009; Lupton and Southerton, 2021). Thus, the Facebook platform offers a rich site for analysis and one most apt for this research as it seeks to analyse content disseminated on the IDF's official group page to its target audiences.

Applying an affordance lens to the study of SNSs takes account of the symbiotic relationship between human action and technological capability and examines the role of SNSs in affecting the process of online knowledge sharing. In their approach to a communicative affordances framework (Majchrzak et al., 2013) adapt the affordance lens to reach the traditional separation between subject-object, user-artefact, intention-

use dichotomies, instead focusing upon the interweaving of people and specific technology in use (p 18). Schrock (2015) calls upon communication researchers to contribute to a theory of affordances by applying this framework to contexts involving mediated communication not easily addressed by other social theories, that is to describe a particular relationship between perception, properties of the technologies and uses (p 1239). Evans et al. (2016) offer a number of potential communicative affordances such as anonymity, persistence and visibility whilst boyd (2010) offers persistence, replicability, scalability and searchability in her study of networked publics, however Evans et al. caution against locking oneself into a few choice definitions or list of a priori affordances (p 46). Although this study will apply the concept of affordances to the use of SNSs as a tool for military StratCom it will also examine the empirical data gathered for other affordances which may emerge. Crucial to this research project is the identification of the perceived affordances of SNSs within the context of military StratCom and network building as well as an understanding of how the materiality of SNS Facebook, impacts upon these communicative practices.

3.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter has served to build a theoretical framework which facilitates a holistic understanding of the potential affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom. The concept of mediatisation facilitates an understanding of how the media reshape or transform the communicative practices of military institutions and the ways in which the media may also be influenced by the norms of these institutions. This theory is complemented by the conceptualisation of the hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013;

Chadwick et al., 2016) which recognises that this communication takes place within a complex ecology where new media has not completely supplanted more traditional forms of media but rather these intersect and intertwine in complex ways as multiple actors compete for control of information flows. Finally, a communicative affordances approach takes account not just of human actions but also the impact of the technological architecture of platforms in conceptualising how the perceived utility of SNSs, their objective qualities and the intentions of military actors, may combine to augment the nature of military StratCom. The theoretical approaches outlined in this chapter are greater than the sum of their parts, building a framework for understanding how an institution such as the military has been altered by both the media and technology, the manner in which they must compete in a hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013) to steer information flows and how both actors perceptions and the technological infrastructures of SNSs impact upon the potential affordances of SNSs as a tool of StratCom . The following chapter outlines the methodological framework for this research as a means to examine the affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the methodological framework for this research - a mixed method qualitative approach incorporating the thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews and online images, to examine the affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom. A mixed method approach is considered to be highly appropriate for the goals of this study as it combines the depth of insight provided by qualitative semi-structured interviews with an empirical analysis of the StratCom work conducted through popular SNS, Facebook, by an active military institution at the forefront of utilising SNSs. The combination of different empirical materials and perspectives in a single study is a strategy that can add rigour and richness to the research (Flick, 2013). In qualitative research the researcher recognises that their own values, experience and interests will impact upon the choices of topic and the interpretation of the study results (Fusch et al., 2018). However, researchers can strive to mitigate their own bias through triangulation. Denzin (1978) proposed data triangulation for correlating people, time and space in order to uncover commonalities across different persons, organisations and settings (Fusch et al., 2018). This study includes interview participants both civilian and serving military, from across multiple geographic locations representing a diverse number of military and defence institutions. This diversity within a single study serves to increase the comprehensiveness of the research and to provide a more complete understanding of the phenomenon in question (Denzin, 2012). Further, multiple methods triangulation occurs when the researcher employs

more than one type of qualitative data collection (Natow, 2020; Zeegers and Barron, 2015). This project combines semi-structured interviews with military and defence communications practitioners with an empirical multi-modal analysis of internet data to provide corroboration for findings, a fuller picture of the topic under investigation and to mitigate any researcher bias (Davies, 2001). A qualitative research paradigm was adopted for this study within a critical realist framework (Contu and Willmott, 2005; Reed, 2005.) This approach can move beyond the deadlock between positivists and social constructionists within the social sciences acknowledging the social construction of reality through factors such as language and culture on the one hand whilst understanding military actors as rational agents utilising strategic communication in service of their institutional goals on the other. A critical realist framework for the study of military StratCom does not impose a particular methodology nor aim to generate one definitive theory of strategic communication but rather opens up questions of impressions, perceptions and practices in this context which can also account for the role of culture and the ways in which strategic communication may help to construct or reinforce certain realities or truths in society (Ihlen and Verhoeven, 2015).

The following aspects of the methodological structure will be outlined in this chapter;

- Qualitative research design in relation to semi-structured interviews and online multi-modal image analysis
- Method of data analysis and overview of process
- The overall challenges and limitations of the research

4.2. QUALITATIVE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The method of qualitative interviews seeks to access the motivations and interpretations of the individuals interviewed. It allows the researcher to examine what cannot be directly observed, that of the feelings, intentions and perspectives of the research participant (Patton, 2002). In order for this to be done effectively, it is important for the researcher to develop a rapport with their interviewees, a process that could not be facilitated by an alternative method such as a survey (Bryman, 2012; Seidman, 1991). Qualitative interviews represent an appropriate method to address the objectives of this research by gaining insights into how stakeholders working within military and defence institutions interpret the affordances of SNSs as a tool of StratCom and how they integrate SNSs into their communications practices. Qualitative interviews combined with online data can uncover meaning, insights and understanding relevant to the research focus (Merriam, 2009).

This research adopts a semi-structured interview format with individuals working within (or who have previously worked within) communications in the military and defence sector. This method facilitates the opportunity to uncover respondents' experiences, perspectives and descriptions of process in a manner that would not be possible through questionnaires or the review of doctrinal documentation. Further, given the difficulties of gaining access to individuals working within the military sector, in-depth interviews can provide data not easily obtainable from other sources (Davies, 2001) and information not necessarily available in the public domain (Kezar, 2003). This research recognises however that the content collected through the qualitative

interview process represents the participants' interpretation of the phenomenon of interest within this particular context and time frame. The semi-structured interviews asked open questions of the participants in relation to their perceptions of the use of social media as a tool of StratCom, how SNSs have become integrated into their communications practices, the nature of the audiences and networks with whom they are attempting to communicate through online platforms and the image of the organisation which they hope to construct for their audiences.

The semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix C) includes a mix of open-ended questions which allows respondents the freedom to express their views in their own terms and encourages a two-way communication between researcher and participant. Open ended questions facilitate greater flexibility in the nature of responses and in the researcher's ability to respond to each interview as it occurs and to allow potential new ideas and themes to emerge (Merriam, 2009, p 90). As specific information is required from all respondents in service of the research objectives, a large part of the interview will be guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored. This research follows the 6 question types suggested by Patton (2002) in semi structured qualitative interviewing.

- Experience and behaviour questions - to elucidate the activities, behaviours and actions a person does or has done
- Opinion and value questions - to understand the participants belief system and opinions

- Feeling questions - to reveal the affective dimension of life, how one feels about something
- Knowledge questions - to document factual knowledge
- Sensory questions - in tandem with the behaviour questions above to investigate what the participant has seen, heard or touched
- Background and demographic questions - age, education, employment, experience etc

4.2.1. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

In order to verify that informed consent had been given by the research participants a consent form and plain language information sheet was provided to interviewees as required and approved by the Dublin City University Research Ethics Board (REC Reference DCUREC/2019/048). The information sheet, which is included in the Appendix section of this project, outlines clearly the purpose of the research and provides details of interview duration, any recording devices to be utilised and the proposed dissemination and output of the research. In an effort to record the interviews as unobtrusively as possible, they were recorded using the iPhone voice memo application which was placed face down to avoid any further distraction to the interviewee from the display. Note taking within the interview was utilised to record latent content such as body language and emotional reactions however was limited to avoid disturbance to the participant. In order to obtain the most accurate database for analysis a verbatim transcription of the interviews was conducted by the researcher

and then imported into the NVivo computer software programme. This software also facilitates the addition of memos to the transcribed interviews in which the latent content recorded, such as body language, emotional reactions and silences can be added to give greater context and depth to the analysis.

As previously stated, this research recognises that the content collected through the qualitative interview process simply represents the participants' interpretation of the phenomenon of interest within this particular context and time frame. It is also essential for the researcher to be cognisant of the complexities of authority and power relations imbued within their interaction with the respondents, particularly within a militaristic setting such as this, to ensure a more reflexive interview process and informed analysis of the interview data (Merriam, 2009). Whilst interview respondents may occupy a position of power relative to the interviewer, this dynamic may be mitigated through preparedness by the researcher in relation to the interview participant and their institution. As Richardson (2014) asserts, a researcher can gain power through knowledge which may imbue them with the confidence to challenge the respondents and their statements. A further element of these relations of authority and power in qualitative research, and one that is of particular concern within this current research project is the question of access. The study of military and defence institutions exposes the research to gatekeepers within the organisation who may have concerns about the nature of the research and its motives, the potential costs of time or impact upon its image and the kinds of questions which may be asked of its current or former staff members. As such these gatekeepers may attempt to influence who the researcher can speak with, the topics for interview and the length of time spent with participants.

The level of access to individuals of interest to the research requires negotiation and likely renegotiation which Bryman (2012) describes as an explicitly political process, the outcome of which is often referred to as the 'the research bargain' (p 151). As Bryman (2012, p 39) has aptly posited, all social research is a balance between what is ideal and what is feasible. In order to mitigate these factors, the researcher as previously mentioned, provided an information sheet which made the purpose of the research explicitly clear. Interview participants and/or their superiors were invited to direct any questions or concerns to the researcher both in advance, during and after the interview process. In order to ensure the best conditions for access, all interviews were conducted in person (with the exception of one Skype interview) in the participants country of residence in order to accommodate the interviewees schedules with the greatest flexibility. A transcription of the interview was forwarded to any participant who requested it prior to completion of the thesis. In travelling to Israel to meet with two of the interviewees, the researcher was cognisant of the volatile political situation at that time (April 2019) in which a spate of rockets had been fired from Gaza into Israel. The researcher took every precaution to ensure their safety, registering with the Department of Foreign Affairs prior to travelling and downloading their smart phone app 'TravelWise' designed to provide travel advice and consular information to Irish citizens travelling abroad.

4.2.2. SAMPLING OF QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

This research adopts a strategic selective sampling strategy for the participants of the qualitative interviews. The participants have been purposefully selected on the basis

of their direct relevant professional experience. Given the specific purpose of this research is not generalisation but rather an in-depth understanding of the perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom this is an appropriate strategy for gaining insight into these practices in this particular context. Interviewees were approached at the 7th and 8th SMi annual conferences on Social Media in the Defence and Military Sector in December 2017 and November 2018 respectively in London, resulting in interviews with eight relevant respondents. This strategy is reflective of the difficulties of access presented to any study of the military and defence sector and thus marks its limitations, however as Merriam (2009) asserts, the crucial factor in qualitative interviews is not the number of participants but rather the potential of each one to contribute to the development of valuable insights and understanding of the phenomenon being studied. All interviewees agreed to waive their anonymity with some requesting to view the quoted excerpts used in the final report prior to publication.

List of interview participants:

Name	Title	Organisation	Interview Location
Commandant Pat O' Connor	Deputy Director Public Relations	Irish Defence Forces	Dublin, Ireland
Chris Riley	Head of Strategic Communications, NATO, Public Diplomacy Division	NATO, Brussels	Brussels, Belgium
Dirk von Holleben	Press and Information, Social Media	German Federal Ministry of Defence	Berlin, Germany
Nate Herring	Social Media Coordinator	US Africa Command	London, United Kingdom
Captain Jelle van Haaster	Researcher Cyber Operations	Dutch Ministry of Defence	The Hague, Netherlands
Lucy Ellis	Communications Advisor, Canadian Joint Operations Command	Canadian Department of National Defense	Via Skype
Professor Gadi Wolfsfeld	Professor of Communication, Head of Graduate Program, Sammy Ofer School of Communication	IDC Herzliya, Israel. (Former IDF Spokesperson Division)	Herzliya, Israel
Lt. Col.(R) Peter Lerner	Former Head of International Media Branch	Israeli Defense Forces	Herzliya, Israel

4.3. IMAGE ANALYSIS

The importance of analysing images in qualitative research has been outlined by Weber (2008) who argues their ability to capture the ineffable, to adopt someone's gaze or point of view and evoke an emotional response makes them powerful tools for researchers (p 45-47). The analysis of images disseminated by a military, in this instance the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), on social network site Facebook is seen as an appropriate method of gaining insight into how it constructs its image online as part of its StratCom objectives. Visual symbols have always been an integral component of political communication. However, in recent years the rise of digital technologies and the ubiquity of social media platforms have significantly increased the importance of visual communication, augmenting the ways in which politics are performed and communicated. Political actors such as military institutions, have embraced the practices and affordances of SNSs to target audiences directly with compelling visuals and to leverage their potential for reputation management and image building. Despite the central role of images and visuals in political communication, the majority of research on the role of digital media in politics has privileged text over images as the most potent subject for research. This 'linguistic imperialism' (Mitchell, 1986) in social media research has thus continued a broader trend in social research of privileging unimodal approaches – specifically, focusing on text (Bruns & Burgess, 2015; Conover et al., 2011) – over multimodal approaches which acknowledge the importance of visual content (Hansen, 2011; Highfield & Leaver, 2016). Highfield and Leaver (2016) have called for a concerted investment in social media visual research one which takes the role of images seriously. This study seeks to address this gap by providing a rigorous multimodal thematic analysis of Facebook images uploaded to the official

Israeli Defense Forces account to provide insights into the importance of the visuals of social media as a potent means of military StratCom. As highlighted by Pearce et al. (2018), images represent a key aspect of the narratives and genres that SNSs foster. The analysis of the images disseminated on the official IDF Facebook page recognises that the meaning of images is always dependent upon context and interpretation (Bleiker, 2015, p 873). This research seeks to investigate the manner in which images and text interact and intertwine and contribute to meaning making and identity formation.

4.3.1. THE ISRAELI DEFENSE FORCES AS CASE STUDY FOR THE ANALYSIS OF FACEBOOK IMAGES

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) was chosen as the case study for image analysis as it represents a military institution at the forefront of engaging digital communication tools particularly in times of conflict. Rid and Hecker (2009) identify the British Army, America's land forces and the Israeli Defense Forces as the three most active militaries in the world (p 207). As the majority of comprehensive empirical studies related to military StratCom and media management have focused upon 'Western' militaries (with the exception of Shavit, 2017 and Kuntsman and Stein, 2015), this research seeks to counter this trend through an in-depth look at the Israeli Defense Forces over an extended period of time. Further, although as illustrated by the participant interviews within this study, social media has now become ubiquitous within military institutions as a tool of StratCom, Israel has been identified as a leader in this endeavour that others have looked to emulate (Banham, 2012). This is further evidenced by the

historic precedent of the IDF announcing the commencement of Operation Pillar of Defence on Twitter in November 2012 (Shavit, 2015). Despite the size of both the population and landmass in comparison with the UK and US, Israel's army, the IDF, have a significant online presence and following. The IDF's official Facebook page has almost 2.4 million followers, making it a rich site for online analysis.

4.3.2. FACEBOOK AS A SITE OF IMAGE ANALYSIS

Facebook was chosen as the site for image analysis for several reasons. 1) it is the most popular social media platform in the world with more than 2.3 billion registered users, 2) it allows for the publishing of both visual and linguistic data and 3) at the time of study, Facebook's 'Netvizz' API (Rieder, 2013) allowed for the relatively easy access, download and storage of official Group Page data. The Facebook Netvizz API was utilised to collect all timeline images uploaded by the IDF Facebook page sampled between August 2015-August 2018 (n=645). As a number of studies have focused upon the use of social media by militaries at episodic points in conflict, this research sought to gain insight into the everyday practices of a military institution on a specific social media platform over an extended period to uncover the consistent identity construction and strategic communication work being carried out on Facebook by the IDF. As such, the sample of images chosen for analysis begins one year after the last significant ground invasion by Israel into Gaza in 2014, that of Operation Protective Edge, to avoid the images in the analysis being subsumed by one combat operation. The timeframe of analysis took place over a period of 'relative' peace in Israel. The

collected data was then subjected to a rigorous qualitative thematic analysis to identify the dominant themes and patterns of meaning in the Facebook images.

4.3.3. FACEBOOK DATA COLLECTION

The Facebook Netvizz API (Rieder, 2013) was utilised to collect all timeline images uploaded by the Israeli Defence Forces Facebook page (n=645) between August 2015 - August 2018. The API tool provides a tabular file of metadata on each image published by the page providing the image id, name, created time, the accompanying text caption, link to the Facebook page and URL, like count, reaction count and comment count for each image. Each image was manually downloaded from the URL provided in jpeg format, numbered and imported into the Nvivo database for manual coding. The text titles accompanying each image and a written description of the content was provided for each individual image in the database.

4.4. A 'REFLEXIVE' THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS AND FACEBOOK IMAGES

The method of analysis adopted in this study is based on a 'Reflexive' Thematic Analysis (TA), a method for identifying and analysing patterns of meaning in a dataset underpinned by a central organising concept. (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2013). The research topic is both experiential and exploratory in nature and so is well suited to TA (ibid). TA conducted within a critical realist framework assumes that truth can be accessed through language whilst recognising that participant accounts

are socially mediated (Madill, Jordan and Shirley, 2000). Further, the analytic procedures of this form of TA reflect the values of the qualitative paradigm with a focus on the subjectivity of the researcher, organic coding processes and a deep engagement with the data (Braun and Clarke, 2019). TA has been utilised across almost every discipline within the social and health sciences and is appropriate to qualitative research questions related to understanding, experience, social processes and human practices and behaviour (Terry et al. 2017). In contrast to other qualitative methodologies, such as interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), grounded theory and discourse analysis which are situated within specific theoretical frameworks which inform the methods of data collection and analysis, TA is not shackled to any one particular theoretical position and so can be applied to a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches (ibid). This theoretical freedom facilitates a flexible approach that can be modified for the needs of many studies, providing a rich, detailed and complex account of the data (Braun and Clarke 2006; King, 2004; Nowell et al., 2017). TA can also be applied across a range of different datasets including text, images and interviews to examine the process of social construction and to trace how a particular representation develops (Joffe, 2012). This flexibility makes 'reflexive' TA particularly useful when the interpretation and analysis of both textual and visual data is required in a single study. Other established analytical frameworks for the analysis of images and other visual communication within the communications discipline are social semiotics (O'Halloran, 2011), and visual semiotic approaches (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006; van Leeuwen, 2001; van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001; Rose 2001). These approaches make explicit the manner in which 'people produce and communicate meaning through the spatial configurations of visual elements in western

societies' (Jewitt, 1997, p 2). Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) highlight social semiotic analysis including representational meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning. While the Facebook image data in this research could have been examined using these approaches, the researcher opted for a thematic analysis. The reason for this is that thematic analysis does not rely on the specialised procedures of semiotic analysis and so is better suited to this research project's exploratory approach. Further, this research and its aims were less concerned with a detailed exploration of the composition of these images (colour, space, light, angles) but rather sought to explore the content of the image with its accompanying text titles and how these elements are positioned towards each other, how these visuals link to broader stories of the military actors, their intentions and motivations and a consideration of the architecture and vernaculars of this particular SNS and the manner in which this may impact upon the nature of this content. This inductive coding approach to the study of online imagery has been utilised by other scholars in their studies of SNSs such as Instagram as a means of visual storytelling (Gibbs et al, 2016; Gurrieri and Drenten, 2019). In answering the research questions, as to the perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom, the manner in which SNSs have been integrated into the StratCom practices of military actors in a hybrid media environment, and the manner in which a military actor (The IDF) use imagery to promote itself to target audiences on popular SNSs, Facebook, TA provides a method that can be applied systematically and with rigour across both the interview data and the Facebook image data. This facilitates triangulation and comparison across the datasets to identify any significant similarities and differences between the perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom and the manner in which it is implemented in practice by and active

military institution on Facebook. It is essential however that the researcher be explicit about the type of thematic analysis adopted and the processes carried out in their analysis of the data.

Thematic analysis as a method should not be treated as a homogenous entity. The 'reflexive' approach to thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013, 2019) differentiates itself from other TA approaches which they refer to as 'coding reliability TA' and 'codebook approaches' (ibid). Coding reliability approaches recommend the use of a coding frame and coder inter-reliability scores which is underpinned by a positivist assumption that there is a universal truth or reality in the data that can be captured by appropriate coding techniques. Codebook approaches advocate the use of a structured codebook although they are not concerned with coder reliability. Codebooks are often developed prior to the data collection however as this study is exploratory in nature, coding directly from the data gathered is a more appropriate approach to meeting the research objectives of this topic. The 'reflexive' approach to TA is flexible and organic in its coding process, with the analytic process understood as an active one which bears the mark of the researcher. Braun and Clarke's reflexive approach purports that there is no one accurate way to code the data. Themes developed throughout the coding process are viewed as analytic outputs that are the result of the creative labour of the researcher (2019).

4.4.1. METHOD: OVERVIEW OF PROCESS:

What is a theme?

Within this reflexive TA approach, a theme captures a recurring pattern within the dataset clustered around an organising concept (Braun and Clarke, 2019). A significant question when coding data highlighted by (Braun and Clarke, 2006) is what counts as a theme and what size it should be. This is a question of prevalence they posit, both in terms of space within the specific data item and its prevalence across the data set. Ideally the theme will recur across the dataset but it is not necessarily dependent upon quantifiable measures. What is more crucial than repeated instances of the theme, is that it captures something important and of relevance to the overall research question. The analytical process of TA, they argue, should demonstrate a progression from description, whereby the data has been organised to show patterns in semantic content, and summarised, to interpretation which exhibits a significant attempt to theorise the significant patterns, their meanings and broader implications in the research (Patton, 1990) often in relation to the broader dataset and to previous literature.

In their positioning of reflexive thematic analysis as untethered to any particular theory and epistemology, Braun and Clarke (2006) are not suggesting that this method can be applied without the researcher acknowledging the theory and epistemological stance of their project, as these decisions and underlying assumptions will impact upon the process of analysis. A further important aspect to be clearly addressed within TA is whether the theme has been derived through a deductive approach, drawn from a

theoretical idea or an inductive approach drawn from the raw data itself (Joffe, 2012). This study takes an inductive approach to reflexive analysis. An inductive approach to coding and analysis is driven by what is in the raw data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This is appropriate as the study is interested in exploring the experiences and perceptions of the respondents to the use of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom and the narratives constructed and projected through the images disseminated by a military actor online. This study is concerned not only with the semantic content of the interview and image data but also with going beyond that to an analysis of the latent elements of the dataset. In reality, as Braun and Clarke aptly point out, it is not possible to be purely inductive as a researcher will always bring something to the analysis of the data. The analysis in this study draws upon theoretical concepts such as mediatization, hybridity, strategic narrative and strategic communication to articulate the research topic and to situate and articulate the findings. A valid argument for the themes generated in the analysis is further built by referring back to the relevant literature. Aronson (1994) contends that when a researcher interweaves the literature with their findings, the story constructed stands with merit. Writing throughout the TA method is also an integral part of the analysis from the beginning of phase 1, with the recording of initial ideas and items of potential interest, continuing throughout the coding and analysis process and prompting a deeper consideration of the data (Bazeley, 2009; Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is also important to note that the process of TA is not a solely linear one, rather the researcher moves through the analysis recursively and reflexively throughout all of the phases.

4.4.2 USING QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS SOFTWARE 'NVIVO'

The use of qualitative data analysis software such as Nvivo in this study has several benefits to the research project. As it facilitates the import of several document types, text, audio, video and images and it allows for the data collected to be organised and centralised within one database. The structural processes within the software which support annotation, coding and sorting also facilitates a greater transparency in the researcher's procedures of coding and analysis of the data, producing an audit trail of each phase of the process. It should be made explicitly clear however that the use of qualitative data analysis software such as Nvivo should not be conflated with a method for analysing data, it is rather an organisational support for the methods chosen in this study (Flick, 2013). One which renders all stages of the analytical process traceable and transparent in a more comprehensive manner than a manual mapping could allow.

The phases of analysis undertaken in this research project across both the interview and image data are detailed below. This process is informed by training undertaken at the Qualitative Research Summer School hosted by Dr Claire Moran in Dublin City University on June 4th, 2019 and draws upon on the six-step approach presented by Braun and Clarke (2006). There will be eight phases of analysis in the application of a reflexive thematic analysis of the dataset. These phases will involve three separate cycles of coding as outlined in the QDATRAINING materials (2018). The three rounds of inductive coding conducted on each dataset are detailed in Appendices D and E.

Generating Initial Codes - an initial description and categorisation of the dataset

Developing Categories - re-ordering, clustering free codes into broader categories, merging and distilling codes

Generating Themes - categories reorganised, re labelled and analysed to identify emerging themes

4.4.3 A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF FACEBOOK IMAGES

The collection and coding of online Facebook data was undertaken first and used to inform the construction of the semi-structured interview questions for participants. This iterative approach allowed for an insight into the way in which an active military institution at the forefront of utilising SNSs (The IDF) implements its StratCom strategies online in practice and how the technological affordances and vernaculars of this specific platform (Facebook) may influence the type of content disseminated. Thus, the initial analysis of Facebook content made suggestions as to how military StratCom practitioners more broadly may be approaching SNSs as a tool of military StratCom and how online platforms may enable and constrain their communication goals. In support of this approach, Rogers (2013) invites researchers to think about how internet objects (tweets, posts, images) speak to us about social research questions and direct our research. These mixed methods facilitate an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of SNSs held by military communications actors with the practices of an active military institution implementing SNSs as a tool of military StratCom, providing triangulation between online and offline data, between perception and implementation.

The eight discrete cycles of analysis applied to the Facebook data are as follows:

Phase 1: Involved familiarising myself with the data. Each of the images within the dataset (n=645) and their accompanying text titles/captions were manually downloaded and viewed in their entirety. In this phase, initial notes and impressions from immersion in the data were recorded that were of interest to the research questions. This process helped to move beyond the purely surface level of the data to begin thinking critically and asking questions about what the data means. Questions such as how does the military institution utilise visuals to present itself and its actions online? What are the key narratives/stories that it tells? What actors are represented and who is excluded, and how are the vernaculars of the platform reflected? This phase is a trigger for more systematic analysis. The images were then imported into Nvivo for coding. The text titles/captions of the photo were included as well as any text overlaying the image and a detailed written description of the content represented in each image. Additional analytical memos were attached to images that required further elaboration or context, for example, the use of emojis in the image captions which could not be properly viewed in the Nvivo software and reference to historical events/figures or specific military units. Memos were also created around the use of contested/controversial terms for example references to Judea and Samaria rather than the 'West Bank' to include greater context to the broader political story.

Phase 2: This phase reflects the beginning of the systematic analysis of the data through coding. These initial non-hierarchical codes identify a feature of the data that is of potential relevance to the research questions. In this phase, codes can reflect both the semantic and latent content of the dataset. Semantic, descriptive codes can reflect the content of the image (actors, setting) whilst the more interpretive latent codes reflect the researchers conceptual and theoretical frameworks, such as the communicative affordances of SNSs. The coding process considered both the nature of the image itself and the textual comment or title accompanying it in the generating of codes, with a consideration of how the image and the text were positioned towards each other. For example, if they were complimentary or juxtaposed to one another, to account for how this might potentially enable or constrain certain interpretations from different target audiences (Freistein and Gadinger, 2020). Codes were allocated clear titles/labels with a written definition to serve as the rules for inclusion (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

Phase 3: Developing categories. This phase involved reviewing all of the coded data to identify similarities or broader topics around which these codes cluster. Related codes identified through the open coding were then grouped under broader categories and organised into a framework that made sense for further analysis of the data. This phase also included distilling, merging and relabelling common codes to ensure that the labels and definitions for inclusion accurately reflected the coded content and described a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data.

Phase 4: Generating themes. Categories are broken down, relabelled, and analysed. This phase involved a recursive process whereby the developing themes were reviewed in relation to the coded data and the entire image dataset to ensure a distinctive and coherent set of themes had been generated. Questions considered in this phase include what is the quality of the theme, does it tell me something useful about the dataset and my research questions? What are the boundaries of the theme, what does it include/exclude? Is the theme coherent? (Braun and Clarke, 2012). This review is undertaken to ensure a set of themes has been generated that captures the most significant and relevant elements of the data in relation to the research questions.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes. Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and overall story/argument the analysis of the dataset makes. This phase is undertaken to ensure the generated themes have a clear focus and scope and that each theme works with and builds upon the other themes. Generating clear titles and definitions of each theme and clearly stating what is unique and specific about each theme.

Phase 6: Involved writing analytical memos against the higher-level themes to accurately summarise the content of each category and its codes and propose findings against these categories. Themes should provide a compelling story about the data which is articulated in the analysis report. This phase also involved selecting appropriate images to illustrate the story of each theme.

Phase 7: Validation and testing. Involved the revising of analytical memos to provide a self-audit of the proposed findings by seeking evidence beyond the dataset. This process involved interrogation of the entire Facebook data set drawing on relationships across and between categories and cross tabulation between the images and the relevant existing literature. This phase also involved relating the analysis back to the main research questions.

Phase 8: Involved producing a clear, cohesive and well supported findings report. This phase resulted in producing the Facebook analysis chapter and contributed to the final discussion chapter.

4.4.4 A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

In-depth interviews with military stakeholders work well with the analysis of online content as they allow for a broader and comparative understanding of the perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom across different geographical and political contexts. The coding of interview transcripts allowed for a triangulation of the interview findings with the online thematic analysis of Facebook data, allowing the researcher to consider the results through the prism of the communicative affordances of SNSs. This approach was undertaken to provide a deeper understanding of how both the perceptions of military communications practitioners and the technological architectures and vernaculars of SNSs may augment the nature of military StratCom. A thematic analysis approach was also applied to the interview data facilitating coherence and comparison across the dataset (images and interview texts).

The eight discrete cycles of analysis applied to the Interview data are as follows:

Phase 1: As with the image dataset, this phase involved a deep familiarisation with the data. Reading and re reading of the interview transcripts and listening to audio recordings of the interviews. Reflexive note taking on initial thoughts and observations were recorded before importing the transcripts into Nvivo for manual coding. This phase initiated the active, analytical approach to the interview data. Questions such as, how does the participant make sense of their use of SNSs? What assumptions about SNSs do they make and what expectations of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom do they have? were considered. Additional analytical memos were attached to coded sections that required further elaboration or context, for example the use of colloquial expressions or reference to specific military operations.

Phase 2: Generating initial non-hierarchical codes from the data. Interesting features of the dataset were coded in a systematic way across the dataset. Codes can be both descriptive and interpretive in this phase. Descriptive or semantic codes largely reflect the content of the interview data and the participants' language. However codes can also identify latent meanings within the data providing an interpretation of the data which reflects the theoretical framework of the study. Codes were allocated clear titles/labels with a written definition to serve as the rules for inclusion. The codes capture the diversity and patterns that recur across the dataset (Braun and Clarke, 2012).

Phase 3: This phase identifies similarities and overlapping issues between the codes. Identifying themes and subthemes involved clustering codes that share some unifying features with each other so that they reflect a coherent pattern in the data that meaningfully connects to the research questions.

Phase 4: Categories are broken down, relabelled, and analysed. Themes are generated to offer a more in depth understanding of both the semantic and latent content of the data to include attitudes, behaviours and representations. This phase is a recursive process whereby the developing themes are reviewed in relation to the coded data and the entire interview data set.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes. This phase ensures that what is unique and specific about each theme generated from the interview dataset can be clearly articulated along with its focus, scope and purpose. Themes should build upon each other in providing an overall coherent story about the data. Clear titles and definitions of each theme are generated.

Phase 6: Writing and analysis around the higher-level themes. Initial insights and memos are reviewed in the process of the analysis and findings report. This phase also involved selecting specific interview extracts to present the story of each theme.

Phase 7: Validation and Testing. Involved auditing the proposed findings by seeking evidence outside of the dataset. This process involved an interrogation of the entire dataset drawing on relationships between the themes identified in the visual analysis to interrogate whether they resonate or diverge with those generated by the interviews whilst also referring to the relevant literature and the main research questions. Although the two datasets (online images and interview texts) have different specifications, they nonetheless allow for some preliminary comparisons between the potential affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom as perceived by military communications practitioners with an analysis of the manner in which these are implemented in practice by an active military institution (The IDF) on the world's most popular SNSs to offer a more in-depth understanding of how SNSs may have augmented the nature of military StratCom.

Phase 8: Involved writing up the findings of the interview dataset in a clear and cohesive manner. This resulted in producing the interview analysis chapter and contributed to the final discussion chapter.

4.5. CHALLENGES, LIMITATIONS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

One of the challenges in this research project as previously stated, is the level of access that I could obtain to interview participants within the military and defence sector. This has impacted upon the number of interviewees, the institutions and geographic locations represented but also upon the gender balance of the interviews which consist of one female participant to seven male participants. Another

consideration is the language limitations presented by some of the interviewees. All interviews were conducted in English despite the first languages of two of the participants being German and Dutch respectively. Although all participants are fluent English speakers, interviews conducted may exclude potential indigenous phrases, expressions and contextual clues which may have been better expressed in their first language.

The empirical analysis of the use of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom is focused upon one military actor, the IDF. An in-depth comparative analysis of the manner in which multiple military and defence institutions represent themselves online would no doubt be fruitful but was beyond the scope and time frame of this study. Further to this, the online multi-modal analysis of images is concentrated on one SNS site, Facebook and is a reflection of the difficulties for researchers in accessing large image datasets across multiple online platforms. Merriam (2009) advises that the researcher must acknowledge that any results of their research will be strongly influenced by the characteristics of the data and the nature of the medium through which it was gathered (p 160). One cannot assume that social media research provides a simple window onto social phenomena. Social media can tell us something about social phenomena but we must acknowledge that social media platforms are hybrid assemblages of users, algorithms and data (amongst other things) that require researchers to regularly reflect on the empirical object of their research (Marres, 2017, p 132). Marres identifies three issues in digital bias (at a minimum) requiring attention: 1) bias in the selected data and content, as the researcher selects certain snapshots of social media coverage, 2) built-in software bias in the research instruments, for instance bias through embedded

algorithms; and 3) bias of methodological nature, for example social media research tools are more amenable to textual queries than visual queries, resulting in a bias towards textual analysis that provides only partial analysis of platform content (p 123), a trend in the research this study seeks to counter through the multi-modal analysis of Facebook images. Marres calls for an 'affirmative approach' to digital bias (2017, p 125) that is, accepting these biases as part of the object of study rather than attempting to neutralise platform effects by disentangling medium research from social research.

Within Dublin City University's (DCU) ethical codes of research, ethical approval for the analysis of publicly available content on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube are not required provided that the names and any other identifying information are anonymised. However, the use of Facebook data within this study was fully outlined in the application for ethics approval which was granted by the DCU research ethics committee on March 25th, 2019. Further, in this instance, the use of social media platform, Facebook by the IDF indicates an acknowledgement on its part of the public nature of its contributions and thus the collection of data from its official Facebook account may be justified on the basis that they intended for this material to be explicitly public.

A further important ethical consideration for this research project is the secure storage and protection of the data collected. In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) introduced in May 2018 the researcher takes responsibility for the data gathered as part of the research project and will not use nor share the data for

unrelated purposes and will keep it safe from hacking and theft. In accordance with the DCU graduate research training in data protection and media management the following procedures have been followed in this regard.

- Systems and individual files will be protected with login and passwords
- Management access rights will be limited
- Virus protection will be updated regularly to prevent vulnerability of data
- Physical access to equipment and storage media will be limited as it will be stored on a private password protected laptop and a private password protected desktop in a private office
- All data will be backed up and co located to ensure recoverability in case of emergency
- There will be regular updates of electronic storage media to avoid outdated storage/retrieval devices
- All dates and time of when a piece of electronic data was originally collected will be recorded for prevention of any manipulation or altering of data at a future date

This chapter has served to outline the methodological structure and design of this study. It has detailed the qualitative research design in relation to semi-structured interviews and online image analysis, the method of data analysis and process and the overall ethical considerations, challenges and limitations of the research. The following chapters will implement this research design in the analysis of the semi-structured interviews with communications practitioners working in the military and defence sector

and a multi-modal thematic analysis of images uploaded to the official Facebook page of the Israeli Defense Forces.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE PERCEIVED AFFORDANCES OF SOCIAL NETWORK SITES AS A TOOL OF MILITARY STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter draws upon the in-depth semi-structured participant interviews with military and defence personnel (former and current) working within Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, the United States, Canada, Israel and NATO to explicate the perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of StratCom across different geographical and political contexts. (see chapter 4 for interviewee sampling and method). The findings identify three primary affordances; Building Networks and Advocates, Impression Management and Intervention in Hybrid Information Flows. These reflect an assemblage of both high-level affordances, that is the communicative practices enabled and constrained by SNSs and low-level affordances which reflect the materiality of platforms, their buttons, vernaculars, and architectural features. The findings also highlight several limitations and constraints faced by actors engaged in utilising SNSs as a tool of military StratCom, which include tensions within their own institutional culture, the potential risks to reputation and an inability to fully control the environment. The perceived affordances of SNSs for military StratCom and their limitations are outlined below. Although each affordance is specific and clearly defined, they operate in tandem and so are related and build upon one another. The findings of the interview analysis are reported first to provide a more macro and comparative view of the perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom and to provide insight into how military communications practitioners make sense of SNSs for this

purpose. What follows in the next chapter is an empirical case study of how one military actor at the forefront of utilising SNSs (whom other military actors wish to emulate) utilised the world's most popular SNS, Facebook, to disseminate its strategic messaging (Banham, 2013). This allows for a comparison between what military actors 'say they do' with SNSs with how this is implemented in practice by the IDF. Further, this platform sensitive approach allows for a consideration of the materiality and the unique vernaculars of Facebook, what these may afford to the IDF and how these may impact upon the nature of the content disseminated.

Section one examines the ways in which SNSs may afford military actors with the opportunity to build networks and advocates creating awareness of and value in the institution amongst larger more diverse audiences. The perceived opportunities to communicate at a lower cost, build digital relationships and to acquire advocates who can engage with multiple audiences and networks on the military's behalf are highlighted. Further, this section outlines the unique ability of SNSs to facilitate communication in a more personable and informal manner which may increase engagement and interaction with military messaging. For the interviewees, the expansion of online networks can result in tangible real-world benefits for the military institution such as the acquisition of funding, recruitment, and public support for their activities.

If 'Building Networks and Advocates' is focused upon accessing networks and the resources held within, 'Impression Management' is about influencing or changing the

perceptions held by those within these networks. Section two details the perceived opportunities afforded by SNSs to potentially challenge pre-conceived notions of the military as an institution and to strategically manage their image online. The capacity of SNSs to facilitate innovative StratCom strategies and to allow military actors to engage in progressive issues such as LGBTQ and women's rights are outlined. Direct engagement through SNSs with audiences and the proactive dissemination of information may promote an impression of the institution as transparent and credible. The awareness amongst military communications practitioners that SNSs do not represent a silver bullet with which to alter entrenched negative opinions is recognised with an understanding that the key audience for military StratCom online is the middle ground who neither explicitly condemn nor support the institution. Furthermore, the technological affordances of SNSs which provide opportunities to strategically manage the visibility of the military institution online through the micro-targeting of content to specific audiences, the ability to pay to boost the circulation of content and to track its performance are outlined.

Section three explores the manner in which SNSs afford military StratCom practitioners the ability to intervene in and disrupt information flows in the contemporary media environment in service of their strategic goals (Chadwick, 2013). The increased independence of the military from MSM in the dissemination of their messaging and the ability to bypass traditional media entirely are highlighted. Further, the interviewees perceive official military SNSs as a mean to potentially drive or at least impact upon the mainstream media agenda. There is a recognition however that SNSs do not exist in a vacuum and so must work in tandem with the institution's overall communications

strategy within which the MSM still plays a significant role, particularly amongst policymakers and those actively engaged in political debate. As such, military actors now adopt a hybrid approach to StratCom, one that combines interactions and relationships with traditional media with their own independent social network engagement. The interviewees highlight that the affordances of SNSs are not experienced in isolation but rather are related to a complex ecology of other tools with other affordances (McVeigh-Schultz and Baym, 2015, p 2). The manner in which SNSs have altered the traditional communication practices of the military and their increasing importance as a tool of military StratCom are also highlighted.

Finally, section four examines the perceived limitations and constraints of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom. The scale of SNSs and the significant resources required to effectively manage it, the potential risks to reputation and operational security and the institutional tensions that exist around if, when and who should engage online on the militaries behalf are outlined. The extent to which military actors may utilise the affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom is thus dependent upon multiple factors, if the actor perceives the function, if that actor has the physical and cognitive dexterity to utilise it and if so, if that actor's use of SNSs is culturally valid and institutionally supported (Davies and Chouinard, 2016, p 245). This is particularly complex within the military context. Further, the inability to fully control the environment and the manner in which different audiences may interpret content are also highlighted.

5.2. BUILDING NETWORKS AND ADVOCATES

This affordance outlines the manner in which military StratCom practitioners perceive SNSs as a means to expand their social networks, acquire advocates and promote greater interaction with and awareness of their institutions. This is essential for military actors operating within democratic states who require broad spectrum public support for their activities in order to operate. SNSs afford military StratCom actors the opportunity to communicate at a relatively low cost and to reach a diverse set of audiences in a more informal manner than previously made possible by mainstream media, which in turn can result in real world tangible benefits for the military institution in the form of public and government support, recruitment and the acquisition of funding.

A recurring theme in the stakeholder interviews was the utility of SNSs as a means to create awareness of the military institution amongst multiple audiences and to promote and sustain support for their activities. This was spoken about by several of the participants in terms of an “existential battle” for the institution (see quote by Commandant Pat O’Connor below). Broad public awareness of, and value in, their activities was inextricably linked to the provision of budgets and their continued ability to operate. Further, SNSs afforded the participants the opportunity to communicate with target audiences at a lower cost than more traditional StratCom strategies might incur.

Commandant Pat O'Connor of the Irish Defence Forces spoke about the lack of resources available to him for public outreach and recruitment of military personnel and how SNSs met this shortfall by providing an essential low-cost avenue of communication.

We moved into the austerity period and all of our advertising and marketing budgets were stripped away. Not only that, we found ourselves in, I don't think it's too far to say, an existential battle, as in, why are we spending a billion on defence? We're broke, let's just get rid of them and arm the Guards⁴ kinda thing....so, we had this perfect storm, where we had to, we needed to communicate more than ever, and we had no budget to communicate. So that's where we had dipped our toe in social media, kind of as a, let's see what this thing is all about, and all of a sudden it became very central to how we communicate. (Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

Other participants highlighted the sheer ubiquity of SNSs in the contemporary communications environment and that for any institution, including military and defence, to not have a presence there would serve to severely undermine their

⁴ An Garda Síochána, more commonly referred to as the Gardaí or "the Guards", is the national police service of the Republic of Ireland.

relevance. SNSs provide a low-cost means of communication but further, they allow access to much larger and more diverse audiences. In order for a military or defence institution to sustain in a democratic state, they must garner support from a broad spectrum of society. Chris Riley, Head of Strategic Communications, Public Diplomacy Division, NATO, utilised the example of Brexit to illustrate the need for military and defence institutions to stay relevant amongst their target populations and to expand their networks in order to ensure their continued existence. This cannot, he said, be taken for granted, and social media is a significant tool with which to accomplish this.

Well for whatever it was, 20, 30 years, no mainstream British political party stood on a platform to take the country out of the European Union but guess what? The political sand shifted and that lack of investment, that lack of base investment in the narrative in the UK meant that the mainstream political parties were undercut by their own voters because they hadn't invested in it at all. So, our view is, we're storing. If we don't break out of our own communications bubble and engage younger people particularly, it's a ticking time bomb for us. And that means you have to have a very innovative approach to social media. (Chris Riley, Strategic Communications, NATO)

For Chris Riley, a robust approach to social media engagement is essential to creating awareness of, and value in NATO which may in turn have real world, offline consequences for the future of the institution. Traditional MSM channels are no longer

sufficient in meeting the StratCom objectives of the military and defence institution as audiences are increasingly fragmented, with younger generations, in particular, migrating to social networks such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat to obtain their information.

SNSs also facilitate the opportunity for a military or defence institution to indirectly target their own governments in order to promote their value and encourage the allocation of greater resources to them. Several interviewees underscored the use of SNSs to reach multiple audiences and networks from publics to policymakers.

In our social media strategy, we identify a few different key audiences. First and foremost, in US government public affairs one of our missions is to inform the American public. So, I would say the US public and what we're doing on the continent of Africa is probably one of the key audiences. Secondly, you have the lawmakers. The DC Influencers, the lawmakers those kinds of people that can really define policy. So, they will, you know, their staffers look at our stuff and they then have an idea of what we're doing. (Nate Herring, US Africa Command)

SNSs offer the opportunity for the institution to both publicise and promote their activities. Commandant Pat O'Connor outlined that greater value for the activities of the defence forces amongst the public encouraged through social media engagement, may, in turn, translate into greater levels of government funding. As an organ of the

state, the Irish Defence Forces are not permitted to directly lobby the Irish government over issues of pay and conditions. Commandant O'Connor perceived SNSs as a conduit to lobby the domestic audience through their online networks which might then in turn influence government spending.

We think that it's important for us to continually show how capable and qualified and expert our people are and maybe that will help the government to address the pay issue. (Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

SNSs allow for the expansion of networks and the potential acquisition of advocates for a military institution. As SNSs can afford the opportunity to communicate with multiple audiences simultaneously, these networks can be comprised of domestic publics, international audiences, soldiers and their families, influencers and journalists alike. Military institutions can then leverage the power that resides within these networks to disseminate and promote their strategic messaging. Several of the respondents spoke about the increased promotion of and interaction with their content through the harnessing of audiences and influencers embedded within their social networks.

You can tag influencers or the women in defensive security account in your tweet or send them a message and say, 'hey can you retweet this?', amplifying it through those very specific and niche networks and

leveraging connections that you build with those networks so that they amplify that to their followers. I think that presents solid opportunities.

(Lucy Ellis, Canadian Department of National Defense)

The use of SNSs to build digital relationships with networks and advocates online was a recurrent theme across the interviews. Every interview participant referenced the unique utility of SNSs to allow them to expand their social networks by engaging in a variety of informational topics beyond those traditionally associated with defence in order to encourage and maintain support for any future military activity that may arise. In contemporary society, public support for military activity is essential if these institutions are to carry out their offline strategic objectives. As stated by Smith (2006), the battle for hearts and minds is no longer a support activity to military operations but is rather their central purpose. SNSs offer just one tool with which to fight this battle.

The idea was, first of all, broadening the scope of IDF issues. So, it doesn't deal just with conflict issues. So, the foundation was getting beyond the conflict in a way where people can relate to Israel issues and see them through the IDF. So, it would be appealing to a broader audience that would not necessarily show any interest in the IDF. But bring them substance or value that would be appealing to them and therefore they will either follow us, like us or share our content. But ultimately all of the issues beyond the conflict were designed in order to have a substantial following when there is a conflict. It was to build that

following and get people that aren't necessarily hardcore Israel supporters. (Lt. Col. (R) Peter Lerner, Israeli Defense Forces)

Several of the respondents referenced the ways in which advocates of the military institution, often obtained solely through online engagement, have the ability to come to the defence of the institution in times of crises or controversy. Nate Herring of US Africa Command illustrated this point through the example of an attack on US soldiers in Niger in 2017 which resulted in the deaths of four servicemen and a significant political backlash in the US in relation to their military presence in that country.

There was an incidence when we had Niger and there were a few congressmen, high level, you know, congressmen that had come out and said, 'we didn't know we had US soldiers in Niger'. We don't necessarily get involved in politics, I mean we can't as a government organisation it's not our lane, but when that's being put out there publicly and that's being talked about you know, it's influencing the conversation and not really helping your cause but you can't directly engage. What I found which was pretty amazing is just general social media users were going through our old tweets, our old Facebook posts, our old website content looking for examples of our commander in news articles, looking for times when he mentioned the US being in Niger or we put a story out about us being in Niger or we talked about it from years ago and they were tweeting directly

at the congressmen with examples of ‘how did you not know? AFRICOM has been talking about this for years.’

LT: So, it’s like an audit trail of your actions basically?

Nate: Yeah, ultimately and you know it was really interesting unprompted just general people you know using that, so they almost fought the battle without us having to. (Nate Herring, US Africa Command)

Military and defence communications can often be constrained by issues of operational security, their normative a-political stance and bureaucratic procedure and thus in certain sensitive situations it may not be possible for them to respond to controversies in a direct and timely manner. SNSs and the networks that reside within them, present opportunities for the military and defence institutions to have advocates engage on their behalf when they cannot. Further, the ‘persistence’ (boyd, 2010) of online content that is automatically recorded and archived, although often perceived as a risk of engaging in SNSs, may also serve to provide an audit trail that can later be used to defend military activity in a trial of public opinion.

The tensions that exist between the public demand for timely and accurate information, particularly in times of crises and the military institutional procedures that may hinder

their ability to provide this, may be assuaged somewhat by the engagement of military advocates on their behalf. These surrogates can disseminate information to their networks whilst providing the military institution with a degree of separation that may insulate them against accusations of inaccuracy or deceit. This point is further illustrated by Commandant Pat O'Connor:

Everyone wants information. They want it, they want it, they want it and there's just the negativity and then this like you know, this hyperbolic like "it's a joke", or "ah it's an embarrassment", "it's a scandal", everything's a scandal, nothing is just a bit bad it's a fricken scandal. And you're like it's not really a scandal it's just this thing happened and I can't tell you any more about it at the moment. I find that personally very frustrating. So, certainly that's something we're going to have to try and deal with and I think that... my gut tells me we need to find our advocates in our network and maybe they're people we can engage when we're 80% sure on something because they don't have to be right but they can be broadly right. (Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

A key group identified by the respondents as potentially effective advocates for the military institution are their own soldiers. Although concerns persist across all of the stakeholders interviewed, in relation to the potential risks to operations and reputation posed by the use of personal SNSs by their soldiers, the majority agreed that the benefits outweigh the risks, once proper training and guidance are provided to

personnel. This position represents a significant shift in traditional military institutional culture that would previously have seriously reprimanded any soldier taking photographs and posting them online when engaged in operational activity. Those within the communications departments of these military and defence institutions at least recognise the inherent authenticity of their soldiers posting about their everyday activities and the potentially greater access to networks this may facilitate.

So, what we talk about is trying to create a culture of content creation.... and that kind of worked and it created that culture of, you know people almost get competitive. You know, I want my picture up. Some of our most viewed posts are just, a guy was out on patrol in the Golan Heights and he just looked back and he saw there was a convoy and it was just a beautiful piece of land and he took a photograph, like, that gets us a 100,000 views you know so we very much encourage that.
(Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

Digital communications technologies such as smartphones offer an inexpensive way for military personnel to capture compelling content and disseminate it across SNSs from the perspective of the embedded individual soldier. This personalisation of the soldiers' experience can serve to promote greater interaction with and awareness of the military institution whilst obscuring the impression of explicit corporate messaging.

I mean take the personal stories thing, we want to know that chirpy Jimmy Fallon from Londonderry, from Co. Derry, is out in some field in Iraq training some Iraqi soldiers and if he's posting and he's a compelling character it doesn't matter whether he's doing the messaging. The point is the association of him, the organisation and what he stands for. He as an individual reaching to his people will have that knock-on effect. But we need everybody to be doing it. (Chris Riley, Strategic Communications, NATO)

SNSs facilitate the soldier as content creator, producer and disseminator on behalf of their respective military institutions (whether intentionally or unintentionally). This can potentially create an emotional and personal connection with the soldier encouraging support for the troops even when public support may be waning (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2015). This support may potentially translate into a positive association with the military for whom he/she serves. Thus, the use of personal SNSs by individual soldiers may create cumulative benefits for the broader military institution.

Utilising soldiers as advocates whilst also placing them at the centre of their online strategic storytelling on SNSs was highlighted by several of the interview participants. Soldiers here represent a resource upon which the military can draw upon in service of their communications objectives. Creating and disseminating content that can potentially provoke an emotional response is key to generating engagement with their content across SNSs. Miskimmon et al. (2013) state that social media allows political

actors to expose publics to their strategic narratives, convince them of their validity and even get them to become proponents of it. Audiences engage with the emotional charge of these narratives (ibid, p 112) which place an onus on the personalisation of the individual soldier.

I think the best thing about our way of communication is that we try to put the soldier, the human being in the middle of our communication. It's always very close, very personal stories. Which is a big difference to, I mean if there are journalists in Afghanistan which there are, and they are also in our camps they do their stories which is totally fine but they are not so close to our soldiers. They are more interested in the political stuff and our series for example, are not that much focused on political issues they're more focused on the personal issues. (Dirk von Holleben, German Federal Ministry of Defence)

The interview participants perceive SNSs as a unique avenue for them to communicate more personal narratives than might be possible through more traditional media outlets. These personal narratives act as a vehicle for the institution to build relationships with their networks and to disseminate their broader strategic narratives as illustrated by Nate Herring of US Africa Command:

I might put out US soldiers doing things in Africa because people love seeing US soldiers. I mean that's a high thing people love; you know

there's still a big sense of patriotism in the US so when I put out US soldiers training with our African partners US audiences like to see that. But then they're also getting the message of what we're doing in Africa with our partners. So, you're kind of giving them, I think that's important, you're giving them what they want but then you're slipping in some messaging to give them the information you want to deliver to them.

(Nate Herring, US Africa Command)

High levels of engagement and interaction on SNSs are achieved through these personable first-person narratives crafted by the military and defence institutions, which can occasionally even defy social media trends that favour images and videos over text. The key, as stated by Lucy Ellis of the Canadian Department of National Defence, to generating audience engagement and attention online is through this accessible emotional connection.

We also found that some of our longer-form posts were in our top-performing content. Ones that had a first-person narrative of just somebody telling their story in a very personable, plain language, colloquial kind of way. It's that sort of 'Humans of New York' style posts where people are willing to read something that has that human connection and isn't like a corporate, like clearly corporate message.

(Lucy Ellis, Canadian Department of National Defense)

The majority of interviewees spoke about engaging in important societal issues outside of the normal defence sphere on SNSs such as women's rights, LGBT rights and the environment as a means to reach broader and more diverse audiences with their strategic communications.

We can post many, many issues where people think 'yeah that's an important issue'. If you're talking about LGBT or whatever we have transgender which is of course not the first thing you connect with the military world. And also, women are very important for us, next month we have many events for women because we have international women's day and we're doing something under the Brandenburg Gate with soldiers, female soldiers. Because it's important for us and we can see that on social media we can achieve more women than we can do it on the traditional media ways. (Dirk von Holleben, German Federal Ministry of Defence)

For the respondents working within StratCom in the military and defence sector SNSs offer this unique opportunity to diverge from traditional security issues, in a manner not previously made possible by traditional media outreach. This diversification of subjects is one strategically made to widen the potential reach of military messaging and to engage audiences who may previously have had no interest in the military institution or issues of defence.

The idea of your one big hit you know, we don't have superstars here. Your one big hit that's going to knock it out of the park that's not going to happen but just getting in, getting into the tech business, getting into the issue of women's rights which NATO does take very seriously. And that will help open up these other audiences, these hard to reach audiences which we need to do. (Chris Riley, Strategic Communications, NATO)

There is no guarantee of heightened engagement for the institution as they contend with a 'paradox of plenty' online - a plenitude of information that leads to a poverty of attention (Mor, 2012). In speaking about competing for their target audiences' attention, two of the respondents spoke about the use of attractiveness or sex to generate interactions and expand networks for the military institution online. Both Nate Herring and Chris Riley referenced the NATO training exercise Trident Juncture in 2018 to illustrate this point.

During the big exercise last year Trident Juncture, we managed to persuade the part-time male model who's in the Royal Netherlands Navy... Good looking guy, you know, look at his Instagram, he's selling sex. And we got on the back of it. And I talked to a couple of friends of mine, US military and others and I said very provocatively to this guy, 'what did you think of it?' and he said, he came back with a very intelligent response, and he said, 'if that was a woman would you have done it?'. Ooh good question, good question. I'm not sure we'd have felt

comfortable doing it because it was a bit of sexploitation. But you know what sex sells doesn't it? And everybody you know; on social media we know that the images matter. (Chris Riley, Strategic Communications, NATO)

The use of physical attractiveness to gain attention and generate engagement on SNSs is endemic to this digital communications environment. However, the idea of explicitly 'selling sex' as a strategy represents a departure from traditional conceptualisations on the nature of military StratCom. The uncertainty of whether a woman would have been used in the same way to promote the military exercise is illustrative of the tensions that exist between the vernaculars of SNSs and the norms and traditions of the military institution in which reputation is a considerable concern. Whether or not these tactics resulted in long term increased public support for the exercise and its participants was not the significant strategic goal or outcome here, rather it was to simply expand their networks and thus increase public awareness.

Well, I mean there are people that had viewed that, that had probably never heard of the exercise that now were aware that it even exists. And that's ultimately a goal is if you can put something out there and reach a new audience and they had no idea you even existed and now they do, you've at least got a foot in the door. So that if someone in the future says do you know the US is doing military stuff in Africa? 'Well yeah actually I remember seeing some really hot guy on social media that was in some

exercise that has to do with, you know whatever'. (Nate Herring, US Africa Command)

Thus, the key objective for the military here is to reach these new audiences with their communications. It is not necessarily concerned with creating a well-informed public on the nature of their activities but rather to foster positive associations with the military amongst its networks. In engaging these audiences previously outside the scope of military communication, several of the respondents highlighted that it's not just what you say, but how you say it that matters. Adopting a tone befitting of the norms and vernaculars of SNSs is critical in generating interaction and expanding ones' networks.

You could, and again to be, not slightly provocative but you know, the secretary-general is great at what he does. He has fantastic messaging but the bottom line is he's not going to reach 18 to 24-year-old women in Krakow. He's just not. So, if you think they're important then you have to move your content to what the audience will consume and that means being prepared to adjust your tone. In the same way that if you were to do an education product for children, you would not use the same tone as you'd use in the New York Times would you? It is common sense. It is communications common sense. So, there's clearly a balance that you have to take, that you have to adapt and I think you've got to constantly reinvent that. (Chris Riley, Strategic Communications, NATO)

SNSs afford a unique platform for military communications professionals to employ a more informal tone not previously possible in traditional mainstream media. A diverse array of content presented in a more light-hearted, relatable tone which reflects the vernaculars of these platforms encourages greater engagement from hard to reach audiences and allows the military institution to further compete for attention online. Both Lucy Ellis of the Canadian Department of National Defense and Dirk von Holleben of the German Federal Ministry of Defence spoke about the importance of bursts of humour for public engagement and the need for their content to grab the attention of target audiences accustomed to scrolling incessantly on sites such as Facebook. This perspective was also expressed by Nate Herring of US Africa Command.

Ultimately social media comes down to, it's half informing and it's half entertaining. I mean you're competing with the cute cat videos; you're competing with I mean; I'll look at Facebook and I'm guilty of this a lot, I look at Facebook, I'll start on 1 video and you know how you scroll down to the next one and I get to a point, I'm like 30 minutes in and what video did I even start with? And you scroll all the way back up and you're like oh yeah god because people you know, the kind of content that's funny, that's engaging that's what draws people in. (Nate Herring, US Africa Command)

There was not uniform agreement across the respondents in relation to the appropriateness of the use of humour and more general social media vernaculars such

as memes and gifs, by a military institution online. Nate Herring also recognised that it remains a challenge for a lot of military organisations to engage in jovial content and exchanges when they are ultimately training for and engaged in, violence and warfare. It's difficult to balance humour on SNSs with announcements of airstrikes that have killed people. Nate acknowledged that commercial brands can take much greater liberty in this regard than a military institution. Commandant Pat O'Connor echoes this point and ultimately strongly disagrees with the idea that a military institution should engage in the norms and vernaculars of SNSs on its official platforms.

That's fine if your Coca-Cola or whatever but if you're an austere organ of the state whose job is to exert violence on behalf of the state if required, I don't think people want us to be those guys. We have chosen specifically not to do that because it doesn't work with our brand, like, we're not trying to be gas⁵. We're trying to be competent and professional, number one. And number two, I think there's a lot of risk to that if you get that wrong, the house burns down. (Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

Utilising humour in their official SNSs represents somewhat of a double-edged sword for those engaged in military StratCom. On the one hand, they must adhere somewhat

⁵ "Gas" is a colloquial Irish expression for "funny"

to the norms and vernaculars of the online environment to reach and expand their networks and on the other, this can represent a significant risk to reputation and public trust should they be seen to be too joyful or glib about the reality of their activities. The majority of respondents, however, agreed that SNSs overall, lend themselves to a greater informality in tone previously unavailable to military institutions in traditional media that may make them more relatable to audiences.

Military communications practitioners perceive SNSs as a means to build networks and advocates online, increasing awareness of the institution amongst broader more diverse audiences than those normally engaged in issues of defence and to acquire advocates to engage on their behalf, particularly in times of crises. This in turn may result in real word cumulative benefits for the military institution in their ability to operate, to recruit and to acquire funding and support. The affordance of 'Building Networks and Advocates' is essentially about reach, in accessing networks and capitalising on the resources within. The affordance of 'Impression Management' outlined in the following section is focused upon the perceived opportunities SNSs present to influence and track the perceptions of those within these networks on the nature of the military institution.

5.3. IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

The affordance of 'Impression Management' describes the goal-directed behaviours military communications actors engage in online for the purpose of controlling or manipulating the attributions and impressions that others form about them (Goffman,

1959; Tedeschi and Reiss, 1981). A fundamental organisational concern for military and defence institutions is the way in which they and their activities are viewed by both domestic and international publics. This concern has been made ever more salient by the dynamics and discourses of the digital age (Flyverbom et al., 2016). Research on the performance of impression management online have highlighted the manner in which average users of SNSs may negotiate audiences and manage their self-presentation (Hayes et al., 2015; Marwick & Boyd, 2011; Pearce & Vitak, 2016). SNSs also afford military actors with a means of self-presentation or impression management (Mor, 2012) through the ability to communicate with their target audiences online in a way that attempts to challenge traditional or pre-existing perceptions of the institution.

We choose to compete and differentiate on comms, so I don't know, like when you're growing up or like maybe still when people think of the military they often think of grey haired moustachioed men with bald patches, who I don't know, my father like would be like 'what the hell do you guys do all day, other than walk around in those clicky shoes?' That's still his picture of the defence forces. So, I think social media gave us an opportunity to adjust that perspective. (Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

Those working within military StratCom can utilise SNSs to produce and curate content that shows what they want to show in relation to the institution and its activities. SNSs can be harnessed "to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present" themselves

to target audiences (Carr and Hayes, 2015, p 50). Facets of the institution not often explored in traditional media can be made visible and structured in a way that attempts to appeal directly to their target audiences.

Being able to tailor it a little bit more and personalise it a little bit more so that it isn't some kind of impersonal news release or TV advert going out there. There's a sense of social media that there is a little bit more connection and I think, that feeling of connection can help when you're trying to emotionally connect to somebody and change their perspective or change their opinion. (Lucy Ellis, Canadian Department of National Defense)

One of the respondents, Dirk von Holleben spoke about the production of an innovative YouTube reality series created to show the training undertaken by new recruits to the German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) and how this impacted upon the younger demographics' impression and knowledge of the military in Germany.

'The Recruits' was really really big because no one expected this and it was a big surprise that 'oh wow these old-fashioned army can be cool' and can be on social media and it's getting bigger, bigger, bigger. And we know that 50% of Germany's people or the people in school, know our series which is big, it's really big. It doesn't mean that they love it but

they know it and that's the important thing. (Dirk von Holleben, German Federal Ministry of Defence)

The production of a YouTube reality series featuring young soldiers can challenge traditional perceptions of the armed forces and the ways in which they have traditionally communicated with their publics. Several respondents once again referenced the use of progressive topics on their SNSs outside of the traditional defence sphere, not only to expand their networks of communication but also as a means to challenge preconceived notions amongst audiences previously aware of the institution.

You tweet about two gay soldiers holding hands and then they think, 'oh this is the IDF? But they keep telling us that they eat babies for breakfast', that doesn't relate to my outlook on the subject'. So, it's creating a contrast that shouldn't be too strong of a contrast or they would say that this is just fake news but believable and relatable stories. (Lt. Col. (R) Peter Lerner, Israeli Defense Forces)

SNSs can afford the opportunity for the military and defence institution to promote these broader, more diverse narratives that do not often appear in traditional media coverage of the military. This promotion of alternative narratives can be used not only to potentially create a more favourable impression of the institution to the domestic public, but this impression can then be reflected in the way their internal audience views the institution and their own role within it.

We feel that if the external audience views us in a certain way, that will have an impact on our internal audience. Because our internal audience need to be proud of how the externals see them so, I talk about our social media being, you know that mirror when you look in you always look good and there's another one, you always look fat, well our social media should be the one where like 'yeah, I'm looking good today'. (Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

LT: A feedback loop?

Pat: Yeah, a positive echo chamber

The majority of the respondents viewed SNSs as a vector for positive stories about the military institution that don't often feature within traditional media. Disseminating these positive stories around topics not often associated with the military and defence sectors such as support for LGBTQ within their ranks can, they believe, assist in challenging preconceived notions on the nature of their institutions and ultimately make them more appealing to their audiences. SNSs do not represent a silver bullet for military actors wishing to alter the perceptions of a waiting public. All of the interviewees without exception acknowledged that no media strategy, including that of SNSs, can successfully change the perceptions of those with entrenched negative opinions of a military institution. Nor is it even their intention to do so. Aside from offering information

and reassurance to existing supporters through their SNSs presence, the primary target audience are those representing the middle ground. Those who neither explicitly support nor condemn the military institution.

You have the supporters who are going to use it and want to get information from you to help them in their arguments. You're going to have people that hate you and they're going to reject everything you say or try to find ways to embarrass you. And then there's the people, the people that are most interesting...those that are slightly interested. Those are the interesting ones because those are the ones you might be able to, let's say, especially when crisis breaks out ok, you're being accused of war crimes and you want to put out there at least your argument why this is not a war crime or why it was self-defence or why you had no choice but to do what you do. You at least want to be able to, even on an uneven playing field you want to go out and fight. They might be willing to hear both sides. I think that's the interesting audience. (Prof Gadi Wolfsfeld IDC Herzliya/ Former Israeli Defense Forces)

The interviewees spoke about the need to communicate with and appeal to this middle ground to serve the strategic objectives of increasing positive perceptions of the institution, which in turn can increase support for their activities during times of conflict. For Commandant Pat O'Connor, SNSs afford the opportunity to positively influence

the perceptions of this middle ground and this was once again inextricably tied to the acquisition of funding and resources to the institution.

On social media one of the things we are trying to do.....we have people who like, my mother would think everything the army does is great because she's my mother. You know, that's just the way it is. But equally, we've people who detest us and think we're baby killers for some reason. You know, it's just certain cohorts. It's the middle, you're just trying to inch them in a direction closer to my mother where they're like "you know what? I'm ok if the defence forces get a little bit more in the next budget" Or "I'm ok I understand the value for defence". That's what we're trying to do. (Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

The interview respondents also highlighted direct engagement with followers as a key mechanism with which to establish an impression of credibility and authenticity amongst their target audiences. This direct accessibility for audiences to institutions that have traditionally been viewed as an austere organ of the state is made uniquely possible by the architectures of SNSs which facilitate a two-way flow of communication. Even those innately critical or sceptical about the nature of the military can comment and be directly responded to, with potentially positive results for the military institution.

You know I've often had people that might say something really negative about the US or what we're doing and we'll try to respond if we can. And

instead of most of the time, you know, based on their initial, you're expecting them to just get in this little war of words with you but a lot of times you'll get 'thank you for your response'. You get a lot of that now because they're not expecting a government agency to respond to some random social media user so I think when you do that it humanises your presence a little bit. (Nate Herring, US Africa Command)

Rather than further inflaming a situation, several of the respondents stated that they found directly engaging and addressing criticism of their institution online led to positive outcomes. Those directing criticism towards the institution online who receive a response, can feel recognised and heard. This can ultimately serve to satisfy the complaint and to promote an impression of transparency of the military institution. This point is further echoed by Dirk von Holleben of the German Armed forces.

We try to interact with everything as long as it's within the laws of this country. And if people are telling us we are stupid then we give them an answer that we think that we're not but it's ok that they think that and this was very successful for us because people didn't expect that. (Dirk von Holleben, German Federal Ministry of Defence)

Although the negativity expressed online towards the institution may persist, the very act of responding to criticism and not simply ignoring or deleting these comments allows the military institution to present itself as transparent and authentic and for the

complainant to feel as if their concerns have been addressed. Authenticity and transparency are key elements in maintaining a credible online presence across SNSs. Several of the interviewees pointed to the importance of providing accurate and timely information to their audiences. Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2015) describe this as a proactive premeditated approach to the dissemination of imagery and information by the military. The effects of transparency here may serve as a "disinfectant" that can assuage ideas of the military institution as secretive or corrupt (Flyverbom et al., 2016).

Obviously, I work for the defence forces, my job is to deliver our messages. But we try to do it in a way that's you know, as objective as possible. Like we, we will never tell mistruths, we will never exaggerate, we will only show things that we actually do because with social media if you try to do anything else you'll be called out on it. And that undermining of our content would kill us. So, therefore, our content is, is a true reflection of what we do. It's obviously a best foot forward, but it is a true reflection of what we do. (Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

The nature of SNSs as a two-way flow of information leaves the military institution vulnerable to criticism or distrust if the audience perceives that they are being dishonest. In order to maintain credibility, they must be perceived by their audiences to be proactive and transparent in their communications. As outlined by Lucy Ellis of the Canadian Department of National Defense, this image of the institution can be

further promoted through the release of less positive stories related to their activities which represents a departure from traditional military StratCom practices.

I've noticed in past year or two across the different accounts there's been more of a willingness to also share bad news, like instead of just constantly promoting, you know, these are the really great operational achievements that we have done. There has also been acknowledgements when there was a fire on a ship during an exercise or acknowledging that an exercise isn't happening this year and explaining the reasons why that is happening. So, I think there's more willingness to take that risk of putting potentially negative information out there but I think that also speaks to maintaining the credibility of the social media presence. That it's giving a more holistic impression of what's really going on. (Lucy Ellis, Canadian Department of National Defense)

The voluntary release of selective negative stories online by the military in relation to their activities may serve to further defy traditional expectations of the institution as protective and secretive and to promote them as a credible information source, whilst simultaneously facilitating the framing of these stories through their own narrative lens. Several of the interviewees highlighted that transparency in their online communications assisted them in building credibility and trust with audiences. As Nye (2005) argued, 'politics has become a contest of competitive credibility' (p 106). In order to obtain and sustain the attention of their target audiences, it is essential to be

perceived as honest and reliable (Mor, 2012). For respondents, this was achieved with publics through online engagement and through the proactive dissemination of information on the activities of the institution.

SNSs afford military actors the opportunity to manage the image of themselves they present to their audiences in an attempt to influence their perceptions. Several of the interviewees spoke about the use of social media to communicate with supporters, providing them with information or “ammunition” but also about addressing their adversaries online by countering their narratives and activities. The key audience that they perceive can be influenced through their strategic communications on SNSs are the under-informed or undecided, both domestically and internationally. One of the respondents, Captain Jelle van Haaster, Dutch Ministry of Defence, specifically referenced the utility of SNSs as a tool to map public sentiment of the institution on the ground in areas of operations.

If you have mapped the terrain or the human terrain you know positive people, people who are positive towards our military operations or negative. Then you actually can do communication engagement or influence them or try to influence them. That's, many people think that's very scary or very 1984 Orwell but military operations are always aimed at influencing people so social media isn't any different in that regard.

(Captain Jelle van Haaster, Dutch Ministry of Defence)

The ability to track the sentiment of the military institution on SNSs is an example of the 'hidden affordances' of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom (Gaver, 1991), as this is largely invisible to the average user and is illustrative of the fact that SNSs afford different things to different users in different contexts (Evans et al, 2017). SNSs can be deployed in service of both operational and communications objectives in an attempt to gauge and potentially impact upon public opinion of the military through careful impression management of the institution. As Goffman states 'the most objective form of naked power, i.e., physical coercion, is often neither objective nor naked but rather functions as a display for persuading the audience; it is often a means of communication, not merely a means of action" (1956, p 241). SNSs can facilitate those engaged in military StratCom the ability to communicate in a timely and relatable manner, in a way that can humanise the organisation and promote trust and public support. As argued by (Miskimmon et al., 2013), the type of media used can have a significant impact on the way in which messages are constructed and disseminated. The unique characteristics and affordances of SNSs are significant when considering their use as one tool of military StratCom. The ubiquity and reach of SNS use, the interactivity and engagement they facilitate and the informality and accessibility they promote provide military StratCom practitioners with a unique avenue for their communications. Those working within military StratCom manage impressions by choosing to highlight certain narrative representations of the institution whilst obscuring others. Impression management represents purposive efforts by military communications practitioners to utilise SNSs to influence the perceptions of the public on the nature of their institutions. This endeavour is bolstered by the technological affordances of SNSs which facilitate the management of their visibility online through

the micro targeting of content to specific audiences, the paid boosting of content and the performance tracking measures made possible through the back-end analytics of these platforms.

5.3.1. VISIBILITY MANAGEMENT

SNSs afford military communications practitioners with the opportunity to strategically *manage* their visibility online, that is to create/produce compelling content, pay to boost the reach of this content and to track its success amongst audiences through back-end analytics. Visibility management is defined as the strategic actions of organisations to manage the content and associations visible on SNSs and the consequences resulting from that visibility (Pearce et al, 2018; Flyverbom, 2016). Visibility in the context of SNSs refers to both the technical features of these platforms and strategic actions of individuals/groups to manage and curate their online presence (Pearce et al., 2018). The level of visibility obtained by any group or individual is determined not only by their own strategic actions but also by the algorithmic and socio-economic components of SNSs (Van Dijck and Poell, 2013, p 6). Although SNSs engage in their own strategies for promoting popular content and demoting others, users can engage in concerted efforts to boost their own visibility online in service of their goals.

As previously highlighted in this chapter, it is imperative for the military to be seen by audiences that can contribute to sustaining them and their activities. One significant demographic that is the focus of military StratCom online is the 18-24 age group, with one respondent indicating that some militaries may, in fact, consider the important

demographic to be even younger, at 16-24 years old. Specifically targeting this demographic is made uniquely possible by the nature of SNSs which are used habitually by this age group in a way that traditional media outlets are not.

We went into Instagram specifically because we were seeing the age engagement on our Facebook page going up which is not particularly useful actually. So, we needed to go into Instagram to stay with the younger demographic and also when we're going for a female focused campaign Instagram is you know, it's strong on female and also its strong on our content like one awesome photo or 30-second video it works for us you know? Again, the diversity isn't for the sake of it, it's not like a diversification to avoid risk. Its diversification for, to get the audiences.

(Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

This excerpt is illustrative of an awareness by military communications practitioners that different SNSs have unique vernaculars and users which in turn impacts how they utilise them in service of their StratCom goals. These younger demographics represent an essential target audience for the military institutions who wish to recruit and retain them in their forces. SNSs facilitate access to multiple audiences for military actors including domestic, for the purposes of support and recruitment and international for the purposes of alliance and prestige. The potential 'scalability' (boyd, 2010) of content online is an affordance of SNSs that can offer visibility of the institution on a grand scale.

I mean there's always those, the sort of outliers or unique pieces of content that end up transcending across all different kinds of populations and those are the moments that... I don't know if you necessarily would have seen or felt in a pre-social media world. (Lucy Ellis, Canadian Department of National Defense)

This level of visibility or virality may be rare for a military institution online. It cannot be guaranteed and must take account of both the technical features of the individual SNSs being utilised and the strategic actions of communications actors to manage their content. Several of the interviewees referenced SNSs as a means to adopt a direct commercial marketing approach to their strategic communications online to increase the visibility of their profiles to garner the result of greater public recognition of their respective institutions.

I know from talking to people in commerce, it's not quite as straightforward but the bottom line is if you're in Comms in Coca-Cola the bottom line is selling more units. And if you're not selling units, you know, the profit margins go down and people lose their jobs. Here it's obviously a bit different but we have now taken that sort of, slightly more commercial approach, recognizing that NATO is a brand, recognising it needs to be protected and like any brand, we are looking at the

demographics we need to engage and they are not middle-aged white men. (Chris Riley, Strategic Communications, NATO)

Military StratCom actors utilise SNSs to create and make visible their brand in order to sell their institution to diverse target audiences. Several of the respondents spoke interchangeably about the nature of their own military institutions and commercial businesses such as Coca -Cola and Nike in how they approach their communications strategies.

I would say it should be, any communicator, like it should be in any marketers interest to go beyond their echo chambers. Because you're always looking from a business perspective for new clients. And I think that is where most of the time we're losing. We, militaries, businesses, they're focused on reinforcing their core audience and not going beyond that to convince other people why they should buy their product or their idea or their policy. (Lt. Col. (R) Peter Lerner, Israeli Defense Forces)

SNSs afford the opportunity for businesses, organisations and those with the resources, to pay to boost the visibility of their content online whilst simultaneously tracking the level of their reach through the back-end analytics of these platforms. Several of the interviewees reported engaging in this process.

On platforms awash with content we feel that we're still standing out because we're making the best content. And I think that's ultimately and I if I was giving anyone advice on social media, how do you compete? Two ways, one, you make the best content and two, you pay for reach.
(Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

Both Commandant O'Connor of the Irish Defence Forces and Chris Riley of NATO Strategic Communication stated that the manner in which you compete for visibility on SNSs is through the production of high-quality compelling content that you can then pay to promote. Thus, in visibility terms on SNSs, resources still matter. The resources may be financial in the budgets allocated for a particular campaign, or human in the form of the skill and experience that you can bring to your StratCom team. Professor of Communications and former Israeli Defence Forces serviceman, Gadi Wolfsfeld stated:

IDF has the resources, you know they have all these reserve officers that have worked in public relations, worked in advertising, worked in social media so they have all this free labour. I myself served at one point in the Israeli spokesperson's office so I was free labour. (Prof Gadi Wolfsfeld IDC Herzliya/ Former Israeli Defense Forces)

SNSs do not afford uniformly to users. Those with significant resources will have a significant advantage in gaining visibility online. The resources made available to the

interviewees for the purposes of online StratCom campaigns varied widely across their institutions (discussed further in section 4. under Limitations and Constraints). The significant resources at hand for the Israeli Defence Forces and the inherent diversity and multilingual nature of their forces allow for the dissemination of multiple campaigns which can specifically target various territories and language groups. For those defence forces working without the same resources, SNSs still afford them the opportunity to micro-target specific content to very specific audiences relatively inexpensively.

Having a female focused piece of content that we can now direct straight at every woman in that age bracket on social media like that's a no brainer, an absolute no brainer, and it's probably something that I've learnt, not that I've specifically done anything about it (laughs) but it's something that I've learnt, I think where the future is in more specific content for specific demographics. (Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

Several of the respondents perceived the future of military StratCom online as becoming micro-targeted to individual interests. This mirrors tactics recently observed across political campaigning online and although the interviewees stated that they do not as yet have the structures in place to support it, these techniques are supported by the platform infrastructures of SNSs such as Facebook and this is the perceived trajectory for managing their visibility with target audiences going forward.

It's like you want to sell bottles of Coca-Cola to Peter or to Lauren then it's a different way to selling it. We have no meat in our Coca-Cola, we have no sugar in our, whatever. So, I think it's different audiences and therefore the message is crafted differently. (Lt. Col. (R) Peter Lerner, Israeli Defense Forces)

Whether targeting niche groups for specific campaigns or broadcasting content to large scale audiences, the strategic goal being met through the use of SNSs is the potential for increased visibility, which can, in turn, push the military institution into the public debate. A high level of visibility online presents both rewards and risks for a military institution. However, several of the respondents stated that whether it be favourable or critical, the key is to be spoken about.

If there's a conversation around the military that's good because it's generally not there. You know, even if the conversation is negative at least they're talking about defence. Because our resourcing suggests that we're not considered to be in any way, not even a priority because we should never be a priority but we're the lowest resourced in Europe and that kind of speaks for itself, I think. (Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

Dirk von Holleben of the German Federal Ministry of Defence outlined how at times, they will play with the line of what is perceived as acceptable communication from a military institution in order to gain greater visibility and attention.

I think we have a good feeling of what works and we have a good feeling what way of criticism we can expect and sometimes we really play with this provocation. And at least for Germany, I know pretty well what kind of organisation would criticize us. And it's ok. I mean usually it's not our goal to make campaigning, recruiting campaigns where everybody thinks 'yeah that's nice'. It's not nice. Then it wouldn't be, people wouldn't care about it. We try to provoke people sometimes and to be very, to be, we want people to discuss about the army we don't want to be that everybody loves us. (Dirk von Holleben, German Federal Ministry of Defence)

The ubiquity of SNSs and the mediation they afford accentuate the need for military organisations to engage in impression and visibility management to increase awareness of the institution and to potentially influence perceptions of it amongst their target audiences. Attention in a networked society is a commodity (boyd, 2010) and those with the resources will have the competitive advantage (Chadwick et al., 2016). Military StratCom practitioners adopt a commercial marketing approach to their messaging on popular SNSs investing significant human and financial resources to produce, amplify and track their strategic messaging. However, SNSs represent just

one tool available to militaries for StratCom and these do not exist in a vacuum. In the contemporary media environment, social media and mass media have become intertwined in a larger cultural arena (Van Dijck and Poell, 2013) where multiple actors compete to be made visible and to impact upon information flows.

5.4. INTERVENTION IN HYBRID INFORMATION FLOWS

This affordance illustrates the potential for military actors and the technology of SNSs to intervene in, disrupt and challenge information flows in the contemporary hybrid media system in service of their strategic goals (Chadwick et al., 2016). SNSs have afforded the opportunity for military actors to disseminate their own communications to audiences with greater independence from, and less reliance upon the traditional MSM. Commandant Pat O'Connor of the Irish Defence Forces stated that one of the key benefits of SNSs for the purposes of StratCom was the ability to control your own messaging and the nature of the information appearing about your institution.

At StratCom level it's about information dominance. It's about, so you Google, Irish Defence Forces, I'm pretty confident you will find our content that we've created. Where it's our website, it's our social media platforms, the links between those drive you up in terms of your SEO on the website, on the Google rankings. If you look for videos on YouTube, you'll probably find my videos, our videos. If you look for photographs, you'll find our Flickr photographs, so I mean, straight away, that means when someone looks for information about our organisation, they're

getting our information, which is obviously 'on message', and we would hope, of such a calibre, of such a high quality, that people don't look elsewhere for other stuff. (Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

The technological infrastructures of SNSs facilitate greater independence in the management of StratCom for military actors. By engaging in multiple SNSs from social media platforms to official websites, they can succeed in pushing their own information and messaging to the top of the search engine rankings seen by those seeking information about their institution. Military actors utilise SNSs to rally support for their institutions both domestically and internationally but also as a tool to both influence and bypass traditional media (Zeitsoff, 2017). The majority of interviewees highlighted the impact of SNSs on their ability to bypass traditional media to disseminate their own narratives on the nature of their institutions.

In Germany it's like, also in the other countries there are many bad news about armed forces. Many scandals many problems whatever, and they are in the newspapers every day. And it's not always as bad as some journalists write. And we can tell the stories also where things work well. Which is not news for a newspaper. (Dirk von Holleben, German Federal Ministry of Defence)

As highlighted previously in this thesis, the relationship between the military and the media is as old as the press itself (Limor and Nossek, 2006) and this relationship is a complex one characterised by varying degrees of cooperation and distrust on both sides. Concerns around the way in which the MSM portrays the military were abundant across the respondents, evidencing that this reticence in interacting with traditional media appears to endure in today's contemporary environment.

I would say internal communication as a whole, when I say internal when you're writing about yourself. You're putting out information about yourself. You're able to put it out in the words that you want it put out. When you rely on external news media you don't always know the angle that they're going to put on it, it may not be 100-percent the way you want it to be phrased so social media kinda cuts out that intermediate. it allows you to tell your story in your own words. (Nate Herring, US Africa Command)

Several interviewees echoed concerns in relation to how stories of their institutions might be framed or otherwise skewed or censored by the traditional MSM. However, all recognised that social media does not exist in a vacuum, it must work in tandem with the institution's overall communications strategy within which the MSM still plays a significant role. As such the potential affordances of SNSs are not experienced by military communications practitioners in isolation but rather in relation to a complex ecology of other tools with other affordances (McVeigh-Schultz and Baym, 2015, p 2).

In the contemporary hybrid media environment in which “new” and “traditional” media compete and intertwine, SNSs can serve an agenda-setting function, influencing what might gain mainstream media attention.

So, it drives traditional media. If you make good enough content, that will cross into traditional media and no matter what you say, traditional media still drives the political agenda. Em obviously, we're a-political and we don't, you know, drive agendas, but in a grown-up comms department, you need to try and get coverage in traditional and social. (Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

Commandant O'Connor's point here emphasises the continued importance of engaging with the mainstream media whilst being illustrative once again of the inherent tensions that exist between the normative idea of the military as an a-political institution and their need to promote themselves to multiple audiences which may include governments and policy makers. Dirk von Holleben of the German Federal Ministry of Defence spoke of a potential trickle-down effect of content being placed on military SNSs being taken up by MSM and how their strategic communications strategies may become orientated with this in mind.

I mean we would say that, at least in Germany now we have the image that we are big and professional on social media. Probably one of the best of official governmental communications. This is what people know

now which is 'wow!'. And we have some, sometimes we try to put something to tell it at first on social media and then to wait and then it finds its way to offline media, to the journalists. (Dirk von Holleben, German Federal Ministry of Defence)

SNSs afford military actors with the ability to create their own content that may then translate into further coverage on MSM. What was significant for the interviewees was that this coverage would be focused upon the types of narratives they wish to tell. Stories about soldiers deployed on Valentine's Day, for example, are used as vehicles to highlight the sacrifices made by military personnel separated from their loved ones, on behalf of the state. Journalists were highlighted by the interviewees as an important target audience of their online StratCom efforts. SNSs can provide a means through which to foster long term digital relationships and information sharing with journalists, particularly those that may be at a significant geographic distance as outlined by Nate Herring, US Africa Command.

You know, I, on our platforms follow a lot of Somali independent journalists. We've gotten to the point that with a lot of them when they hear information, they'll reach out to us in a private message before they tweet about it and say, "hey can you confirm we're hearing this can you confirm this?" and we'll try to, we'll try work with them on that. Or they'll email us or that kind of stuff so those are relationships that have been built on digitally in some cases because they are connected on the

ground and they're hearing those types of things and I think that's one of the keys is, you have to have your audience trust you as an information source. (Nate Herring, US Africa Command)

Once again, military actors recognise that different social media platforms offer different affordances in their utility as a tool of StratCom. Twitter for example is recognised as a platform orientated towards real time news and news production and consumption (Papacharissi, 2010). Further to the collaboration which occurs between journalists reaching out to military actors through social media prior to their reporting, the practice of journalists directly utilising content disseminated on official military SNSs was viewed as particularly valuable by the respondents as a means to build credibility for their respective institutions.

It's definitely one of our measures of success when one of our tweets ends up embedded in a news article as like an update on our operation.... So yeah, we're definitely conscious of the fact that we have a decent number of reporters who are actively monitoring our social media feeds and making sure that we leverage that to get info to them. (Lucy Ellis, Canadian Department of National Defense)

The traditional MSM have also adapted to and integrated SNSs into their own operations. As an industry facing significant financial and logistical challenges, SNSs provide an accessible and cost-effective means to source information. Traditional MSM

have always incorporated press releases and statements from military institutions into their reports of their activities. What appears to be unique about SNSs however, is the practice of journalists who follow official military accounts, directly retweeting or embedding their content in their reports, without subjecting them to the usual filtering or editing processes. This practice has been made uniquely possible by the technological affordances of SNSs operating within a complex media ecology. Several of the interviewees highlighted this as beneficial to the military institution.

When CNN would take a tweet of ours and post it on their TV saying, ‘the IDF is saying this and they posted it as fact they didn't question it. So, then they were using our information as a credible source. (Lt. Col. (R) Peter Lerner, Israeli Defense Forces)

The very nature of the contemporary hybrid media ecology means that traditional MSM and military actors enter into closer relationships (Hoskins and O’Loughlin, 2015). The MSM relies on the SNSs of military actors as a source of compelling visuals and information and military actors upon them as a means for heightened visibility and credibility. The majority of interviewees highlighted the importance of incorporating both ‘traditional’ and ‘new’ media as part of their overall communications strategies in order to reach all of their target audiences from publics to policymakers.

It has grown a lot I mean it's; I would not say it's more important but well it depends on what's your target group. For political stuff, it's still

important what's in the newspapers because this is what the political world is reading. But also, social media is getting more and more and more important and we need to combine these two ways of communication and what we've seen is that it's shifting more and more to social media. (Dirk von Holleben, German Federal Ministry of Defence)

Although recognising the continued importance of traditional media such as newspapers and television particularly for political debate, all of the respondents acknowledged that SNSs are becoming increasingly important in meeting their StratCom objectives.

My sense of things is that everything you do on traditional media needs to be duplicated on social and everything you do on social needs to be duplicated on traditional so there is a symbiotic relationship between the two that needs to be, they need to complement one another.... at that time and it's 2 years ago when I left and 5 years or 4 1/2 years before that, social media was still complementary to traditional. Now it looks like social media has become much larger in its importance in communicating so I think maybe we're on the fringe of a changing time, for sure we are. (Lt. Col. (R) Peter Lerner, Israeli Defense Forces)

For Chris Riley of NATO Strategic Communications, although traditional media still plays a role in their communications strategy, this balance has already tilted in favour of SNSs.

I would say digital is more, the recognition that digital is more important. So clearly the way that this building is organised there's clearly a lot of focus on press work. The set-piece engagement, the secretary-general etc but getting the message out beyond the normal bubble means that you need to have a fairly robust approach to digital.... we invest compared to the size of the organisation that we are, we invest quite significantly in audio-visual production and dissemination... and a lot of that goes into social media. (Chris Riley, Strategic Communications, NATO)

Lucy Ellis of the Canadian Department of National Defense illustrated the ways in which SNSs have fundamentally altered the ways in which they communicate, affording greater agility and efficiency in the day to day information they put out, reserving engagement with traditional media for more significant events.

There's been a shift in the department over the past 2 years to only do news releases for like high profile events so before there would be news releases for you know, 'the Canadian army does an exercise with 35 people for a day and a half' and that would be a news release. And it was

just such a cumbersome effort to you know, staff that news release to get it approved to push it through all the things and then to send it out and then it just kind of fly by the media's desk. So, we've been cutting down on those smaller news releases and putting that kind of information just on social media. And then keeping the really like high-level major updates still have you know, news releases and media engagement and all of that as well as social media as part of the strategy. (Lucy Ellis, Canadian Department of National Defense)

Traditional MSM remains relevant, particularly to reach policymakers and those actively engaged in political debate and so military actors now adopt a hybrid approach to strategic communication that combines interactions with traditional media with their own social network engagement. In contrast with traditional communications practices, SNSs afford military actors the opportunity to communicate their desired narratives to their target audiences, to bypass traditional media and its framing and filtering processes and to potentially influence the mainstream agenda.

SNSs also facilitate direct interactions between audiences and those within the hierarchy of the defence institution not previously feasible through traditional communications means. This point was aptly illustrated by Lucy Ellis of the Canadian Department of National Defence when outlining an accident that took place in Canada in 2019.

There was a bus crash in Ottawa and some military members happened to be on the bus and were injured in the crash. There were like 3 people who passed away from their injuries. So, it was something that the entire city was you know, in mourning for those people and talking about it and thinking about it so we posted a message from the Chief of the Defense Staff's account that was acknowledging the families of the people who had been injured and talking about the fact that there were these military members that were also on that bus. Just this message of support and solidarity with this broader community and it really resonated with people because it was like a very powerful moment...but in a pre-social media world I don't think that you ever would have had the Chief of Defense Staff, you know like he wouldn't call a news conference and say, 'hey this happened like we are also implicated in this'. We are also experiencing this pain and this suffering. You wouldn't use a news release for that.

(Lucy Ellis, Canadian Department of National Defense)

What is essential for the respondents when considering how best to communicate is a consideration of their target audience. Dirk von Holleben of the German Federal Ministry of Defence, stated that when it comes to recruitment, the level of investment placed in television advertising is now zero for the German Armed Forces. Put simply, their audience isn't there. Engagement with traditional media for military actors now appears to be less about broadcasting to the masses and more about reaching a more niche politically minded audience who remain influential in defining policy. SNSs have become the vehicle for them to reach much broader and diverse audiences.

Intervention in hybrid information flows is an affordance which facilitates the use of SNSs by military actors to disseminate their own communications independent from the traditional MSM and to potentially drive or at least impact upon the mainstream media agenda. SNSs do not exist in a communications vacuum however and so they must work in tandem with the institution's overall communications strategy within which the MSM still plays a significant role, particularly amongst policymakers and those actively engaged in political debate. Military actors now adopt a hybrid approach to StratCom, one that combines interactions and relationships with traditional media with their own independent social network engagement. SNSs have however altered the day to day communication practices of the military and have become increasingly important as a tool of military StratCom.

The use of SNSs by military communications actors is still evolving and although it is perceived as having the potential to facilitate the building of networks and advocates, to manage impressions and to intervene in information flows, this is by no means guaranteed. Each of the interviewees expressed significant limitations and constraints upon the perceived affordances of SNSs as an effective tool of StratCom, including tensions within their own institutional culture, the potential risks to reputation and an inability to fully control the environment.

5.5. LIMITATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

The very anatomy or architecture of SNSs as a two-way flow of information makes engagement a critical component of any successful and credible online presence. All of the interviewees recognised that engagement with their online networks was essential to reaping the benefits that SNSs can afford, however they outlined several obstacles in doing this effectively. Commandant Pat O'Connor of the Irish Defence Forces stated that the initial promise of SNSs as a means to engage directly with audiences was quickly subsumed by its sheer scale and the resources required to manage it.

I think that is the way it developed, and I think now actually we use it as a broadcast platform that allows comments, I think that we initially, we took it on as almost one to one communication and PR so you've a question, I'll ask you, I'll answer you, however, as it scaled up, it became unwieldy. And then also, the environment changed slightly. It maybe started getting a little bit more toxic. It became a bit more polarised and that engagement was more difficult to do. (Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

Not only are the scale of comments difficult to manage without the appropriate resources, but the nature of the comments that can proliferate on SNSs present a challenge. Several of the respondents expressed a reluctance to further inflame

controversy online through their recognition of, and direct engagement with it. When military actors do engage online the information they provide needs to be accurate. If the information provided by them is later found to be false, they may expose themselves to a significant backlash from the public. The speed at which social media moves and the constant demand for information presents significant challenges to a government organisation such as the military, traditionally unaccustomed to the release of information to the public at such pace, particularly in times of crises or conflict.

It becomes a no-win situation because we can't say anything but the information is out there on social media so the perception is, by the general public is, we either A, don't know or B, we're hiding something. And that's a problem with a government organisation where we just, we're held to different standards, held to different rules than a lot of private organisations may be and with social media a lot of times that doesn't come off. You know you can explain it but people just default to 'well you don't want to say something because you're hiding something' especially when something is controversial. So that's the biggest challenge, I think. It's just the speed of information and the different standards and how that is perceived per se. There might be a reason but that reason may not carry through into the public perception. (Nate Herring, US Africa Command)

Failure to engage for military actors can result in the public impression that they are either incompetent or deceptive, both impacting negatively upon their credibility. All of the respondents stated they felt held to higher standards of accuracy than other actors online. As noted by Miskimmon et al. (2013) the volume, speed and diversity of sources on SNSs creates a perpetual “risk of credibility loss” for militaries (p 120). Thus, the high-level affordances of SNSs such as connectivity (Van Dijck, 2013) and visibility (Treem and Leonardi, 2012) can both enable and constrain military StratCom efforts depending on the context. To successfully meet their StratCom goals, they must provide timely and truthful information at speed.

Several of the interviewees also expressed the idea that simply having a presence on SNSs is not sufficient, it must be constantly fed to sustain the engagement of your audiences and to prevent the ceding of information territory to others.

Another big risk is if our content, if we're not producing the content, we lose our information dominance and we give it over to somebody else. So, if you don't keep creating good quality content other people will start taking over and owning your space. I think that's a risk. (Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

All of the respondents recognised that those working within communications, whether in the military or any other institution have no choice but to engage in SNSs and although reservations persist within the broader military structure, those working within

StratCom are cognisant that their goals cannot be met without a robust approach to social media.

I mean there's really no choice. This exists and you have to do the best you can. It's not a perfect marketplace, it's not a perfect medium for achieving your goals but you have no choice. It's there and everybody's using it and you can do it better or worse. You can either be more clever or less clever at using it but like every other tool including television, including movies, including entertainment, including everything, it's a tool which is there and you can either be better at it or worse at it. (Prof Gadi Wolfsfeld IDC Herzliya/ Former Israeli Defense Forces)

SNSs are not an idealised means upon which to conduct military StratCom. Increased visibility can result in beneficial outcomes but can also pose significant risks that undermine the goals of military actors. The technological architecture of SNSs means that control over the environment and even one's own content can never be fully retained. The possible 'replicability' (Boyd, 2010) of content online means that it can be altered in ways unintended by the original author.

You know the risk of tweeting something and it being misconstrued either accidentally or deliberately by a hostile actor. I think that's always something to sort of keep in the back of your mind that you know, if your quotes retweeted and then becomes the butt of somebody's joke then it's

hurting your legitimacy and your credibility. (Lucy Ellis, Canadian Department of National Defense)

Professor Gadi Wolfsfeld spoke about the potential for SNSs to be hacked by hostile actors and adversaries of the military. Whilst the inherent 'programmability' (Bucher and Helmond, 2017, p 243) of these platforms facilitate military access to platform data for purposes such as sentiment and engagement tracking, so too can this affordance be appropriated by enemies of the institution. This presents a risk to military actors' communications not previously possible in traditional MSM. Where historically the fear of MSM within the military extended to the nature of the frame they would place on their information, SNSs present the opportunity for adversaries to entirely alter or erase it.

All groups are vulnerable to sabotage. All groups are vulnerable to someone taking over, either denial of services or taking over your feed and they can pretend It's them or redirecting them to you know, the Hamas site. I mean sure you're always vulnerable to that. And again, every new technology whether it be in communication or anything else is a double-edged sword. It's always going to have both advantages and disadvantages. (Prof Gadi Wolfsfeld IDC Herzliya/ Former Israeli Defense Forces)

A significant advantage of SNSs as previously expressed by the interviewees is the potential to reach multiple and diverse audiences, however, this too can present challenges to their communications objectives. Military communications actors must appeal to multiple audiences online but without the knowledge of how different audiences may interpret and relate to the same content (boyd, 2010).

That's another thing with social media is you have so many different audiences it's hard to anticipate how, you really have to design content that is going to be acceptable by multiple audiences because whether you like it or not you might be targeting this, your content may be really intended to reach this audience but you're going to reach like 50 other audiences that maybe aren't your target. And if you're designing something that's really tailored towards this you may have another audience that might not think the same way. And you see that time and time again with different case studies and those kinds of things. (Nate Herring, US Africa Command)

SNSs do not afford military communications actors the ability to fully control the audiences their content may reach nor can they control the nature of the reactions that it may provoke within these audiences.

I mean the army, the armed forces is an organisation, they want to control everything and so that was a moment where I was surprised the armed

forces were the first ones in the German government going out on social media, going out on YouTube, on Facebook because there you cannot control everything.... You can post something and then people can comment on that and then you can have a debate you probably didn't expect and you maybe don't like. But then you have to live with it and you have to communicate on a level with these people that's for us the most important thing. (Dirk von Holleben, German Federal Ministry of Defence)

This unpredictability and inability to control the environment result in the persistence of concerns within the broader military institutional culture towards the use of SNSs as a tool of StratCom. The interviewees expressed that these concerns centre not only around the nature of the external audience but also those internal to the institutions, the soldiers and their families.

This is a learning for our organisation because of course there are like, people who want to not allow people to use social media privately and we think now well, they're doing it anyway. You can just go on Instagram and #bundeswehr and see so many great pictures of young soldiers in Instagram style doing their selfies and this is so much cooler than all of my campaigning, I think. Because that's super authentic. I mean of course, if I do campaign, I do have professional photographers and we try to be as authentic as is possible in professional marketing but the best is always if people are doing it by themselves and these people know so

much better what they're doing than the bosses and this is the big internal discussion at the moment we are doing. People are very sensitive if they're doing that but we have a big discussion internally and it's more a discussion between generations I would say (laughs). (Dirk von Holleben, German Federal Ministry of Defence)

Dirk von Holleben alludes to the idea that it is the older generation within the military institution, those not natively acquainted with SNSs that are most concerned with its use. The risks associated with soldiers' use of SNSs are related to concerns about the release and spread of rumours from within the force and of any content that may bring the institution into disrepute. The vulnerability of military institutions to this kind of exposure is probably best illustrated by the example of the Abu Ghraib scandal. The interviewees working within military communications expressed frustration with these perspectives advocating for the soldiers to be permitted to communicate on the military's behalf.

In the same way you trust a 19-year-old boy with a gun trust him on his social media. Train him and trust him on his social media tools. Teach him about the minimum standards for operational security but let him be engaged within his lane. (Chris Riley, Strategic Communications, NATO)

Potential risks to operational security posed by media exposure are nothing new. They have however become amplified with the proliferation of mobile digital technologies

and the ubiquitous use of SNSs. One of the interviewees, Captain Jelle van Haaster of the Dutch Ministry of Defence, described the impact of SNSs on institutional fears that soldiers' mobile phones may be susceptible to hacking from hostile actors. This creates an institutional tension between a communications strategy that promotes the use of soldiers use of SNSs and the operational security briefings that view this as inherently dangerous. Further, it is not only the soldiers that are now seen as targets for hacking but their entire network.

The attacks served on soldiers really increased in the last year's you know in the, it used to be that the soldier was the prime target of enemy activities but now with social media, the entire network has become an attack serve, so possible vector of influencing the soldier. And there have been a lot of examples here, for instance, the Enhanced Forward Presence, our NATO mission in the Baltic states, there have been activities against the home front but that's not really new because Afghanistan and Iraq had the same experience also and the UK that the home front was targeted. So that's what scares soldiers the most I think because they have accepted that they are a target because you know, they've decided to wear the uniform. (Captain Jelle van Haaster, Dutch Ministry of Defence)

For all of the interviewees, the risks outlined above can be met through the proper education of their soldiers on how best to utilise SNSs and what to be aware of and

avoid. All respondents stated that to not engage at all would ultimately be much more damaging to the institution in the long term in terms of maintaining their relevance and public support for their activities.

I think the failure to engage is a big risk. The 'let's stay behind our digital wall and not play'. And you're right, culturally commanders are not given gold stars for engaging and allowing their troops to engage but they sure as hell are fired if somebody gets something spectacularly wrong or they get it wrong. So, the risk, the assessment of risk and benefit is skewed by our own culture. If you get my drift. (Chris Riley, Strategic Communications, NATO)

Their own military institutional culture which is inherently risk-averse can create an obstacle to the communications personnel in terms of adopting a creative and innovative approach to engagement on SNSs. Internal tensions exist not only between the broader institution and their communications departments but also between the communications department and their own internal audience. Several interviewees stated that campaigns conducted on SNSs have often received the most criticism from within their own ranks.

Lots of people were giving out that our soldiers marching in the Pride parade had like you know, fairy wings and feather boas and all that kind of stuff and they were saying that's a disrespect to our uniform but then

we were able to show them photographs of people in uniform in Santa hats and GAA⁶ jerseys, you know. What's the difference?" ...Now, there's people that will never agree with you so the most successful campaigns have also led to the most visceral kickback. And the kickback is often internal rather than external. (Commandant Pat O'Connor, Irish Defence Forces)

The concern for how the military institution is portrayed on SNSs and its impact upon its reputation is a concern shared from the very top levels of the military down to the individual soldier. The foray of military communications into areas outside of the traditional defence sphere, such as LGBT rights, may serve to appeal to a wider external audience whilst alienating their own on internal audience.

There is criticism from time to time and people think it's 'ok this was not the right tone' or people feel offended and that's the challenge because the target group is very diverse. I mean the audience is very diverse. Something where the external audience thinks 'wow that's cool', my internal audience thinks this is really a shame so it's always a balance.

⁶ GAA is an abbreviation for the Gaelic Athletic Association which is an Irish international amateur sporting and cultural organisation, focused primarily on promoting indigenous Gaelic games and pastimes, which include the traditional Irish sports of hurling, camogie, Gaelic football, Gaelic handball and rounders.

And usually, we find the balance sometimes we don't (laughs). (Dirk von Holleben, German Federal Ministry of Defence)

Finding the appropriate tone for the military institution online, one that satisfies all of the potential audiences, internal, publics, policymakers and journalists is a significant challenge. As previously mentioned in this chapter, SNSs afford those working within military StratCom the ability to adopt a more relatable and informal tone which can make them more appealing to their audiences. Determining the appropriate tone of communication can be tricky however in an environment where contexts are collapsed (boyd, 2010) and multiple audiences may differ in what they deem as socially acceptable from a military institution.

It's very challenging to find the balance between how can we show ourselves on social media, what's authentic and what's our image, where do people think 'yeah this is right, this is ok' and where do people think 'no this is just for PR stuff, marketing stuff, glossy campaigning and that's very challenging for us. (Dirk von Holleben, German Federal Ministry of Defence)

Publics are traditionally quite sceptical of military institutions and so the management of their image online must not be too far removed from their nature if it is to be accepted as truthful and authentic. Adopting a tone that is too informal or jovial in style as an

organ of the state whose modus operandi is the preparation for, and enactment of state violence can serve to significantly undermine the reputation of the institution.

There's operations you know, where it's a lot more sensitive than others so being cognizant of those like sensitivities and knowing where it's appropriate to add humour and where it's not appropriate to add humour, I think is really important because, people perceive you to be sort of, too gleeful I guess as a military. I think that can lead to a lot of backlash and a lot of people feeling like comments are taken in poor taste. (Lucy Ellis, Canadian Department of National Defense)

Different audiences will have differing expectations of what constitutes appropriate content from a military institution. To the extent that it is possible on SNSs, knowing the audience whom you are targeting is critical to the context and the tone of your online behaviours. One of the interviewees, Chris Riley of NATO Strategic Communications, also highlighted the importance of ensuring that the content disseminated appeals to the target audience rather than just their own internal bubble.

The other challenge of course is recognising that, you know, you could just feel it oozing through this building, the sort of middle-aged men, you know, basically what we do in this building and people laugh nervously when I say it, in this building lots of middle-aged white men pass bits of paper to each other..... so, there is always the danger that you're

ultimately creating products and outputs that make them happy. (Chris Riley, Strategic Communications, NATO)

Thus far, proving the tangible benefits of engagement in SNSs to the internal military structure presents another significant challenge. For the majority of the interviewees, this was primarily gauged by an increased awareness of the military institution amongst the public measured through engagement metrics and in some instances polling. Without quantifiable results, it is difficult for the majority of those working within the communications departments to secure the level of investment and resources required to extract all of the possible benefits from their online presence.

I wish I had a staff of like 5 or 6 people that were focused on social media only, I don't. I have two people, one of which I don't have anyone right now, and one that's mostly not a social media person, he's just a general photojournalist, does some video stuff. So, coming up with even more in-depth campaigns is difficult because I just don't have the resources.
(Nate Herring , US Africa Command)

Having an effective strategy across SNSs requires resources, both to maintain a presence across current platforms and networks and to be able to adapt to the ever-changing nature of the environment. SNSs such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat mutate and evolve, as does the nature of the audiences that frequent them.

The ability of military StratCom actors to adjust to the ephemeral nature of platforms and their popularity is essential for them to sustain access to their target audiences.

I think agility is going to be a challenge. Setting up new channels and managing them. We've got a relatively modest social media team here, relatively modest social media capability throughout the military system. We're arguing with the military, actually the military are agreeing with us on the communications side that we need to resource this properly.

(Chris Riley, Strategic Communications, NATO)

Once again Chris Riley's statement is indicative of the internal tensions that exist within the military structure in relation to support for and resourcing of SNSs as a means of StratCom. And resources matter. In discussing all of the limitations and constraints which may affect the use of SNSs by military communications actors; a lack of engagement, the need for constant compelling content and to train soldiers in their effective use, an increase in resources are required to address these. SNSs do not represent an even playing ground nor do they guarantee an audience. Those with the appropriate financial and human resources will have a competitive advantage.

The need for a proactive and innovative approach to communication on SNSs is somewhat of an uncomfortable fit for the majority of the military institutions represented by the interviewees. Ultimately the very nature of social media is somewhat incongruous to the nature of the military as an institution. SNSs on the one hand, are

defined by their constant evolution and the speed at which information proliferates. Here, informality and transparency are the currencies of credibility. In contrast, a military institution is inherently secretive, due in part to concerns revolving around operational security and a historical distrust of the media. They are traditionally neither agile nor quick to evolve to changes in their external environment and information must sift through a multi-layered bureaucracy prior to its release. Thus, the potential for military communications practitioners to harness the perceived affordances of SNSs is highly dependent upon the level of institutional and cultural support they receive from their respective institutions (Davies and Chouinard, 2016; Davies, 2020). Lieutenant Colonel (R) Peter Lerner highlighted the need for the military institution to come to terms with the very nature of how SNSs operate if they are to take advantage of their potential affordances.

You can't win this if you're not going to realise that this isn't how the world of social works. Then you are always going to be heavy handed, heavy footed, slow, behind the curve. We always felt that we were behind the curve and we were pretty fast. But we always felt that we could have been faster. I think that's a good place to be because I think you also need to be cautious because sometimes doing things too fast means you're going well beyond the edge and it's a slippery slope from there. So, it's balancing out the need to be fast but also the need to be responsible about the information that you're putting out. (Lt. Col. (R) Peter Lerner, Israeli Defense Forces)

The interviewees for this study represent different military and defence institutions operating in different cultural, historical and political contexts. What will constitute an appropriate tone or piece of content for one, is not uniform across each context. All of the respondents, however, highlighted the importance of SNSs as a tool of StratCom in the contemporary media environment. The interview findings identify three primary perceived affordances of the use of SNSs as a tool of StratCom; Building Networks and Advocates, Impression Management and Intervention in Hybrid Information Flows. These perceived affordances simultaneously exist for the interviewees at multiple levels (both high-level and low-level) across different SNSs in a complex ecology of human action, algorithms and technological features all operating within a hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013). The findings also highlight several limitations and constraints faced by military communication actors, which include tensions within their own institutional culture, the potential risks to reputation and an inability to fully control the environment. The very nature of social media may be viewed as incongruous to the nature of the military institution itself or at the very least as a double-edged sword as a tool of military StratCom. Despite these challenges, the interviewees asserted that the importance of SNSs are only increasing within the military context and that they have served to fundamentally augment the nature of military strategic communication practice. The findings of this chapter will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 7. What follows in the next chapter is an empirical analysis of the strategic communications work conducted through visuals on popular SNS, Facebook, by an active military institution at the forefront of utilising SNSs, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). The findings of the participant interviews reveal several strategies military communications practitioners may employ in their approach to SNSs as a tool of

StratCom including reaching out to more diverse audiences, engaging in topics traditionally outside the sphere of military and defence, a focus on the personalisation of the soldier, a shift in tone towards more informal and colloquial language and humour and the careful curation of their own stories or narratives. The empirical analysis of the official IDF Facebook page facilitates a comparison between what 'they say they do' with a case study of how the world's most popular SNS was utilised in practice by an active military institution as a tool of StratCom.

CHAPTER SIX: THE ISRAELI DEFENCE FORCES ON FACEBOOK. A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF TIMELINE IMAGES

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter compliments the stakeholder interviews and contributes to their findings by providing an empirical analysis of the StratCom work conducted through popular SNS, Facebook, by an active military institution at the forefront of utilising SNSs. Outlined below are the findings of a multi-modal thematic analysis of timeline images and their accompanying text titles, uploaded to the official IDF Facebook page between August 2015-August 2018 (n=645). This research sought to gain insight into the everyday StratCom practices of a military institution on a specific SNS over an extended period to uncover the consistent identity construction and StratCom work being carried out. As such, the sample of images chosen for analysis begins one year after the last significant ground invasion by Israel into Gaza, that of Operation Protective Edge (2014) to avoid the images becoming subsumed by one combat operation and to better facilitate triangulation with the interview analysis. This analysis underscores some of the more salient points of the perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of StratCom that emerged from the interviews, such as building networks and advocates by creating awareness of, and value in the institution, reaching out to more diverse audiences in a more relatable and informal manner around topics traditionally considered outside the sphere of defence, and impression management through engagement in progressive issues such as LGBTQ and women's rights to challenge perceptions of the institution. Thus, this case study serves to provide an in-depth example of the use of this SNS by an active military institution in practice. The primary

goals of this analysis were to examine the kinds of images and narratives being published by the IDF on their official Facebook page, to understand how it utilised visuals on Facebook to represent itself, its actions and motivations to its target audiences, and the manner in which the unique vernaculars of this platform may impact upon the nature of this content and their communicative goals. The analysis considers the content of the image and its accompanying captions/titles, and how these are positioned towards each other (whether they are complimentary or juxtaposed) as well as their explicit or implicit linkages to a larger political story (Freistein and Gadinger, 2020) with a consideration of the technological affordances of the platform. The findings identify five primary themes across the dataset, 'Legitimacy', 'Capability', 'Credibility and Authenticity', 'Progression' and 'Calls to Action'. The findings also highlight a degree of tension recurrent across the dataset, between the images disseminated by the IDF on their official Facebook page and the text that accompanies them. I refer to this as 'Image Dissonance', whereby the images presented have an unintentional contrasting effect with the strategic messaging that frames them. This chapter will first discuss each of the five prominent themes generated from the thematic analysis of Facebook images and will conclude with the potential limitations to these as a result of image dissonance.

Section one outlines the theme of 'Legitimacy' and the manner in which Facebook images and their accompanying text titles promote the societal value and necessity of the IDF in providing security to the Israeli state and its citizens against perceived threats such as violence and terrorism. Both national histories and contemporary events are drawn upon to articulate these threats and to align them with the broader

international struggle against global terror. Further, this theme articulates the manner in which these images promote the IDF as a humanitarian actor with a moral imperative to save lives. Its own operational activity is represented as proportional and precise and as conforming to legal standards in an effort to legitimate its own activities whilst delegitimising those of its adversaries.

Section two details the theme of 'Capability'. This focuses on representations of institutional capability in the form of professionalism, skill and preparedness in training and the corporeal capabilities of IDF service men and women as strength, endurance, camaraderie, and mental resilience, particularly in the face of great personal struggle.

Section three maps the theme of 'Progression' which focuses on the inclusion of different races, religions and equal opportunities for men, women, those with disabilities and those traditionally excluded from military life. Images within this theme address issues outside those traditionally associated with the defence sphere such as LBGTQ, transgender and sexuality. The theme of progression is constructed through these narratives of inclusion but also through representations of the technological innovation of the IDF, through advanced weaponry, app development and scientific research.

Section four focuses on the theme of 'Credibility and Authenticity'. An image of the IDF is constructed as credible and authentic through references to its international alliances, to the institution as a reliable information source and the dissemination of

more relatable, informal content which draws upon the unique vernaculars of SNSs and upon popular cultural references in film, music and celebrity as well as the personal individual stories of its soldiers.

Section five discusses 'Calls to Action' which details images and text titles intended to induce the viewer to follow or perform a specific act such as liking, sharing or commenting upon this content thus utilising the technological features of the platform to further their strategic communications objectives. These calls for action range from banal requests to engage in photo caption contests to appeals to publicise violence against Israel, condemn terror and demand justice on its behalf. The Facebook feature of 'liking' is explicitly aligned with an expression of support for the IDF's service members.

Finally, section six examines 'Image Dissonance'. This refers to images in the dataset which have a contrasting effect with their text captions and are thus inconsistent with each other. This tension is exhibited through visual representations of soldiers with their weapons drawn accompanied by titles describing their life saving activities, or through text titles promoting equality or opportunity for women accompanied by visual representations of them in sexualised or passive poses to camera.

6.2. LEGITIMACY

The concept of legitimacy infers that something is 'desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions'

(Suchman, 1995, p 574). Military institutions seek legitimacy by engaging in practices of 'legitimation' whereby they justify their policies, identities, and practices through an articulation of legitimacy claims (Reus-Smit, 2007, p159; Goddard and Krebs, 2015, p 6). The complex nature of warfare in the 21st century is characterised by a shift from the mass mobilisation of publics in the 20th century to one of citizen support (Shaw, 2005). Within contemporary democratic societies, the application of force must be accounted for, explained and justified to garner the support of domestic and international audiences and to undermine one's adversaries (Hocking, 2005). The emergence of SNSs provide military institutions with opportunities for greater visibility, to engage directly with target audiences, to build awareness of, and value in the institution and to build trust and legitimacy with their publics.

A recurring theme across the image dataset was the legitimate societal need for the existence of the IDF as a military institution. As one tool of strategic communication, Facebook was utilised as a conduit to justify its activities and to promote its value and necessity in providing security for the state and its citizens against perceived threats such as terrorism, violence and injustice. Hansen (2011) argues 'security' is constituted through the discursive modality of threats and dangers, calling for radical measures in defence of one's survival. Survival itself can be both concrete in terms of being physical or territorial but it can also be linked to culture and identity (p 58). The Facebook images on the official IDF account present issues of security through the identification of multiple adversaries such as Hamas, Hezbollah, ISIS, Iran and broader 'Palestinian terror', whilst also highlighting the dangers presented by Israel's neighbours, persistent antisemitism and the unpredictability of global terror. Hansen describes this practice

as ‘visual securitization’ whereby images constitute something or someone as threatened and in need of immediate defence by security actors (ibid, p 68). What is key here are the ways in which the IDF as a military institution use visual means on a SNS to present these issues of security, embodying threat images that can potentially increase the plausibility of its claims, legitimate its activities and garner the support of its target audiences (Vuori, 2012).



Figure 1. Image title. Hezbollah’s leader openly threatens to destroy the State of Israel. What’s behind his words? Over 100,000 rockets. (date posted 17/07/2016)



Figure 2. Image title. A year ago today, terrorists entered a Jerusalem synagogue during morning prayers. Armed with axes, meat cleavers and a gun, the terrorists murdered 5 worshippers and a policeman. We remember the victims, mourn their loss and remain defiant in the face of terror. (date posted 18/11/2015)

The IDF articulates the threats and dangers facing Israel and the Jewish people by highlighting both contemporary acts of violence carried out against its citizens and by drawing upon its national history. The use of historical imagery is unsurprisingly predominantly centred upon references to the Holocaust in which over six million Jews perished during World War II at the hands of the Nazi regime and its allies and collaborators. Campbell (2003) argues that when it comes to historical memory, the photograph retains considerable power. National histories are variously put to work across the image dataset to legitimate the societal need for the military institution to protect its people. As Kelly (2012) posits, for armed conflict to be possible, it requires 'the ideological support of a grateful nation' (p 726).



Figure 3. Image title. This #HolocaustRemembranceDay, we remember each one of the six million Jews murdered. We remember each victim, each name, and each story. We vow to 'Never Again' allow our people to be killed because they are different, because they are Jewish. (posted 05/05/2016)



Figure 4. Image title. Today, 77 years after the destruction of Jewish lives, synagogues and shops during Kristallnacht, we remember. The Jewish people no longer stand defenceless. (date posted 09/11/2015)

Another historical and iconic attack against the Jewish people which took place at the Munich Olympics in 1972 is recurrent across the dataset. This attack in which 11 members of the Israeli delegation were murdered by the PLO is commemorated each year on the official IDF Facebook page.



Figure 5. Image title. 43 years ago, terror shook the Munich Olympics. PLO terrorists took hostage and brutally murdered 11 members of the Israeli Olympic delegation. The “Munich Massacre” spread fear of terrorism worldwide. On this day, we mourn the loss of the victims and stand strong in the fight against terror. (date posted 06/09/2015)

This image and its title are illustrative not only of the ways in which national histories are put to work on Facebook to promote the value and necessity of the military institution within Israeli society, but also of how the IDF align the threats facing Israel and its citizens with the broader international struggle against global terror situating their motivations and actions within a broader political story.



Figure 6. Image title. While Israelis mourn the death of three innocent Israelis killed in last night's brutal massacre, Palestinians in Gaza took to the streets to celebrate. The Palestinian leadership has refused to condemn the attack and continues to incite even more violence. (date posted 22/07/2017)



Figure 7. Image title. 13-year-old Hallel was in her bed this morning when a terrorist broke into her home, entered her bedroom and repeatedly stabbed her. As millions of kids across the country woke up to their first day of summer vacation, Hallel was murdered in cold blood. The IDF will continue to stand strong in the fight against terror. Share to condemn this horrific act of terror. (date posted 30/06/2016)

Negotiations of legitimacy and necessity are sought out via the images disseminated on Facebook by the IDF both to its domestic and international audiences. Across the dataset the contemporary threats to Israel articulated by the IDF on its official page, in the form of Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, ISIS and 'Palestinians' are referred to under the broad umbrella of terrorism. These images plug its activities into wider "western" societal structures and beliefs that view terrorism as aberrant and the actions taken to prevent or retaliate against it, as legitimate and justified. As argued by Beetham and Coicaud (2002) political legitimacy requires justifiability in terms of shared beliefs,

values or norms and it requires an expression of consent (p 17-18). Situating these visual representations under the one unifying discourse of a 'war on terror' obfuscates the historical, political and cultural tensions underpinning the IDF's conflict with its adversaries, whilst facilitating a connection with the international community in relation to the terror attacks they have faced. Several images across the dataset express solidarity in the wake of terrorist attacks in the United States, France, Belgium and Turkey drawing parallels that articulate a legitimacy claim to international audiences that they are all facing the same senseless violence.



Figure 8. Image title. The IDF stands in solidarity with the American people and the city of Las Vegas as they recover from this terrible attack. May the victims' memories be a blessing. (date posted 02/10/2017)



Figure 9. Image title. Terror has no borders. Our thoughts and prayers are with the injured and the families who lost loved ones in today's brutal attack in Turkey. (date posted 19/03/2016)

The IDF utilises Facebook as a platform to attempt to legitimise its own existence and activities to domestic and international audiences by delegitimizing its adversaries. This is illustrated by images which position the IDF and the norms and values of other democracies on the one hand and Israel's adversaries such as Hamas and the 'Palestinians' on the other, promoting an 'us versus them'/ 'right versus wrong' binary. As Hanson (2011) argues, all political discourse is about the constitution of identities that the Self to be secured and the Other threatening it are called upon to inhabit (p 58). Several of the images across the dataset emphasise the terroristic nature of Hamas, assigning them with responsibility for 'all hostile activity from the Gaza strip'. Lilleker (2019) argues that visual representations between right and wrong have specific resonance due to their ability to capture an argument succinctly and ensure it

is retained in memory (p 39). The images disseminated on the IDF Facebook page juxtapose ideas of terrorism and extremism with those of democracy and necessity. These binaries speak to values embedded within 'western' culture such as abhorrence of terrorism, the rights of civilians to safety and of children to innocence. In this way, the IDF attempts to utilise visuals to legitimate itself whilst demonising the other in a structured moral hierarchy (Kelly, 2012), not only disseminating its own strategic narratives but simultaneously working to undermine the narratives of its enemies.



Figure 10. Image title. In the past several months, we have seen children wielding knives in the streets with a drive to kill. We have seen 13 year olds trying to stab people to death, or at least die trying. But why? Many Palestinian men, women, and children are raised and educated in a society that cultivates hate, violence, and a willingness to kill. From the toy they are given as babies, to the government broadcasted children's TV shows, Palestinian incitement is institutionalized. It is at the very foundation of many Palestinian communities. It is the reason both Israelis and Palestinians are dying. Not convinced? Read more: <https://www.idfblog.com/blog/2016/03/10/creating-terrorist/> (date posted 10/03/2016)



Figure 11. Image title. Yesterday, the world marked International Women's Day. How did Palestinians choose to celebrate and honor women? By paying tribute to mothers who encourage their young children to riot and attack. Depriving children of their childhood is nothing to celebrate. (date posted 09/03/2016)

The images disseminated on the official IDF Facebook page seek to promote reasoned and legitimate explanations of the IDF's own self defence against Hamas terrorism and to position IDF activities wholly as a response to provocation or as retaliation for violence perpetuated against the state, positioning the military institution as having the moral imperative to save lives (Basham et al., 2015).

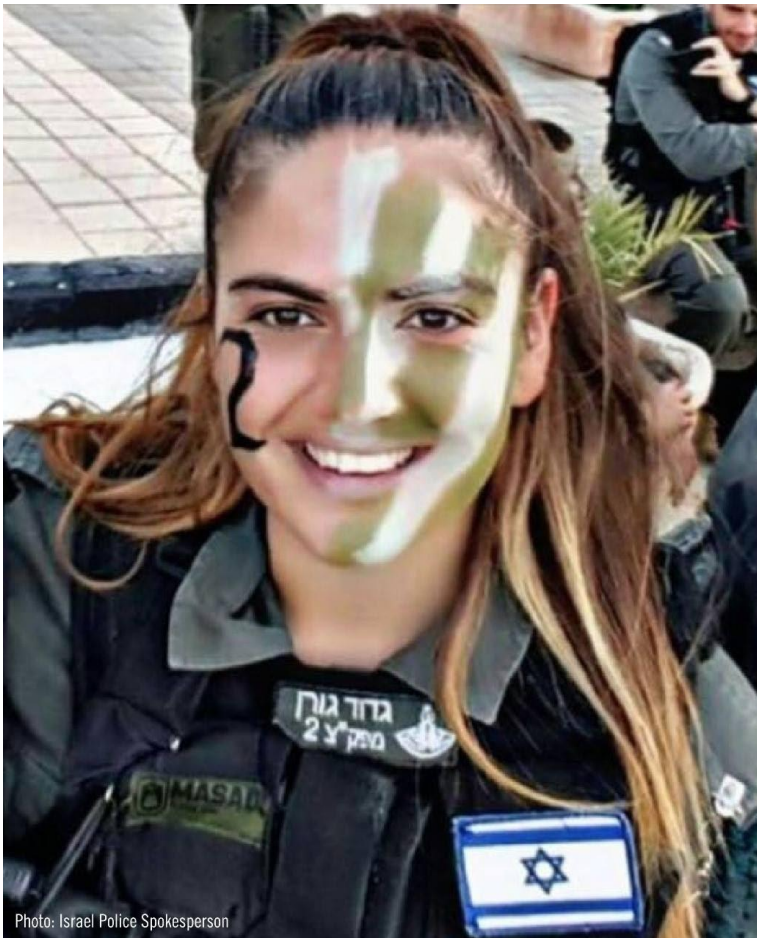


Figure 12. Image title. Yesterday evening, three Palestinian terrorists carried out a terror attack in Jerusalem, fatally stabbing Border Police officer Hadas Malka, 23. In response, security forces carried out joint operations in the village of Deir Abu Mash'al, where the assailants lived, to prevent further attacks. May Officer Malka's memory be a blessing. (date posted 17/06/2017)

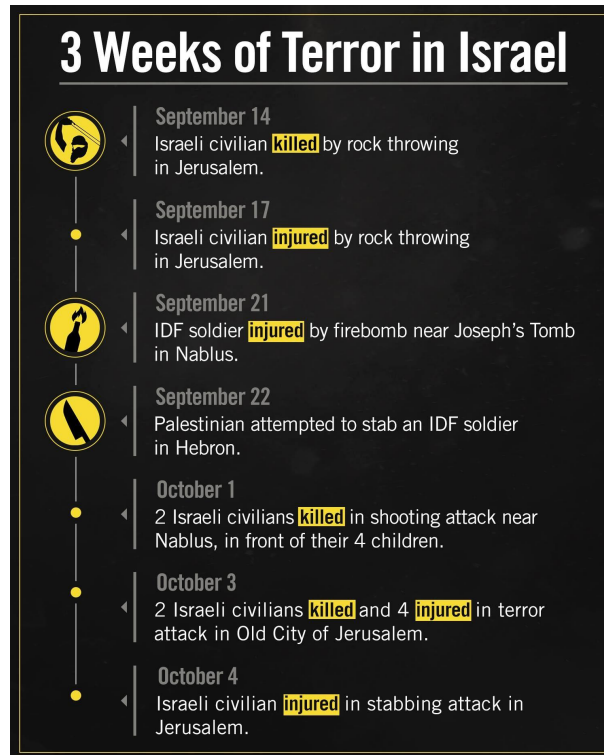


Figure 13. image title. During the celebratory holiday season in Israel, we have seen an unnerving rise in Palestinian terrorism. In response, the IDF has increased its presence in Judea and Samaria to maintain security and stability for Israel's civilians. (date posted 05/10/2015)

Images depicting the Israeli population living in fear and under the constant threat of terror are used to legitimate the societal role and actions of the IDF. Galtung (1998/2000) identifies a series of dichotomies that underpin discourses of the self and the enemy which include, good/evil, innocent/guilty, civilised/barbaric, and which underpin the meaning of violent practices of warring parties such as necessary/unnecessary, last resort/provocative, limited effects/major effects and legitimate/illegitimate. Thus as the IDF seeks to construct an image of its enemies as illegitimate, it is simultaneously constructing an image of itself in contrast as legitimate, necessary and a force for good.

The IDF utilises its official Facebook page to promote Israel as a land of opportunity and freedom and to highlight its own role in facilitating this environment. As Zeitzoff (2017) contends, actors engaged in conflict do not solely use SNSs as a tool to mobilise supporters but also to actively shape the narrative about their group (p 1976). Ideas of the IDF as a moral protector of liberty as it pertains to race, religion and security are recurrent across the image dataset, equating these freedoms of the state with the protection the IDF affords it.



Figure 14. Image title. "I grew up in Ethiopia where there weren't many opportunities for Jews. Poverty and discrimination put a very clear glass ceiling over our heads. When I was 19, I moved to Israel. Here, if you work hard and believe in yourself, you can reach any height. It doesn't matter if you come from Ethiopia or anywhere else in the world. Here in Israel, I believe the sky's the limit." -Lt. Col. Dr. Avi Yitzhak, Head of the IDF Combat Medicine and Trauma Branch. (date posted 23/04/2016)



Figure 15. Image title. “When I was five years old, my family and I immigrated to Israel from Iran. It was a dream of ours. Israel was in our blood, and despite our family living in Iran for generations, we were excited about the move. It was a fulfilment of a centuries-old desire to return to the land of our forefathers. We told everyone in Iran that we were going on vacation to Turkey, and never came back. We left everything behind: our house, our belongings, and all of our extended family. At first, it wasn't easy. We didn't know the language. We were quiet and introverted, and had to learn to understand the Israeli mentality. The difficulty has paid off, though. Being in Israel has taught me to appreciate the little freedoms, like the ability to walk around openly with a kippah. That would not have been easy to do in Iran. Giving makes me happy. It satisfies me to see myself making a positive impact on the lives of others. Throughout the years, I dedicated my free time to being a medical clown. I would dress up and go cheer up children in hospitals. When it came time for me to draft, I decided to pursue a role in the IDF as a combat physician. Growing up, doctors were my role models. They dedicate their entire lives to helping others. Seeing others do good is contagious and I was inspired to do good myself. Being a combat physician isn't easy. The job requires years of difficult training, but it is all worth it. It has made me both a better person and a better medical practitioner.” -G, student in the IDF Combat Physicians Course. (date posted 15/05/2016)

The images disseminated to its followers on Facebook promote the IDF as a societal good and as a humanitarian actor engaged in life saving activities both internationally and domestically. Musarò (2017) discusses the visual politics of the Mare Nostrum military-humanitarian operation, contending that images depicting an army engaged in a 'humanitarian battlefield' can contribute to influencing public perception whilst also shaping the public imaginary through moral discourses of care and responsibility. The IDF illustrates its activities on Facebook through the prism of humanitarian aid delivery articulating its activities as often altruistic and lifesaving.



Figure 16. Image title. No one left behind. Recently, our Home Front Command conducted a wide-scale evacuation drill for hundreds of institutions for the disabled. (date posted 22/06/2016)



Figure 17. Image title. We have seen horrible acts of hate and terror over the past week, and there are dozens of victims who are in dire need of blood. Today, on #WorldBloodDonorDay, our soldiers are donating blood and encourage you to do the same! Since the beginning of 2016, IDF soldiers have donated 13,348 litres of blood - making up 30% of Israeli blood donations. (date posted 14/06/2016)

The narratives perpetuated on Facebook of a military institution primarily focused on the protection of human life is bolstered through imagery that portrays its operational activities as proportional, clean and precise. What is entirely absent from the image dataset is any visual representation of violence, injury or death carried out as a result of IDF operational activity. Information on the actions taken by the IDF are frequently provided in the form of infographics presented in a 'bloodless' and hygienic manner constructing a narrative of 'clean war' (Der Derian, 2000, p 772). Galai (2019) highlights this transition in the late 2000s from more celebratory images of IDF military achievements in seeking public legitimacy to metric-based infographics as statistical stand ins for the 'victory image' (p 306). This simplified representation of IDF military

activity serves to mitigate intangible risks and violence and to screen off the human causalities of IDF activity (ibid). Further, these infographics are particularly suited to the vernaculars of SNSs as highly shareable content that integrate spatially and temporally diverse incidents into a single event (Höllerer et al., 2018). The graphic imagery of violence that does appear on the IDF Facebook page is reserved for attacks carried out against Israeli civilians whilst there is a profound lack of embodiment and a total erasure of casualties as a result of IDF activity.

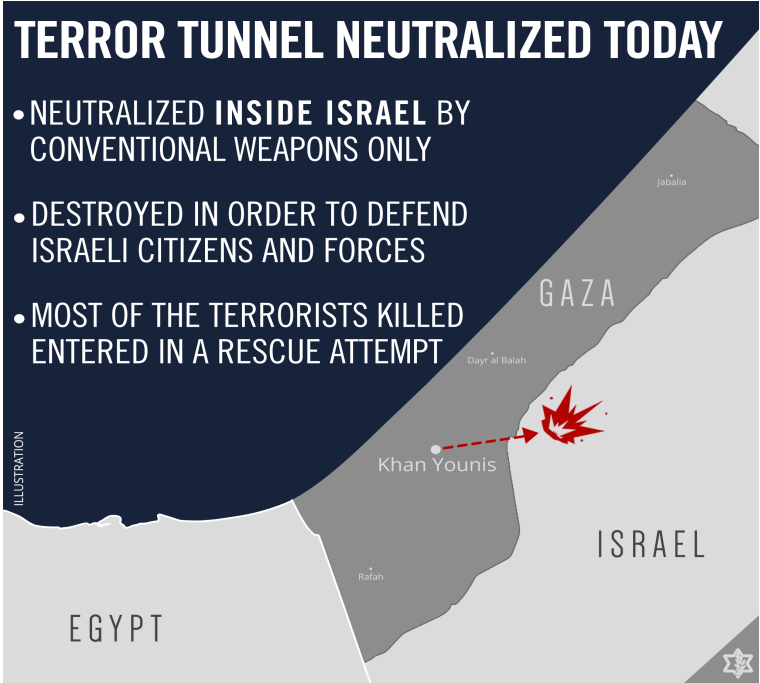


Figure 18. Image title. The IDF neutralized a Gazan terror tunnel today. This is what you need to know. (date posted 30/10/2017)



Figure 19. Image title. This is what the IDF's operational activity looked like in 2017. (date posted 07/01/2018)

Any successful claims to political legitimacy involve the conformity to legal rules (Beetham, 1991). The representation of its own activities as 'clean' facilitates a narrative that the military institution is conforming to legal rules and culturally acceptable norms of behaviour as they relate to proportional warfare and the protection of civilians. In promoting its claims to legitimacy on Facebook the IDF frames its activities through visual narratives of humanitarian interventions and defence. The next section will outline the ways in which the IDF promotes its capability in this defence.

6.3. CAPABILITY

Capability here is understood as the visual and textual representation of both the institutional capabilities of the organisation with a focus on a culture of professionalism, skill and team-work, and the corporeal capabilities which focus upon its personnel's strength, endurance, and mental resilience. Maltby et al. (2015) in their study of the

British Military use the term capability to refer to the multiple representations of the military institution and military personnel as ‘capable’, that is: ‘having the needful capacity, power, or fitness for (some specified purpose or activity), having general capacity, intelligence, or ability; qualified, able, competent’ (p 4). SNSs afford military institutions the opportunity to purposefully construct and portray their identity as capable and competent to its audiences, which can serve to contribute positively to the reputation of the defence forces amongst its networks online. A recurrent theme generated from the dataset was the ‘capability’ of the IDF, both in terms of its broader institutional culture and its personnel. The corporeal capabilities of the IDF were represented through an emphasis on the physical strength and mental resilience displayed by its soldiers.



Figure 20. Image title. “My father had polio as a child. Every time I reach my physical limits in the field, I think of him. I can use my legs. But, really, it’s all a matter of perspective. Even if I have mud in my teeth, it’s not hard if I don’t see it that way. I just sort of change my state of mind. My father really is my inspiration. If he can do it, I have no reason to give up on myself.” -Cpl. Yahalom, combat soldier in the 282nd Artillery Division. (date posted 22/03/2017)



Figure 21. image title. Sergeant Hila is a combat medic. She was recently awarded the Presidential Citation of Excellence for her great work providing medical care and defending our borders. “I proved to myself that I can overcome the physical & mental challenges of the job.” (date posted 06/06/2016)

Capability is explicitly represented not only through the physical abilities of individual soldiers but also through examples of their mental resilience and emotional strength, particularly in the face of personal obstacles or struggles which they have overcome, articulating a military identity of survival and endurance. A focus on emotional strength represents somewhat of a shift in traditional conceptions of military masculinity which valorise physical strength and bodily fitness with emotion more typically constructed as feminine (Cheng, 1999). This focus on emotional and mental strength can appeal to broader, more diverse audiences, positioning its soldiers as less aggressive and may once again serve to obfuscate the IDF’s role in enacting violence on behalf of the state.



“
EVEN THOUGH
I HAVE A DISEASE,
I FEEL STRONGER.
IT'S ALL A
MATTER OF
PERSPECTIVE.”

CPL. TOMER
IDF FITNESS INSTRUCTOR

Figure 22. Image title. “I found out I have diabetes at the age of 17. I never expected it because I was a very active kid, playing soccer since the fourth grade, and I never ate much junk food. When I realized that I’ll have to live with this for the rest of my life, I started crying like a little boy. I know it sounds strange, but looking back now, it’s one of the greatest things that happened to me. I avoid junk food almost completely and work out a lot more to keep my body healthier. Even though I have a disease, I feel stronger, and I learned that it’s all a matter of perspective. You’re not different from anybody else, you just have an obstacle that you need to overcome and learn to even cherish” - Cpl. Tomer, Gym Instructor at the Wingate Institute for Combat Fitness. (date posted 14/11/2016)



Figure 23. Image title. "I decided to draft to the Search and Rescue Brigade to do something truly meaningful, to see how far I can bring myself and test my limits. To do something for this country and to give back to her - to do things that would allow me to always be in motion... After everything I've been through in my life, the challenges that I've faced, and the challenges that I continue to face as an IDF combat soldier, I believe that I'll be able to overcome every obstacle that comes my way." Pvt. Barino's mother went missing when she was eight months old, and her father passed away when she was twelve. Raised by her grandmother, Pvt. Barino found the strength to keep pushing on - and the strength to enlist in the IDF as a combat soldier in the Home Front Command Search and Rescue Brigade. (date posted 26/11/2016)

In constructing representations of corporeal capability, a direct association is made between courage and bravery in the face of injury and the mental and physical resilience required for military life (Maltby et al., 2015).



Figure 24. Image title. "During Operation Cast Lead - right after I finished training - a mortar struck me dead on. I was rushed to Soroka Medical Center in Beersheba, Israel and underwent emergency surgery. But it was too late; I lost my left and dominant arm. Six months after the surgery, I decided to stop taking mind-numbing doses of medication for phantom-limb pain. If it was up to the doctors, I would still be on those drugs. But I decided from day one that I wanted to go back to the army, and back to combat. By mid-2010, a year and a half after the injury, I was back in the IDF. I had to relearn to shoot, load, and unjam a rifle. How to throw grenades, climb rope, and do push ups - all minus an arm. After completing training, I served in Hebron, and later progressed to command school. I ended my active service leading a squad of thirteen soldiers through their advanced training, and I continue to serve as a Special Forces sharpshooter in the 551st Reserves Brigade. It's been nine years since I lost my arm. When I look back, I feel blessed. It was rough, but without knowing it then, I gained insights that still benefit me today." 1st Sgt. (res.) Izzy #ModernMaccabees. (date posted 28/12/2016)

These images align serious combat injuries with commitment to the state and refer to wider historical narratives of Jewish resilience and heroism through the creation and use of #ModernMaccabees, a reference to a Jewish family who led a successful rebellion against the Seleucid Empire which threatened the existence of the Jewish religion in the 2nd century BCE. In this way national histories are utilised to create a 'hero-fication' of the soldier both past and present (Kelly, 2012).



Figure 25. image title. When your big brother is also your hero. Tamar surprised her brother, Pvt. Yuval, on the last half a mile of his beret march! (date posted 06/01/2018)

The qualities highlighted to represent the capabilities of the IDF soldiers, of mental and physical resilience, endurance and hard work are presented in the images as parallel and complimentary to those required in sport. John Kelly (2012) contends that 'sports utility as a cultural form to engender and inculcate symbols of nationhood' (p 734), make its appropriation as a tool for promotion by the military, unsurprising, with military actors frequently sponsoring or taking part in sporting events. Several of the images in the dataset conflate the roles of soldier and athlete and the capabilities each possess.

These images connect military training with athleticism and the mastering of sport (McSorley, 2016) with military corporal capability.



Figure 26. Image title. "Even from a young age, I was interested in martial arts. My father was a boxer and I got to know that world through him. I started to train seriously at 14 years old, and from that moment I fell in love. I won second place twice and first place once in the under 18 division of the national MMA championship. There's a popular saying in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu: 'Either you win or you learn.' The spirit and skill that I learned from my four years of training in MMA has helped me become a better soldier." 🥊 - Sgt. Yuval, Combat Soldier in the Kfir Brigade. (date posted 07/11/2016)



Figure 27. Image title. Behind every soldier, there's a story. Our athletes are driven to become exceptional soldiers. Find out more about them next week! (date posted 03/11/2016)

Dedication and training is portrayed not only through athleticism but also through the representation of preparedness in military training which contributes to a discourse of the defence force as 'capable'. The images of training in the dataset align with 'long standing representational strategies of soldiers who are battle ready or in various stages of preparation' (Woodward et al., 2009). The construction of the military identity is built upon demonstrations of the expertise of the trained military operative (Woodward and Jenkins, 2011, p 253).



Figure 28. Image title. Anti-tank missiles, snipers from rooftops and terrorists hiding in houses. Our soldiers prepare for Urban Warfare on all fronts. <https://www.idfblog.com/blog/2016/01/24/urban-warfare-battle-streets/>. (date posted 24/01/2016)



Figure 29. Image title. Today is the first day of the Northern Command Exercise, the largest IDF exercise in 19 years. The exercise, called “Or HaDagan” in Hebrew, brings together the Israeli Navy, Ground and Air Forces, intelligence, 20 brigades, reservists, and more to increase our readiness on the northern front. (date posted 05/09/2017)

Military 'capability' is represented through preparedness and skill in training but also through the possession of specialist weaponry and equipment. The dissemination of images depicting weapons systems serves to bolster fundamental military claims of professional skill and competence but can also act as a deterrent to its enemies.



Figure 30. Image title. Get to know our latest operational aerial defense system.
(date posted 02/04/2017)



Figure 31. Image title. Smaller, quicker, and easier to use: Our new tactical balloons are preventing attacks in Judea and Samaria. Developed by the Technological Division of the Ground Forces, our field intelligence soldiers utilize this new tech to gather information, patrol the borders, and detect terrorists. This smaller balloon provides prolonged intelligence coverage from a height close to 1,000 feet. The soldiers operating them are collecting vital information to keep people safe in this ongoing wave of terror. Give them a LIKE to show your support! (date posted 05/04/2016)

The institutional or cultural capability of the military institution is emphasised through representations of legacy, of pride in the uniform and the professionalism of its forces.



Figure 32. Image title. 44 years ago Amitzur Shapira, an Israeli Olympic coach, was murdered in the Munich Olympics. Today, his granddaughter, Sgt. Lior, reflects on his memory. “My grandfather died in the 1972 terror attack before I was born. In every Olympics I am filled with pride and strength as I think about how he represented our country. I am sure that he would’ve been proud of me for serving my country, too.” -Sgt. Lior. (date posted 20/08/2016)



Figure 33. Image title. “To be the first doctor for the Bardelas Battalion is a challenge. I see it as an opportunity to build a strong foundation and establish a high standard of professionalism paired with the values of human dignity, gender equality and preparedness to always help to the utmost of my abilities.”
-Lieutenant Dr. Or, first doctor of the co-ed Bardelas Battalion’ (date posted 04/06/2016)

Pride in the uniform and in membership of the military is directly associated with an institutional culture of collective endeavour (Woodward and Jenkins, 2011), brotherhood and camaraderie. Ideas of teamwork, strong emotional bonds and co dependence amongst the soldiers are recurrent across the image dataset.



Figure 34. Image title. "This year, I learned to appreciate my home and my family more. Since I joined this amazing new family - my battalion - I learned that there's nothing better than a loving and united family. I'm taking this lesson with me for the year to come: family comes first. You don't need to be far away from them to understand that." Pvt. Smadar, Combat Soldier in the Bardelas Battalion. (date posted 15/10/2016)



Figure 35. Image title. "Growing up, it wasn't a given that I would serve, but I always admired soldiers. I'm proud to walk around my village in uniform. My father was also really proud of my decision to draft, and after I told my friends the stories of my service, five of them drafted to the battalion too. We're like a big family here - everybody knows each other. Friends bring friends; we become brothers. Nothing brings us together like protecting and fighting for the country we love." -Sgt. Yossef, combat soldier in the Desert Reconnaissance Battalion. (date posted 12/01/2017)

Visual and textual representations of camaraderie and family are common across the dataset as expressions of cultural and institutional capability. As Maltby et al. (2015) and Woodward and Jenkins (2011) found in their respective studies of the British military, it is rare for the deeds of soldiering to be understood as individual but are rather considered by those within the military as a group endeavour (ibid, p 260). The construction of corporeal and institutional capabilities by the IDF which places an emphasis on physical and mental strength and a culture of professionalism and teamwork, facilitates the promotion of the IDF's reputation in service of maintaining public support. Further, a focus on the emotional resilience of its forces challenges traditional conceptions of military masculinity and is somewhat antithetical to the realities of the IDF and its soldiers as engaging in violent activities on behalf of the state. The representations of unity and teamwork disseminated on the official IDF Facebook page are portrayed as being inclusive not only of male personnel but also of women, minorities, LGBTQ, and multi-ethnic service members, promoting the military to its followers as a modern progressive institution. The following section will outline the theme of 'progression' which was generated from the dataset.

6.4. PROGRESSION

This is defined here as references to the process of moving or developing gradually towards a more advanced state, in favour of change or innovation, and social reform. The theme of 'progression' was recurrent across the dataset, encompassing images and text titles which directly refer to the inclusion of different races and religions and equal opportunities for men, women, those with disabilities or those traditionally

excluded from military life. As outlined in the previous chapter, in order for a military to sustain in contemporary democratic states, it must garner the support of a broad spectrum of society. Facebook affords the IDF with the opportunity to promote a narrative of the institution as progressive and fair in a manner not previously afforded by traditional media outreach. In doing so, it can address and potentially appeal to a diverse audience which may not previously have engaged with the IDF and its activities.

Images of female soldiers were prolific across the dataset on a scale disproportionate to the numbers they represent within the military institution in reality (just under 20% of the standing professional army) and promoted a narrative of equal rights and opportunities available to women within the institution.



Figure 36. Image title. Major G. was just appointed by the Israeli Air Force (IAF) commander as the first female flight squadron commander in the IAF. Wish her luck and safe flights!✈️🙏➔ (date posted 07/08/2018)

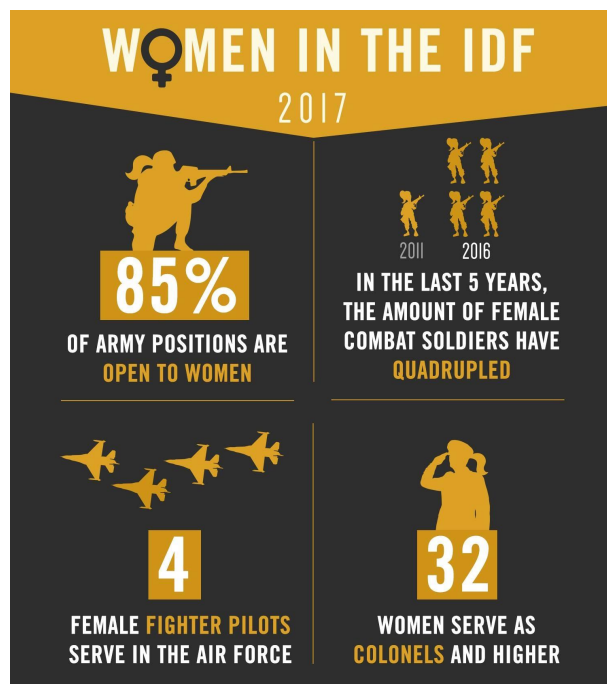


Figure 37. Image title. Another year, another step forward. 🇮🇱 (date posted 07/01/2017)

Ideas of gender equality are equated with the opportunities for serving female members to engage in combat roles and to work side by side with their male counterparts as equals. Several scholars have identified the military as an inherently masculine institution (Barret, 2001; Sasson-Levy, 2003; Connell, 1995), not only as a consequence of the majority of their members being male but also, as Hale (2008) contends, as they ‘constitute a crucial arena for the construction of masculinity’ in larger society (p 327). The military as a gendered organisation champions traditionally masculine traits such as physical strength, bravery and power (Levin, 2011). Facebook and other SNSs afford the military the opportunity to challenge traditional perceptions of the military as dominated by males (often at the expense of their female co-workers), and to appeal to the women in its networks for the purposes of recruitment and reputation management.



Figure 38. "Being a good soldier is about character, bravery, friendship, and determination. If you are capable and motivated, it really doesn't matter if you are male or female." Cpl. Tomer, soldier in the co-ed Lions of the Jordan Battalion. (date posted 25/02/2016)



Figure 39. Image title. "When Cpl. Daniella drafted, she was assigned to be a secretary. After a few months, however, she realized her true dream was to be a Search and Rescue soldier. "Being a combat soldier is more than I could ever have imagined and prepared for. It's harder than I thought it would be, but also that much more fulfilling. My work is an amazing combination between protecting Israel's borders and saving people's lives." (date posted 09/01/2016)

These images of opportunity for women and their positioning as equal with their male counterparts challenges gender stereotypes within the military. However, the images of female soldiers in the dataset demonstrate a mimicry of traditionally male combat practices on the one hand, with displays of the more traditionally ascribed female roles as caregivers, mothers and wives on the other. The images present a narrative of the woman who can have and do it all, fulfilling multiple roles as wife, mother and combat soldier defending the state of Israel.

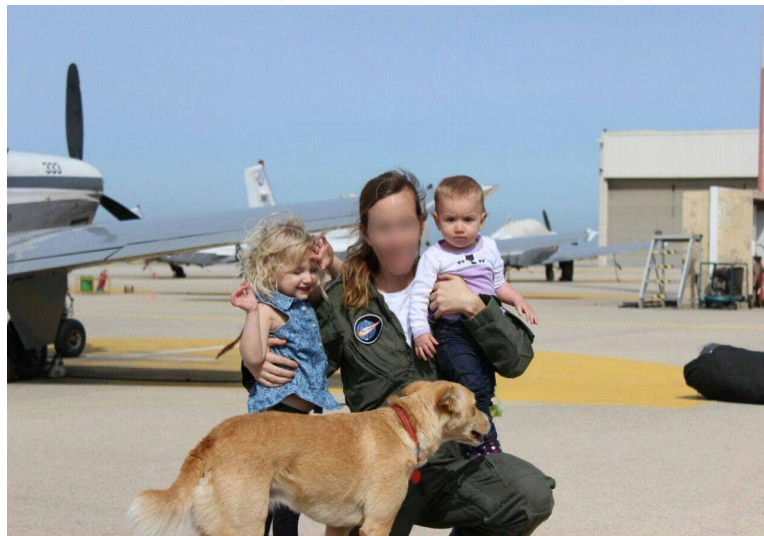


Figure 40. Image title. Newly appointed Lt. Col. T. will be the first female pilot to act as Squadron Commander in the IAF. Congrats! (date posted 17/01/2018)



Figure 41. Image title. 34% of our female career soldiers are mothers! Join us in saluting the dedicated moms who choose to raise a family while defending the State of Israel. Happy #MothersDay! (date posted 08/05/2016)

The images that reference the ability to balance family life with military service are reserved solely for those that represent female soldiers. Unsurprisingly perhaps, this is not presented as a necessary balance or consideration for serving male members. Speaking within the context of Israel, Galai (2019) highlights a gendered approach to the security of the state, one where women are conscripted and required to serve as soldiers but that this role is ultimately subordinate to the role of motherhood. Thus these images may be viewed as a product of the military as an inherently gendered institution (Levin, 2011) which is underwritten by ideas of traditional masculinity and femininity but perhaps also as a strategy for appealing to the women in its networks for the purposes of recruitment and as a tool to challenge traditional perceptions of the

military institution. The images represented in this theme seek to promote a narrative of the IDF as a progressive institution in terms of gender equality but also in terms of the ethnic, religious and socio-economic diversity of its forces.



Figure 42. Image title. Merry Christmas from Sgt. Fadi Khurani! He's a Christian IDF soldier protecting our border with Gaza.

<https://www.idfblog.com/blog/2015/12/23/christian-merry-christmas/> (date posted 24/12/2015)



Figure 43. Image title. Married and father of a three-year-old, Pvt. Yazid recently swore on the Quran to protect Israel and its citizens. “When my son Hussein was born, I realized that my responsibility as a father was to protect him. And if I want to protect my family, I have to defend my country. Like my father, I decided to leave my job and enlist as a combat soldier in the IDF.” (date posted 07/03/2017)

The IDF's Facebook page affords it with the opportunity to manage the attributions and impressions its network forms about it by highlighting the presence of multiple religions and ethnicities within its forces. As highlighted in the previous chapter, stakeholders working within military strategic communications view SNSs such as Facebook as a vector for positive stories of their respective institutions. The narrative of a progressive and diverse military perpetuates the idea not just of a Jewish army but rather a nation's army targeting and potentially appealing to multiple audiences simultaneously, both domestically and internationally. Further, SNSs such as Facebook have the unique utility to allow military institutions to engage audiences on topics traditionally considered as taboo or entirely outside of the defence sphere such as LGBTQ and gender equality. Facebook's features and vernaculars afford a space for the military to directly address these issues which can in turn expand its audiences and advocates online.



Figure 44. Image title. "It's important to be honest with yourself and not apologize for who you are." Cpl. Yehonatan talks to us about being a religious, gay IDF soldier. <https://www.idfblog.com/blog/2016/06/03/youre-alright-dont-change-idf-soldier-gay-religious/> (date posted 03/06/2016)

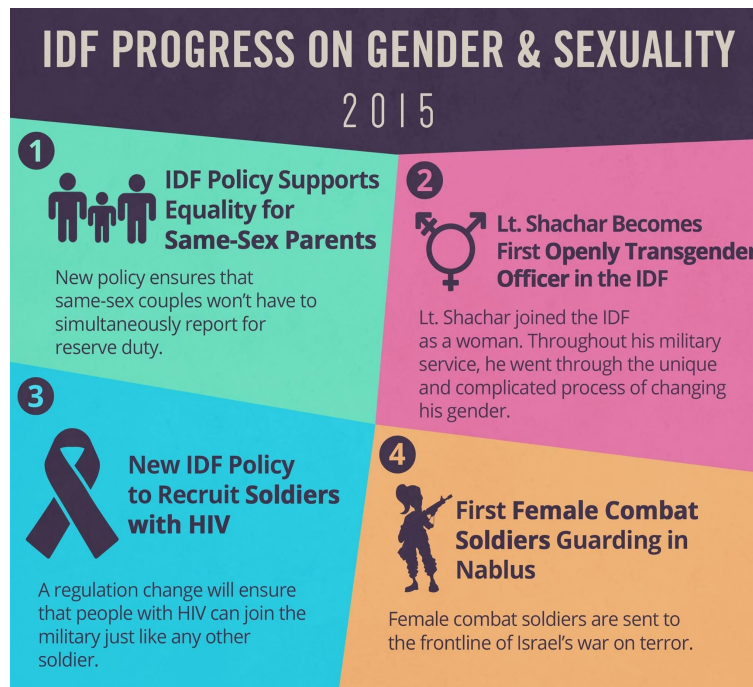


Figure 45. Image title. Changes we made because it was 2015.
#BecauseIts2015 (date posted 31/12/2015)

These images and their accompanying text titles challenge the traditional hetero-normative and gender ideals associated with military institutions and allow the IDF to enter into new social and cultural arenas in its strategic communications. Both masculinities and femininities are reconstituted by the military as a means of meeting its strategic objectives and 'the aims of the process of militarisation' more broadly (Hale, 2008, p 306.). Traditional masculine values of physical strength are supplanted by images of active service members with non-combat related physical disabilities, in a narrative of inclusion.



Figure 46. Image title. “At eight years old, the cancer returned. I remember that heavy feeling of immense fear. I know I went through it once, but there was no telling what was going to happen this time. I was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia three times before the age of 10. The third time, when I was nine - that was the most difficult. It was no longer treatable with chemotherapy. The only option was a bone marrow transplant. My mother was pregnant with my brother at the time, and we found out the month before his birth that he was a match for me. Four months later, I was treated with the blood from my brother’s umbilical cord. I’ve been in remission ever since. For me, right now, my military service is a step on the path to ultimate independence. I want to someday own an apartment, have a great job, cook - to really live on my own. This drive gets me through the toughest times.” -Staff Sgt. Noam #ModernMaccabees. (date posted 30/12/2016)



Figure 47. Image title. 19-year-old Second Lieutenant Sheli drafted in December 2014 as a volunteer. She was exempted from service due to being born with a hearing disability. After giving her all in the Education Corps for a year, she decided to pursue her dream of becoming an officer. In December 2015, Sheli entered Officers Training Course and finished last month. She is now a proud officer in the IDF. “There have been so many challenges on the way to this moment. From the intense physical training to a role that requires me to verbally communicate with people and make countless phone calls every day. I’m happy to tell my story because I know that a lot of people choose not to volunteer. They don’t understand the many things you can accomplish in the army, even with a disability. My disability makes it difficult for me to communicate with those around me, but I made it and became an officer. And if I can - so can all the other volunteers”. (date posted 14/05/2016)

The IDF utilises its Facebook page to challenge perceptions of the military institution and to engage in topics and with audiences traditionally considered outside of the defence sphere. As highlighted by the findings in the previous chapter, military communications actors perceive that their ability to operate in the contemporary environment is dependent upon an awareness of, and value in its activities from a broad and diverse audience. The images within this theme feature heterogeneous genders, sexualities, religions, and bodies challenging the traditional links between the military and ideas of masculinity with a representation of the IDF as accessible and forward thinking. SNSs such as Facebook provide a platform for the institution to do this, portraying itself as a progressive institution but also as an attractive employer brand, one that is both caring and responsible.



Figure 48. Image title. Nothing justifies violence against women. #OrangeTheWorld (date posted 25/11/2015)



Figure 49. Image title. A new IDF initiative aims to tackle Bedouin unemployment by helping discharged soldiers find jobs in Israeli companies. “This program is a jump-start towards a better future for its participants. It gives our soldiers a better opportunity to become a beneficial and equal part of society.” - Lt. Col. Shay Saraf Read more about the initiative here: <https://www.idfblog.com/blog/2016/02/16/ambitious-idf-initiative-will-tackle-bedouin-unemployment/>. In the photo: A discharged Bedouin soldier receives professional training at Israel Electric Corp. (date posted 16/02/2016)

The images disseminated on the official IDF Facebook page present a narrative of progression not only in terms of the institution’s personnel but also in terms of its technological innovation through discourses of high-tech weapons systems, security smart phone apps and cutting-edge scientific research. These images remediate broader Israeli state narratives that present itself as the ‘start-up’ nation and a hub of technological innovation (Gilboa, 2006)



Figure 50. Image title. In 2015, Israel was ranked the 3rd most innovative country by the World Economic Forum. Just wait and see what 2016 has in store! (date posted 21/01/2016)



Figure 51. Image title. Check out this new app! Designed by the IDF Home Front Command, this app has GPS tracking tech that sends location-based security updates straight to your phone. It also gives safety tips for all different types of situations. The app is available on Google Play and the Apple app store in English, Hebrew, Russian, and Arabic and will play a crucial in keeping Israelis safe. Download on Apple App Store: <https://goo.gl/PjWmcP> Download on Google Play: <https://goo.gl/U7YfOF> (date posted 24/02/2016)

The narrative of 'progression' perpetuated by the IDF on its official Facebook page serves to fulfil several strategic communications objectives. 1) by engaging in societal 'hot topics' such as gender and ethnic equality and LGBTQ rights, the military can open up potentially new networks and audiences to its strategic messaging, 2) it can challenge preconceived notions and criticisms of the institution and its reputation, and 3) constructing an identity of the IDF as progressively minded and technologically innovative allows it to create a distinction between itself and its adversaries. This rejection of traditional ideas of military masculinity and the projection of the IDF as 'progressive' in its representation of women, minorities and multiple ethnicities may once again ultimately serve to obscure the realities of the military as an institution as a focus on inclusivity, acceptance and teamwork replaces images of predominantly white males enacting celebratory images of military achievement (Galai, 2019). SNSs, such as Facebook afford military actors a unique avenue through which to engage these topics and networks in service of its StratCom goals. The next section will outline the ways in which the IDF seek to utilise Facebook as a platform to establish 'credibility and authenticity' with its networks.

6.5 CREDIBILITY AND AUTHENTICITY

Credibility is defined here as the quality of being trusted and the power to inspire belief in one's integrity, honour and honesty. Authenticity is defined as the quality of being true or in accordance with fact, being accurate and genuine. The construction of credibility, Mor (2012) argues, is an inherent part of social accounts, including those that pertain to the use of force. In order for military strategic communication to be

effective in its attempts to influence or persuade, it is essential that the institution is perceived as reliable and trustworthy by its target audiences. Encouraging a perception of the military as credible and authentic is also essential in obtaining the engagement and continued attention of these audiences online, a task made significantly more challenging by the digital environment and its copious information sources (ibid, p 393). In order to compete in this space, the military institution is required not only to construct a reputation for credibility but also to alter its communication practices in a way that reflects the unique vernaculars of SNSs through the use of more informal language, hashtags, emojis and an engagement in popular culture, constructing an authentic online presence for its followers.

A narrative of the IDF as credible and authentic was recurrent across the dataset constructed through references to its international alliances, to the IDF as a reliable information source and through the dissemination of more informal and 'relatable' content on its official Facebook page. As argued by Joseph Nye (1990), 'politics has become a contest of competitive credibility'. One manner in which the IDF presents itself as credible to its online networks is to highlight its international, predominantly western alliances and to make appeals directly to its international audiences.



Figure 52. Image title. Thank you U.S. Navy and Marine Nationale for joining the Israeli Navy הים הזרוע in a 2-week-long exercise simulating dismantling naval mines and combating terror. Strengthening our cooperation 🇮🇱🇺🇸🇫🇷👉 (date posted 27/07/2017)



Figure 53. Image title. Today, Chief of General Staff, LTG Gadi Eisenkot met with UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander Maj. Gen. Michael Beary, as part of the IDF's ongoing dialogue with UNIFIL. 11 years after the Second Lebanon War, both UNIFIL and the IDF are committed to maintaining the security of the region and to facilitate economic prosperity for the residents of Israel and Lebanon on the northern border. The commanders discussed the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and the UNIFIL commander expressed continued willingness to enforce the resolution. (date posted 07/07/2017)

The IDF attempts to construct a perception of the institution as credible by aligning themselves as allies and partners with other international actors such as the US, France, Mexico and the United Nations. These alliances are all presented as supportive of the IDF, particularly in its training and security measures, lending credibility to its motivations and activities. The images disseminated on Facebook make direct appeals to international followers both through a discourse of international co-operation with the IDF, but also by encouraging them to see the security situation in Israel from its perspective, undermining the narratives of its enemies (peaceful protest versus violent riot) and promoting itself as the credible actor and source of information about what is occurring on the ground in Israel.



Figure 54. Image title. While people around the world are waking up to alarm clocks, Israelis are waking up to sirens. (date posted 30/05/2018)

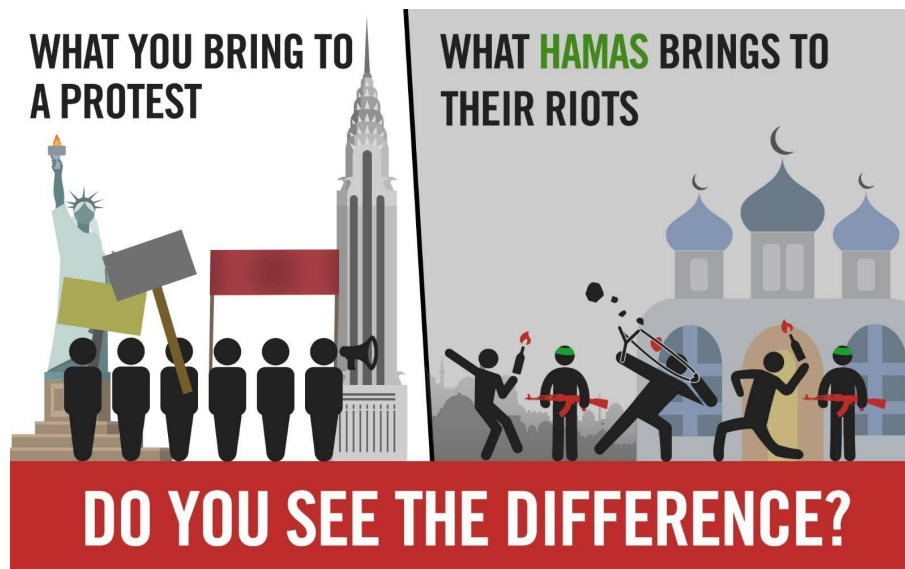


Figure 55. Image title. Hamas tells the world about a peaceful protest, it should be called a violent riot. (date posted 30/03/2018)

As outlined by the interviewees in the previous chapter, transparency and the timely dissemination of information online is perceived by military communications actors, as key to building credibility with target audiences in service of their strategic goals. SNSs such as Facebook afford militaries the opportunity to proactively disseminate information, fulfilling the contemporary societal need for information at speed whilst attempting to dominate the narrative on the nature of the institution in an online environment replete with different sources.

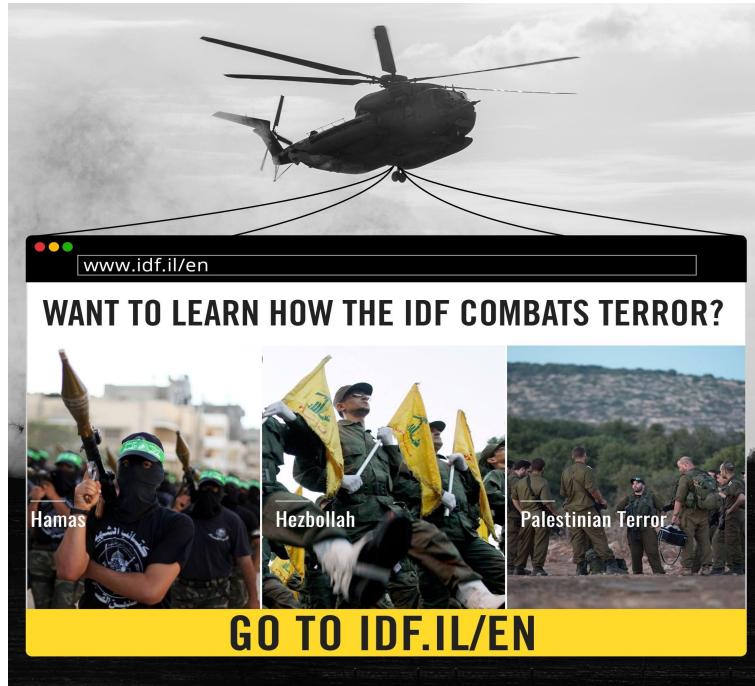


Figure 56. Image title. All the information you need, all in one spot. <https://www.idf.il/en/> (date posted 13/02/2018)

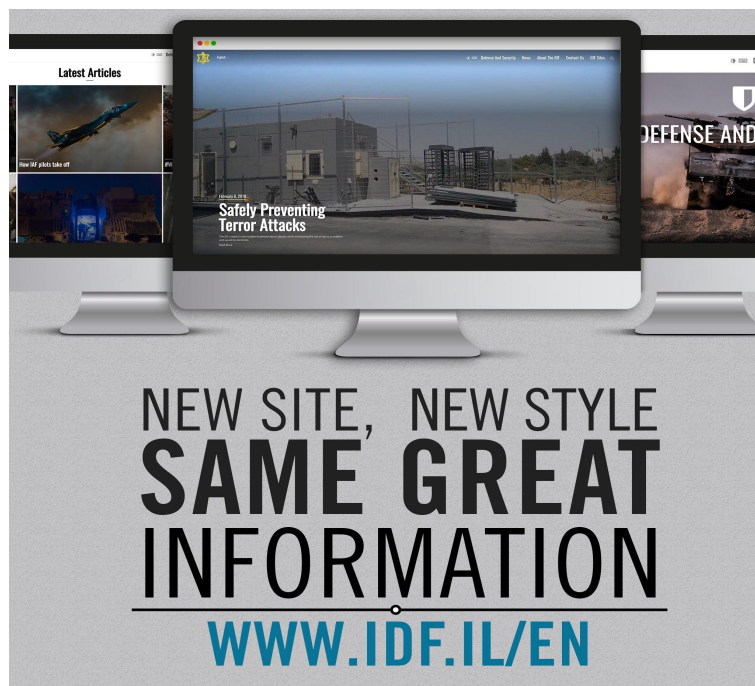


Figure 57. Image title. We don't have to tell you. Just leaving it here... <https://www.idf.il/en/> (date posted 06/02/2018)

The IDF utilise Facebook as one platform with which to promote itself as a credible information source, encouraging its followers to 'read more here', providing links to its other SNSs and encouraging its audience to send it questions. In appropriating the social media platform as a tool of strategic communication, they also appropriate some of the techniques and representations, traditionally associated with mainstream media outlets and their respective logics. The live 'Q & A' sessions and the term 'breaking' or 'breaking news' over its posts, mimic informational formats typically associated with professional news, tapping into audience associations with credible information sources and providing them with an avenue to directly engage online with the military institution.



Figure 58. Image Title. Hurry up! Lt.Col. Jonathan is going up live in 15minutes. Send us your questions. (date posted 15/01/2018)



Figure 59. Image title. Today, an IDF combat soldier was killed during operational activity near the southern Gaza Strip. A terrorist squad shot at IDF troops and the IDF soldier was severely injured. He later succumbed to his wounds. His family has been notified. The IDF expresses its heartfelt condolences and will continue to support the family. (date posted 20/07/2018)

The direct engagement with audiences online can assist in promoting the institution as credible amongst its networks. Further, the IDF attempts to construct an 'authentic' online presence by utilising its Facebook page as an avenue to engage in topics outside of those traditionally associated with defence, drawing on popular holidays, cultural references in music and film and by adopting the unique vernaculars of SNSs such as hashtags, emojis, selfies and colloquial language which may serve to humanise the institution. This level of informality or 'relatability' represents a significant augmentation in the nature of traditional military strategic communication, one that is made uniquely possible by the affordances of SNSs.



Figure 60. Image title. With their green berets and camouflage paint, our soldiers from the co-ed Bardelas Battalion go above and beyond to make sure they don't get pinched. Happy St. Patrick's Day! (date posted 17/03/2016)



Figure 61. Image title. What do you want to learn how to make? Latkes (potato pancakes) or sufganiyot (jelly doughnuts)? Vote now! (date posted 13/12/2017)

The informality and ‘relatability’ of this kind of content facilitates the possibility of greater engagement of target audiences with IDF content, challenges traditional perceptions of a military institution and provides the opportunity for the IDF to reach a more diverse audience, expanding its networks. As previously outlined, the deluge of information online combined with the deficit in public attention means that in order for militaries to meet their strategic communications objectives on SNSs, they must compete with cute cat videos and celebrities online. As Corner and Pels (2003, p 8) contend, celebrity power is ‘being translated from the popular entertainment industries towards more ‘serious’ fields such as business, politics, art and science.’ The IDF utilised well known celebrities and public figures who can act as advocates on its behalf, again lending greater credibility to the institution and promoting greater engagement from its audiences.



Figure 62. Image title. Jerry Seinfeld and his family celebrated the first day of the new year at the Ramon Airbase. (date posted 02/01/2018)



Figure 63. Image title. Even after completing a military fitness test, Conan O'Brien Presents: Team Coco still keeps that smile! (date posted 30/08/2017)

SNSs afford the IDF the ability to enlist not only popular figures to construct an image of credibility and authenticity online but also popular cultural products such as film and music, tapping into broader cultural trends of interest to its target audience. One such example was a post promoting Star Wars: The Force Awakens on the day of its release in an image that blurs the military and the filmic.



Figure 64. Image title. 'Today is the day. #ForceAwakens #StarWars (date posted 17/12/2015)

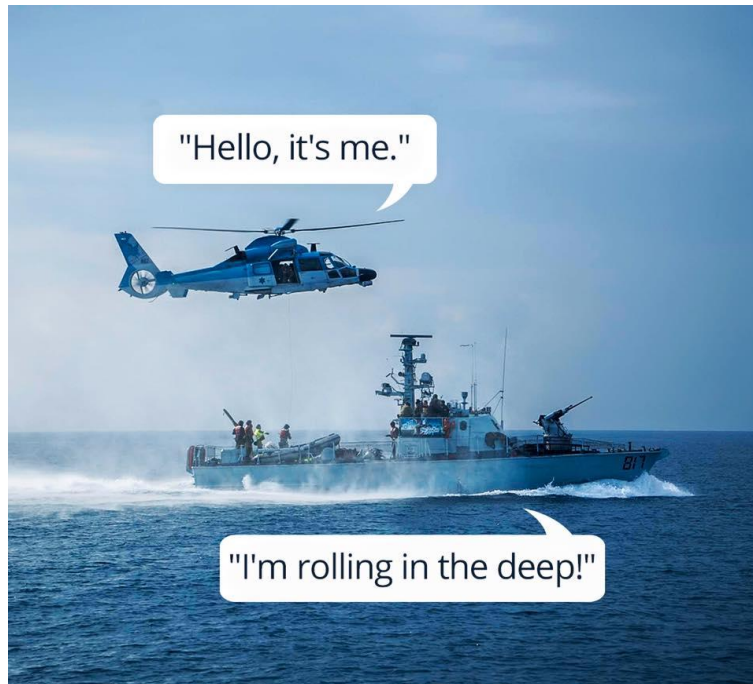


Figure 65. Image title. Trust us, these guys are not chasing pavements. (date posted 15/01/2016)

References to film and music are combined with visual representations of soldiers and military hardware in a blurring between the social spheres of culture and the military complex. The text bubbles and image title seem antithetical to the physical locale and the military hardware depicted. Popular culture acts as a conduit here for the IDF to reach new audiences that may not have previously engaged with its content whilst modifying traditional visual discourses of military activity. As Silvestri (2014) aptly asserts, war fighters have access to the same cultural frameworks that we do and as such draw upon the same reference points and cultural icons (p 108). In speaking about the importance of language used by political actors to convey integrity and credibility, Corner and Pels (2003) pointed to a move towards more informal modes of address. This informality they contend, suggests closer relationships with more colloquial political language reconfiguring political relations with the public. The use of

social media vernaculars such as popular hashtags, selfies and colloquial language were recurrent throughout the dataset defying expectations of the traditional nature and tone of military communications.



Figure 66. Image title. '#Selfietime with the U.S. Navy, Marine Nationale and the Israeli Navy הים זרוע during the Noble Melinda 2017 naval exercise. (date posted 07/08/2017)



Figure 67. Image title. 'David started his week by jumping from a plane. Go to <https://www.snapchat.com/add/idfficial> to join in on the action. #MondayMotivation (date posted 12/09/2016)

In conjunction with less formal language the IDF also utilised humour and sarcasm on Facebook, mirroring broader trends within public authorities online (Fraustino and Ma, 2015). This use of humour on SNSs points to the nature of communication the military perceives as necessary to effectively engage target audiences online in the midst of significant competition. Recent 'big data' research has demonstrated that humorous content achieves disproportionate attention across SNSs (Davies et al., 2018). The use of humour as a discursive strategy also challenges traditional perceptions of the military institution as stuffy and archaic replacing it with a level of relatability to audiences.



Figure 68. Image title. You can't choose your family...or your paratrooping instructor! This instructor at the Lotar Counter-Terror School was in for a treat when his sister turned out to be his paratrooping instructor! (date posted 05/03/2018)



Figure 69. Image title. Share and help us wish Hamas a Happy Birthday! (date posted 14/12/2015)

Humour as a political communication device is not unique to the internet but is distinctly *of* the internet as social media reshapes the tone of political communication (emphasis included, *ibid*). The style and vernaculars of SNSs afford military actors with a unique avenue for a more personal, informal and humorous tone not previously possible in traditional MSM. Humour can be utilised to contribute to solidarity and relationship building between the IDF as an institution and its networks online. SNSs can also facilitate a more personal relationship with individual military personnel. Placing the soldier at the centre of its strategic storytelling on Facebook can facilitate particular claims to authenticity for the IDF (Parry and Thumin, 2016). Personalised, first person stories of individual soldiers were recurrent across the dataset as conduits to represent the military institution and to promote an emotional connection between them and the IDF's target audiences.



Figure 70. Image title. "I was born Jewish in a small village in Ethiopia. I never knew my father. When I was five years old, my mother and I were set to move to Israel. It had always been her dream. A week before the flight, my mother died in a car accident. I couldn't move to Israel on my own because I was too young. I was adopted by my father's sister, a Christian. Throughout my childhood I always knew I was Jewish, and dreamt of one day moving to Israel. Around the age of 18 (I never knew my birthday), I decided to fulfil my mother's dream and finally move to Israel. I came here all on my own. After two years in Israel, I joined the army. The day I put on my uniform for the first time was one of the proudest days of my life. At that moment, I knew I made it. My dream is to help other orphans like myself. I know how hard it is to grow up without parents, and how important it is to have supportive people by your side. But if you believe in yourself and work hard - nothing can stop you." Pvt. Minalu, an IDF Security Center Specialist (date posted 27/02/2016)



Figure 71. Image title. In January 2015, forces were on a routine patrol on the northern border when they were suddenly hit by a barrage of Hezbollah anti-tank missiles. 20-year-old Sergeant Tsoof and his team were the first paramedics to arrive at the scene and provide medical care to the injured. "I was really new at the job, but it was clear to me what I was going to do, how I was going to treat the injured, what orders I was going to give the medics. The injured were located in several different spots at the scene. We had to locate them and provide efficient medical care in real time, while the enemy was still firing at us. As we evacuated the injured to safety, the exchange of artillery fire was happening all around us and right over our heads." After this incident, Sgt. Tsoof realized that he wanted to teach future IDF paramedics. Today, he is an instructor at the IDF's Medical Training Facility. (date posted 28/06/2016)

This personalisation of the soldier in the telling of emotionally charged narratives, promotes an authenticity of experience which serves to encourage an emotional connection and support for the troops which can then translate into a positive association with the military. As argued by Bleiker and Hutchison (2008) emotions play an omnipresent role in world politics and political actors do not shy away from drawing upon emotional appeals in order to garner support for their activities (p 119). Online networks are an important site for military institutions to not only persuade those audiences willing to listen to its messaging, but also to encourage them to become

active proponents of it. The following section will outline the ways in which the IDF used its official Facebook page to make 'calls to action' which attempt to induce its networks to engage with, appropriate, and share its strategic messaging.

6.6. CALLS TO ACTION

This is defined here as a piece of content intended to induce the viewer or follower to perform a specific act, as facilitated by the platform features and architecture. For example, to like, comment, or share content disseminated by the military institution on its official Facebook page. These are actions made uniquely possible by the routine practices and vernaculars of SNSs that are appropriated by the IDF as one tool of its strategic communication, in order to enhance the engagement of its followers with its content. Kuntsman and Stein (2015) coin the phrase 'digital militarism' to elucidate the ways in which SNSs have been mobilised as 'tools, sites and languages of militarist engagement' (p 6). Although they too focus their study on Israel (both its military and public) they contend that this extension of militarised culture into social media domains is not unique to the Israeli context but rather SNSs are increasingly employed by western states to 'win hearts and minds' (ibid).

Facebook images which included a 'call to action' were recurrent across the dataset, encouraging the IDF's followers to either engage with, or become proponents of, its strategic messaging through the ordinary practices of 'likes', 'shares', and 'comments' afforded by Facebook's technological infrastructure. Several of these posts consisted

of banal requests, for example to vote for the IDF's next Facebook cover photo or to participate in photo caption contests.



Figure 72. Image title. For the next 24 hours, you have the chance to write the IDF's next Facebook status! Think of the best caption you can for the attached photo. Write it in the "comments". In 24 hours, we will choose the best post and publish it to our official pages! May the best caption win! (date posted 02/09/2015)



Figure 73. Image title. A big thank you to everyone who participated in our most recent caption contest and congratulations to our winner, Raan Lindsay from Oklahoma. (date posted 03/09/2015)

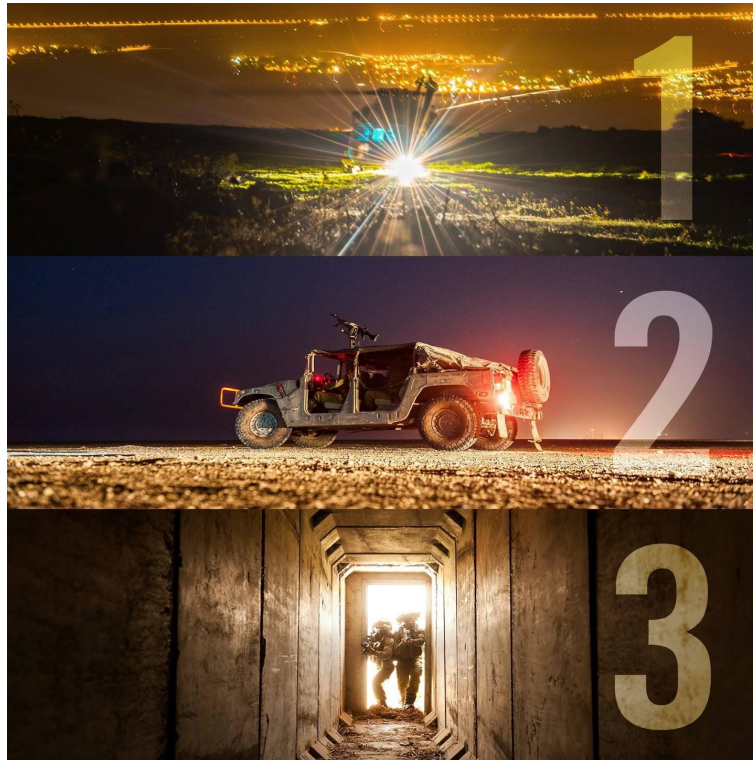


Figure 74. Image title. The time has come for YOU to choose our next cover photo. Comment with the number of your favourite picture and in 24 hours we will declare the winner! (date posted 24/10/2015)

These images combine video-game imagery, cinematic aesthetics and mundane social networking practices to promote the IDF, appeal to its target audience and to encourage them to actively engage with its content. The everyday mundane SNSs practice of 'liking' a piece of content was explicitly aligned with an expression of support of its military personnel.



Figure 75. Image title. Corporal Mahmoud, a Bedouin soldier from the city of Rahat, just finished Combat Medics Course. In his family, serving in the IDF is a core value. Everyone in his family served; he's no exception. "I'm willing to give everything for Israel. As a new combat medic, saving lives is the most important thing for me." LIKE to wish Cpl. Mahmoud luck in his new position! (date posted 09/04/2016)



Figure 76. Image title. After growing up in the U.S, Adam Stufflebeam drafted into the Golani Brigade's elite reconnaissance battalion. Despite not knowing a word of Hebrew before arriving in Israel, he was named "Outstanding Soldier." Last week, he passed down his beret to his younger brother, Eitan, who also serves in Golani's reconnaissance battalion. Their youngest brother, Jared, is also drafting into the IDF. LIKE to support the Stufflebeam brothers! (date posted 29/10/2015)

The routine Facebook rituals and technological affordances of 'sharing' and 'commenting' upon a piece of content are conscripted by the IDF as a means for its followers to publicise violence against the state, to condemn terror acts perpetrated against it, to demand justice on its behalf and to assist them in promoting narratives which undermine its enemies.



Figure 77. Image title. Today, Leah Goldin, whose son Lt. Hadar Goldin's body is being held hostage by Hamas, addressed the UN Security Council. "Our son was not the victim of the war in Gaza, he was a victim of the ceasefire, a humanitarian ceasefire brokered and sponsored by the United Nations." The international community must demand that the terrorist organization, Hamas immediately release Lt. Hadar's body <http://webtv.un.org/> (date posted 22/12/2017)



Figure 78. Image title. In matter of hours, terrorists have carried out stabbing attacks in Israel's two largest cities. The recent wave of terror has become a daily threat to Israeli civilians. Share. (date posted 08/10/2015)



Figure 79. Image title. Since 2014, Hamas has spent \$150 million on terror tunnels. Read below what Hamas could've bought for the people in Gaza. Comment with your suggestions. (date posted 31/08/2017)

Here, the socio-technical affordances of SNSs which facilitate, encourage and condone these sharing and communicative practices (Malty and Thornham, 2016) are combined with the strategic communications strategies of the IDF in a complex mediation that extends military practice into normative social networking practices. The everyday mundane uses of SNSs can become imbricated in more extraordinary uses such as the support and remediation of military messaging to one's own networks. The IDF not only made these requests for action from its followers but also posed rhetorical questions to them on topics ranging from the mundane to the violent.



Figure 80. Image title. With the #RioOlympics underway, we'd like to introduce you to some of our own #IDFAthletes. Meet Pvt. Shani, a soldier whose true passion is volleyball. Shani has been playing for the past 6 years, and is a member of the Israeli national team. His workout tip? "The best way to stay fit and healthy is to run. Not only do you burn calories, the adrenalin and the energy you will get from running will make you happy! (date posted 13/08/2016)



Figure 81. Image title. It shares real-time intelligence with soldiers in the air, on the ground, and at sea. Its helmets give pilots a 360-degree field of vision and even allows them to see through the floor. And even more impressive, its stealth capability makes it invisible to radar. What is it, you ask? It's the Israel F-35. (date posted 23/06/2016)



Figure 82. Image title. When firebombs are being thrown, it's not a "peaceful protest". (date posted 03/04/2018)

The IDF employs rhetorical questioning and the everyday SNSs practices of 'liking', 'sharing' and 'commenting' to encourage engagement with its content from its target audiences and to harness these online networks to further promote and publicise its strategic messaging in a manner that becomes naturalised to its their supporters. Expressing support for a military institution through familiar social media practices can, argue Kuntsman and Stein (2015), serve to minimise and banalise the violence they exert, mitigating its impact upon the public. The now ubiquitous nature of SNSs and their practices can in fact be done, argues Moores (2014) with very little thought. Lemmy (2012) echoes these points, noting that liking, commenting, sharing and participating in content disseminated by a military institution online such as the IDF, can become no more controversial than sharing your favourite Nike brand campaign. It is not a matter of politics or ethics but rather becomes just another component of one's online persona (ibid). The platform structures of SNSs afford military actors with opportunities to harness their technological features in service of their StratCom objectives. The capacity to encourage engagement and boost visibility through the mundane practices of these sites, coupled with the ability to then track this engagement is unique to communication practices on SNSs. Further, the architecture of SNSs such as Facebook supports this as it pushes users to constantly connect to others, to share content and to promote the formation of new groups and communities as the number of connections users make through the platform raises its monetary value (Van Dijck, 2012). As previously outlined in this thesis SNSs do not afford uniformly. Those with the dexterity, resources and institutional support will have the competitive advantage in gaining visibility online. This advantage is further solidified by shared features across SNSs such as verified pages demarcated by a blue 'tick' on Facebook, Instagram, and

Twitter. A verified badge confirms it is an 'authentic' page for a public figure, company, or brand. When verified pages were rolled out by Facebook it was bestowed upon prominent public figures such as celebrities, journalists, government officials and popular brands with large audiences. The IDF official Facebook page has been granted this verified page 'tick' lending it a mark of 'authenticity' from the platform. At issue here is first, that users engagement with military SNSs through 'liking' and 'sharing' can spread military messaging quickly and widely without the mediation of traditional MSM (Crilley, 2016) and second, that although the IDF may be visible on Facebook and have a significant following, its engagement with its networks in a manner which appropriates mundane social media norms and vernaculars, creates a visualisation of military activity which masks its inherent nature an institution that trains for and engages in violence and warfare.

As militaries have appropriated SNSs and impacted upon their culture, so too have SNSs influenced the manner in which these institutions conduct their strategic communications. Tensions were evident across the dataset however, in the nature of the visual material disseminated and the text titles which accompanied them. I refer to this as image dissonance, which will be outlined in the following section.

6.7. IMAGE DISSONANCE

Image dissonance here refers to instances in the dataset whereby the image and accompanying text placed together have a contrasting effect and are inconsistent with one other. These dialogic tensions were recurrent across the dataset, exhibited through visual representations of soldiers with their weapons in hand accompanied by titles describing their life saving activities, heavy weaponry and wishes for peace, and the celebration of popular holidays whilst in full combat attire.



Figure 83. Image title. Saving lives under immense pressure is both challenging and rewarding. Read about Capt. Bar's experiences as a medical commander. <https://www.idfblog.com/blog/2016/05/17/a-conversation-with-bar-an-idf-medic/> (date posted 17/05/2016)



Figure 84. Image title. There's no better feeling than knowing you're responsible for saving lives' Sgt. Omer Yihye, Combat Medic in the Hermon Region. (date posted 13/02/2016)

These images present a paradox between conventional representations of military weaponry and activity with discourses of life saving and more mundane everyday topics such as popular holidays. This creates somewhat of a disconnect between the strategic narratives the IDF may wish to project to a broad audience about the nature of the institution in these particular posts (as humanitarian and progressive) and the images of uniformed combat ready soldiers and military equipment.



Figure 85. Image title. Wishing you a peaceful Shabbat. (date posted 25/11/2016)



Figure 86. Image title. The IDF wishes you a happy Thanksgiving! (date posted 24/11/2016)

This juxtaposition between images and their accompanying text was also evident in some of the images representing women in the IDF with text titles promoting their equal capacity with their male counterparts and of limitless opportunity, accompanied by visual representations of them in sexualised or passive poses to camera or as encompassing traditional gender roles as wife or mother. Inconsistencies of this kind

can serve to undermine IDF strategic narratives of a progressive institution which views its female personnel as equal to the males.



Figure 87. Image title. There’s no doubt that this week that started in the field and ended in a wedding shows that it’s possible to combine the military and family life. Maj. Ruth, who serves as a communications officer in the 188th Armored Brigade, left in the middle of a military exercise to get married. Congrats. (date posted 28/10/17)



Figure 88. Image title. Meet the first female tank operators of the border defense array that finished their training today as part of a trial run. (date posted 05/12/2017)



Figure 89. Image title. Tonight, Jews from all four corners of the earth will be celebrating freedom, liberty, and redemption. As our soldiers defend Israel, we will be commemorating a journey that inspires, resonates, and continues to this day. #HappyPassover! (date posted 22/04/2016)



Figure 90. Image title. "Being a field observer means having the honor and responsibility to protect the soldiers and be their eyes in the field". Sgt. Tess & Sgt. Carmel, Combat Intelligence Corps observers responsible for the Gazan border. (date posted 25/09/2016)

The women in these images exist in a field of tension between what is considered feminine and what characterises a good soldier (Kronsell and Svedberg, 2012). Narratives of opportunity, promotion, and of female soldiers engaged in combat and defence are undermined by the way in which they are visually represented. Whilst the researcher recognises that the reception of these images and their accompanying text titles are likely to be interpreted in different ways by different audiences, in different contexts, the purpose is to highlight how these images may delimit opportunities for certain interpretations and affective responses (Freistein and Gadinger, 2019, p 226). These contradictions between imagery and narrative in the dataset may serve to undermine the communications objectives of the IDF and the identity of the institution they wish to promote to its broader target audiences on Facebook.

The findings of this multi-modal thematic analysis of Facebook timeline images identified five primary themes, 'Legitimacy', 'Capability', 'Credibility and Authenticity', 'Progression' and 'Calls to Action', providing an empirical analysis of the StratCom work conducted through the world's most popular SNS by an active military institution at the forefront of engaging in SNSs (the IDF). The interview findings outlined in the previous chapter revealed that military StratCom practitioners perceive SNSs as a means to build networks and advocates by creating awareness of and value in the institution, reaching out to broader, more diverse audiences, and engaging in topics traditionally considered outside of the defence sphere in a more relatable and informal manner. Further, the interviewees highlighted the importance of engaging in the cultural norms and vernaculars of these SNSs, adjusting the tone of their StratCom messaging to incorporate humour and more emotionally driven personal stories in

order to drive engagement and create positive associations with their respective institutions. Although the thematic analysis of Facebook images disseminated by the IDF represents one example of the use of a specific SNS as a tool of everyday StratCom in practice, the findings of this case study resonate with the perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom as articulated by the interview participants. The themes generated in this analysis reflect a promotion of the legitimate value of the IDF as an institution and its capabilities and reveal the use of much more informal content and colloquial language which reflect the cultural norms of the platform. The image analysis reveals an engagement with progressive issues such as LGBTQ and women's rights alongside popular cultural references to film, music and celebrity and a greater personalisation of soldiers stories told through long-form first person narratives. Further, the unique platform architecture and vernaculars of Facebook aide the IDF in encouraging greater engagement with its content through the mundane practices of 'liking' and 'sharing' whilst facilitating a visualisation of the military which largely disappears the realities of its activities. However, the findings also highlighted a degree of 'Image Dissonance' recurrent across the dataset, whereby the images presented are juxtaposed to their accompanying text titles/captions creating a productive friction between the two which may serve to undermine the IDF's strategic messaging with some audiences. This underscores some of the difficulties in projecting StratCom narratives through a medium in which contexts collapse many diverse audiences into one (Marwick and boyd, 2011) . The findings of the interview analysis and the thematic analysis of images disseminated by the IDF on Facebook provide an understanding of how military actors perceive SNSs and how they approach it as a tool of military StratCom on the one hand, with an empirical analysis of how an

active military implemented its StratCom initiatives in practice. The final chapter of this dissertation offers a summary of the findings from the stakeholder interviews and the thematic analysis of Facebook to elucidate the perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of military strategic communication and to elucidate the ways in which SNS have augmented the nature of military StratCom.

CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

7.1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis has argued that SNSs have augmented the nature of military strategic communications practice both in terms of potential reach and tone. The nature of the contemporary war environment combined with a highly complex media ecology have placed public awareness and perceptions at the forefront of success in conflict (Lind, 2004; Hammes, 2006). As such, the media are essential to military-strategic communication practices which endeavour to influence and manage the perceptions of multiple and complex target audiences. Further, these conditions place increased importance on the construction of well-crafted strategic narratives by military actors which can be disseminated across multiple media platforms both old and new. Within this context, this thesis finds that SNSs have been integrated into the StratCom practices of military institutions, with a recognition that they provide a unique conduit for strategic messaging and a means to engage with larger and more diverse target audiences in a much more colloquial and informal manner for the purposes of building credibility, awareness and public support for their activities. In so doing this study has addressed a gap in the research which has not sufficiently engaged with the way in which military and defence actors have integrated SNSs into their strategic communications planning. Filling this omission is important because content disseminated across SNSs can have a real-world impact upon societal attitudes evidenced by recent concerns around incitements to violence, and the spread of disinformation by nefarious actors online. Less attention has been paid to how official state actors utilise this arena of popular culture as a means to meet their institutional

objectives. The official SNSs utilised by military institutions are viewed as authoritative within the communications environment, both by those that follow these accounts and by MSM who directly utilise them as information sources in their reportage. This study has contributed to the discipline of communications by theorising the affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom and empirically exploring the strategic communications work carried out by an active military institution (the IDF) on a popular online platform, Facebook.

This final chapter offers a summary of the findings of this research in relation to the literature and theoretical frameworks outlined in the previous chapters. This summary revisits the research questions and the aims and objectives set out in the introductory chapter and outlines the significance and implications of the study. Finally, I layout the core contributions of this thesis to the broader field before discussing the limitations of the study and directions for further research.

7.2. THE AFFORDANCES OF SNSs AS A TOOL OF MILITARY STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

The affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom are understood in this thesis through a hybrid conceptualisation of the media system, within which SNSs and their networks have altered the strategic communicative practices of military actors in service of their goals. Military communications practitioners may avail of the broad communicative affordances of social media such as visibility, persistence and scalability as outlined by scholars (Evans et al, 2017; boyd, 2011), but the findings

presented here provide grounded contextual detail on the perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of military strategic communication gleaned from the semi-structured interviews conducted with practitioners working within the military and defence sector. The interview data provided an insight into the intentions, processes and aims involved in the use of SNSs by military actors in the dissemination of their messaging. This is important as understanding an actor's aims is a central issue in the study of strategic narratives and politics more broadly (Miskimmon et al., 2013, 2015).

7.2.1 BUILDING NETWORKS AND ADVOCATES

As this study has revealed, military actors are acutely aware that broad-spectrum societal support is essential to their institution's ability to manoeuvre and operate in contemporary democracies. As such, creating awareness of and value in the military institution amongst the public is a key objective of their StratCom efforts and one that can no longer be sufficiently met by traditional MSM alone as audiences become increasingly fragmented. Several of the respondents spoke about this in terms of an existential battle for their respective institutions, one in which SNSs offer one tool with which to burst through their normal communication bubbles and engage those audiences not previously interested or invested in issues of defence. SNSs afford the military with the opportunity to build online networks which in turn may result in tangible real world benefits for their institutions such as the acquisition of funding, recruitment, and public support for their activities.

One of the main advantages of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom is that they facilitate the targeting of multiple audiences simultaneously from internal personnel and their families to domestic and international audiences to political elites. The findings of the study reveal the duality of the military institution both as an independent organisation with its own objectives and goals and as an organ of the state which enacts its foreign policy. Although in a normative sense the militaries of democratic states are a-political institutions and thus constrained from directly lobbying their governments for the purposes of freedom of manoeuvre or budget allocations, the interviewees illustrated that SNSs allow for an indirect form of lobbying, through the promotion of their activities to political elites and the potential garnering of public support which may translate into support for the greater allocation of resources to the military.

SNSs provide a unique opportunity for military communication practitioners to acquire advocates from within their online networks who can further engage with audiences on their behalf which may be particularly useful in times of controversy or crises. In contrast to elite talking heads or military spokespersons who traditionally communicate on behalf of military institutions in more MSM forums, on SNSs their advocates can belie the appearance of corporate messaging and lend an authenticity to the content whilst granting access to their wider networks. Advocates can be strategically approached and engaged by military institutions or this can happen as an organic process made uniquely possible by the norms and vernaculars of SNSs. Followers of military SNSs can remediate military-strategic messaging through the common practices of liking, sharing and commenting. This is line with what Kuntsman and Stein

(2015) describe as 'digital militarism' in which SNSs become militarised tools in the weaving together of the military and the civilian through social media practices.

Soldiers were identified in the findings as key potential advocates for their respective institutions with military communications practitioners attempting to foster a 'culture of content creation' by its personnel. The rationale being, that audience's interaction with their soldiers' SNSs may result in greater engagement and a positive association with the military in which they serve. This strategy represents a significant shift in military institutional culture previously highly protective of information disseminating publicly from their serving members, particularly in areas of activity. What the military (or at least those working within StratCom) increasingly recognise is the potential to harness the inherent authenticity of their soldiers who can act as conduits to larger networks for their strategic messaging. Placing the soldier at the centre of military strategic messaging allows for a degree of personalisation and more emotive content. This strategy of personalisation of the soldier may, as argued by Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2015) encourage support for the troops despite falling public support for wars. This thesis finds that military communications practitioners conceive emotion and personalisation as essential to audience engagement and the amplification of their messaging.

This thesis has argued that as military institutions have appropriated SNSs as a tool of military strategic communication they have altered the tone of this communication in response to the norms and vernaculars of these online platforms. With the copious amount of content available online, audience attention is limited. Chapter five illustrates that military communications practitioners view humour and a more informal tone as

crucial in grabbing the scarce attention of target audiences. This finding contributes to more recent literature that focuses on the intersection between humour and politics online (Davies et al., 2018; Crilley and Chatterje-Doody, 2020). The StratCom practices of military actors on SNSs embrace this greater informality in tone through the use of colloquial language, pop culture references, “selling sex” and the appropriation of popular online vernaculars such as hashtags in an attempt to increase audience engagement with their content. SNSs are perceived as a form of ‘infotainment’ in which more relatable and informal content serves as a vehicle for military strategic messaging. Further, military actors increasingly utilise SNSs to engage in topics and issues beyond those traditionally associated with the sphere of military and defence such as LGBTQ and equal rights for women in a strategic attempt to push the boundaries of their existing networks and provide relevant, high-quality content to these audiences so that they may follow and even become advocates for the institution and their strategic messaging. This represents a significant shift in the nature of military StratCom in direct response to the characteristics of this new media format. The nature of this kind of communication disseminated by state actors engaged in the complex realities of violence and defence may at once serve to render them more visible whilst also obfuscating the very nature of the institution and its purpose (Kuntsman and Stein, 2015).

7.2.2 IMPRESSION AND VISIBILITY MANAGEMENT

As evidenced by chapter five of this thesis, a fundamental organisational concern for military and defence institutions is the way in which they are viewed by both domestic

and international publics. This concern has been made more prevalent by the dynamics and discourses of the digital age (Flyverbom et al., 2016). SNSs afford military actors with a means of self-presentation or impression management (Mor, 2012) through the ability to communicate directly with their target audiences in a way that attempts to challenge traditional or pre-existing perceptions of the institution.

The study finds that military communications practitioners conceive of SNSs as a channel through which to potentially influence audience perspectives (both internal and external) on the nature of the military institution. As previously mentioned, emotional content is viewed as essential to audience engagement but further, the creation of an emotional connection with the audience is also understood as essential to changing opinions towards the institution in a favourable way. SNSs provide a conduit for positive stories about military institutions which they can disseminate to target audiences directly, and the promotion of narratives not normally present in the MSM. However, military communication practitioners are highly cognisant that SNSs do not represent a magic bullet with which to influence awaiting audiences, or to alter highly entrenched negative opinions. Nor is it even their intention to do so. Whilst StratCom efforts online can be used to bolster and reassure existing supporters, or as Freedman (2006) asserts, to provide guidance for those already committed, chapter five of this study illustrates that the key target audience of military StratCom efforts are the underinformed, the undecided, the middle-ground. In managing the perceptions of this segment of the audience, the purpose is to shore up support for any future military activity and to promote positive associations towards the nature of the institution and its activities.

As illustrated by this thesis, SNSs provide a unique opportunity for military actors to proactively disseminate information on a wide variety of topics and to directly engage with audiences in a two-way flow of communication not previously afforded by MSM. As evidenced by the interviews, military communications practitioners view this direct engagement as essential to the success of their online identities and as a means to directly address criticism of their institutions from their audiences. Directly engaging with and responding to negative comments can create an impression of the institution as open and transparent. As argued by Hallahan et al. (2007) an inclusive and collaborative approach to strategic communications may be a particularly prudent approach to communications efforts across new media platforms.

Visibility for any individual or group on SNSs is never guaranteed but rather is determined not only by their own strategic actions but also by the algorithmic and socio-economic components of SNSs (Van Dijck and Poell, 2013). The platform architectures of SNSs engage in their own opaque strategies for promoting popular content and demoting others, however, users can engage in concerted efforts to boost their own visibility online. This thesis has illustrated that military StratCom practitioners adopt an increasingly commercial approach to their StratCom initiatives online to garner public recognition and to promote awareness of their 'brand'. SNSs do not represent an equal playing field for all participants. They afford different things to different types of users across an array of different contexts and resources still matter. Chapter five of this study finds that military communications practitioners take advantage of these

dynamics afforded by SNSs, paying to boost their content online and to track its level of success and engagement through back-end analytics honing their strategies across SNSs. As aptly argued by Couldry (2010, p 7), “having a voice requires resources”. Militaries across the world invest significant resources into their output on SNSs (Crilley, 2016). They have the capacity to make high-end compelling content and to pay for reach. As illustrated by this study, the resources employed by military communications practitioners may be financial in the budgets allocated to a campaign or human in the form of the expertise and experience made available for strategic communication. As aptly asserted by Davies and Chouniard (2016) the extent to which an object may afford is dependent upon the perception and dexterity of the user and the level of cultural or institutional support provided to them in this endeavour. Power, resources and expertise are not equally distributed (Chadwick et al., 2016) amongst the users of SNSs and so those that can bring these to bear have an advantage in gaining visibility for their content.

Allocation of resources for StratCom and online campaigns vary significantly across different military institutions however even those without significant resources can micro-target content to a very specific audience relatively inexpensively due to the technological architecture of these platforms. As made clear by the interviews, the 18–24-year-old demographic is a key target audience for military StratCom on SNSs with one respondent intimating that this may in fact be significantly younger, starting at 16 years old. Accessing this demographic is made uniquely possible by the nature of SNSs which are used habitually by this age group in a way traditional media outlets are not. The interviewees exhibited an awareness that different SNSs offer unique

affordances in terms of the demographics or genders present on individual sites and so integrate this into the implementation of their online StratCom initiatives. While Instagram may be utilised for female focused campaigns and YouTube as a recruitment tool, Twitter was understood as a platform which facilitates the building of digital relationships with journalists. Chapter five of this study reveals that the future of military StratCom practice online is moving towards a micro-targeting of individual interests. Thus, it is important to understand the nature and tactics employed in military StratCom practice on SNSs as it may become increasingly targeted and ultimately less visible as it moves to niche interest groups on Facebook or to encrypted opt-in WhatsApp groups which facilitate one to one communication.

7.2.3. INTERVENTION IN HYBRID INFORMATION FLOWS

SNSs facilitate greater independence for military communications practitioners from MSM and the opportunity to bypass them entirely in the dissemination of their strategic messaging (Banham, 2013). As illustrated in chapter five, the presence of official military SNSs are maintained by military actors in an effort to create an environment of information dominance for those searching for information about the respective institution online. This finding is in line with what Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2015) refer to as 'arrested war' and a proactive premeditated approach to the dissemination of imagery and information by the military in a strategic use of the media. The military have thus structured their StratCom practice in response to the nature of the media environment (Maltby, 2012) appropriating SNSs as a tool of military StratCom (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2015). The opportunity to bypass traditional media and disseminate

their own narratives directly to audiences was a key feature of SNSs for the interviewees making evident that the historic suspicion and distrust of the media (Hooper, 1982; Snyder, 2003) and how they portray the military in their reportage persists within the contemporary media environment. However, all of the interviewees conceded that SNSs do not exist in a vacuum and so they must work in tandem with more traditional MSM as part of the overall communications strategy.

Chapter 5 of this study finds that military communications practitioners perceive SNSs as a means not only to bypass MSM but also to serve an agenda-setting function influencing what stories might gain MSM attention in a hybrid media system in which “old” and “new” media compete and intertwine (Chadwick et al., 2016). Military StratCom practitioners increasingly design social media content and events which they anticipate will provoke MSM attention. Strategically this makes it easier to influence the nature of the narrative they want to tell and to amplify it across all media. As this study has revealed, journalists represent a key target audience for military StratCom across SNSs. When the content disseminated by military actors on their official SNSs is directly utilised by journalists as an information source, it lends credibility to the military institution. The military and their spokespeople have always been utilised as an authoritative source by the MSM. What is unique about SNSs is the practice of journalists who follow military accounts directly retweeting or embedding military content into their reports, without subjecting them to the usual contextual framing or editing traditionally associated with MSM (Banham, 2013). This was viewed by the respondents as particularly beneficial to military StratCom objectives. MSM are also grappling with the nature of the hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013) and have

integrated SNSs into their own institutional operations. As an industry facing significant financial and logistical challenges, SNSs provide an accessible and cost-effective means to source information. Within this context, MSM and military actors enter into closer relationships (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2015) as MSM are reliant upon the SNSs of military actors as a source of compelling visuals and information and the military upon them as a means for heightened visibility and credibility creating a complex interdependent relationship between the media and the military. While military actors may engage in closer relationships with the MSM, it may also be possible for them to enter into mutually beneficial relationships with the platforms themselves. The economic interests of social media platforms aid military actors in their appropriation of these tools. The logics of capitalism are reflected in platform architectures which facilitate the collection, storage, assessment and commodification of data, usage behaviour and user-generated content (Fuchs, 2012, p155), all of which are capitalised upon in varying degrees by military communication practitioners. Within the context of this research, several of the interviewees discussed fostering relationships with contacts within social media platforms such as Facebook and Snapchat in order to remove content they found offensive or to advise on how best to utilise the platforms for their needs. At issue here is the invisibility of these mechanics. These potential affordances of SNSs remain largely hidden to the average user.

7.3. LIMITATIONS TO SNSs AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL OF MILITARY STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

The perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom as outlined above, are contingent upon several factors including the resources and training allocated, the institutional support provided and the participation and expertise of personnel. These factors will determine the extent to which the opportunities SNSs present for StratCom are realised. As argued by (Miskimmon et al., 2013) the volume, speed and diversity of sources on SNSs creates a perpetual “risk of credibility loss” for militaries (p 120). In order to successfully harness SNSs as a tool of StratCom, military actors must consistently provide timely and truthful information. This poses a challenge to institutions traditionally unaccustomed to the release of information to the public at pace, particularly in times of crises or conflict.

Finding the appropriate tone that will appeal to as wide an audience as possible is also a challenge. Military communications actors must appeal to these imagined online audiences without the knowledge of how they might interpret their content (boyd, 2011). Adopting a tone that is too glib or jovial is likely to repel audiences and undermine the reputation of the institution. On the flip side of this coin, fears of reputational damage which result in a failure to engage with audiences online can also result in public perception of the institution as secretive or deceptive. As evidenced in chapter five of this thesis, military communications practitioners expressed frustration at the reticence of some of their military institutions to allow soldiers to post on SNSs on the military’s behalf. Whilst those working within communications in these

institutions believe that the benefits outweigh the risks, the wider institution grapples with the fear of unfavourable rumours spreading from within the force or the dangers posed by the potential hacking of soldiers' mobile phones by hostile actors. This creates an institutional tension between the communications strategy and operational security. The online environment is not one that can be controlled by military actors. The content disseminated on official military SNSs may be altered in ways never intended, deleted or hacked by adversaries in a way not previously possible in MSM. Further, the findings reveal a tension not only between the broader military institutions and their communications departments but also between the communications department and their internal audiences. The desire to break out of the traditional communications bubble and to engage wider audiences on progressive topical issues such as LGBTQ and women's rights has been met with some internal criticism from serving military personnel. This illustrates an inherent tension and potentially competing values between military institutions which endeavour to appeal to new more diverse audiences and their own personnel which may feel alienated by this approach. As asserted by Davies and Chouinard (2016), the extent to which an object can afford something to the user will be dependent upon their perceptions of the technology, their dexterity in utilising it and the level of cultural or institutional support they receive.

The findings of this study highlight the paradoxical nature of SNSs and the nature of the military as an institution. SNSs are defined by their interactive two-way flow of information, their brevity and informality, their constant evolution and the speed at which information proliferates. In contrast, military institutions are inherently secretive,

due in part to operational security concerns and an inherent historical mistrust of the media. They are traditionally neither agile, progressive nor quick to adapt to changes in their external environments. Information is released once having been verified through a multi-layered bureaucratic system. However, SNSs are ubiquitous in the modern communication environment and military institutions must come to terms with the inherent nature of how SNSs operate as they increasingly integrate them into their StratCom practices.

7.4. THE INTEGRATION OF SNSs INTO MILITARY STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PRACTICE

This study finds that military communications practitioners adopt a hybrid approach to their StratCom strategies. Military actors incorporate both older and newer media and their logics in order to reach the widest possible audiences that may be receptive to their narratives. The type of media they employ is primarily dictated by the audiences they wish to reach which have become increasingly fragmented across multiple platforms. Traditional MSM and the credibility it affords remains highly relevant to military StratCom particularly when targeting policymakers and those engaged in political debate. The findings of chapter five illustrate that the traditional military set-piece engagement with MSM is now reserved for high-level major events or updates whilst the day to day StratCom work is increasingly carried out through their own SNSs. For the respondents, traditional media and their own SNSs should complement one another in a symbiotic relationship. Interestingly, for the interviewees, the utility of traditional MSM for the purposes of StratCom is less about broadcasting to the masses

and more about reaching a more niche politically-minded elite audience who remain influential in defining policy. SNSs in contrast have become a vehicle for military actors to reach broader and more diverse audiences.

As illustrated by chapters five and six of this thesis, SNSs have fundamentally altered the manner in which militaries conduct their StratCom initiatives. Standard news releases are now primarily disseminated online saving both time and resources and facilitating greater agility and efficiency in the day to day output of information. There is an increased investment in in-house audio-visual equipment and staff training in photography and videography. Although some reticence still exists within the broader military structures, soldiers are increasingly being fostered as content creators on the military's behalf. This finding is in line with Crilley (2016) who argues that SNSs collapse the context between military and the media as they become media actors in their own right with the capacity to both produce and distribute their own content. The findings of this study indicate that we are at an important juncture in Military StratCom practice, one in which the scale is tipping in favour of SNSs as the primary avenue for perceived successful StratCom practice. This is particularly true in the targeting of younger demographics for the purposes of public awareness and recruitment. An illustrative example of this is the German Armed Forces whose investment in television advertising for the purposes of recruitment is now zero. Put simply, their audience isn't there. As an alternative, it created its own YouTube reality series following young recruits which became widely popular amongst the 16-24 demographic in Germany. Military actors are recognising the potential of a broad suite of digital technologies which may be incorporated into their StratCom practice such as podcasts, WhatsApp

groups, virtual reality headsets at recruitment fairs and the use of bots to interact with audiences on their SNSs. A debate around the morality of utilising these tools and artificial intelligence in recruiting young people is still ongoing within military institutions however there is a recognition that this is the likely trajectory of military StratCom practice in an environment where new media technologies are now ubiquitous and the need to reach new audiences is seen as existential to these military institutions in their ability to operate.

7.5. MILITARY STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION ON FACEBOOK, A CASE STUDY OF THE ISRAELI DEFENSE FORCES.

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) serve as a microcosm of military StratCom practice and as a means to empirically ground the StratCom work carried out by an active military institution on popular SNS, Facebook. In an increasingly visual media ecology, any study of military SNSs must take account of their inherently visual nature and the role of images in disseminating military narratives (Crilley, 2016; Miskimmon et al., 2015). As previously outlined, the nature of the contemporary war environment and the complex media ecology make it essential for military institutions to appeal to broad spectrums of society to generate public support. SNSs are one tool utilised by military StratCom practitioners to reach multiple diverse audiences. The challenge for military actors is to find narratives that will appeal to and convince these multiple diverse audiences in service of their goals (Roselle et al., 2014). If influencing audience perceptions of the military institution is a key objective of military StratCom, strategic narratives facilitate a means to “change the discursive environment in which they

operate, manage expectations and extend their influence” (Miskimmon et al., 2015, p 3). Chapter six of this study finds that the content disseminated by the IDF on its official Facebook page weaves together images and narratives which promote the legitimacy, capability, progressiveness and credibility of the institution whilst utilising the cultural norms and vernaculars of the platform (liking, sharing, commenting) to encourage calls to action from its followers. As a means to appeal to and persuade audiences which may differ greatly in their beliefs and ideologies this study illustrates that the IDF's strategic messaging on Facebook utilised appeals to personalisation, popular culture references in film and music, and informal colloquial language as vehicles to communicate its strategic narratives in a potentially more palatable and relatable way.

The multi-modal thematic analysis of timeline images uploaded to the official IDF Facebook page revealed a narrative of legitimacy of the IDF as an institution of value in society in the provision of security against perceived threats such as violence and terrorism. Hansen (2011) describes this practice as ‘visual securitization’ whereby images constitute something or someone as threatened and in need of immediate defence by security actors (2011, p 68). Chapter six finds that the visuals disseminated on the official IDF Facebook page were used as a conduit to present these issues of security, embodying threat images in an effort to increase the plausibility of its claims and garner the support of its target audiences (Vuori, 2012). Narratives on the nature and the necessity of the IDF were linked with broader political narratives that aligned their activities with the international struggle against global terror. These narratives plug into larger ideas on the nature of “western” societal structures and beliefs that view terrorism as aberrant and the actions taken to prevent or retaliate against it, as

legitimate and justified. The findings reveal that Facebook was utilised as a means for the IDF to disseminate its own strategic narratives on the nature of the international system, its place within it as a humanitarian actor with a moral imperative to save lives and the issue of terrorism as a global threat to security (Miskimmon et al., 2015). In so doing, the IDF sought not only to legitimate itself in the eyes of its public but also to support national objectives remediating state strategic narratives of security and threat.

The images disseminated on the IDF Facebook page juxtapose ideas of terrorism and extremism which are associated with its adversaries, with those of democracy and necessity. These images speak to values and beliefs embedded within 'western' culture such as the rights of civilians to freedom and safety and of children to innocence. In this way, chapter six illustrates that the IDF utilised Facebook to legitimate itself not only by disseminating its own strategic narratives but by simultaneously working to undermine the narratives of its enemies. The narratives perpetuated through the IDF Facebook page are focused on the institution as a humanitarian actor both domestically and internationally and portrays its operational activities as proportionate, clean and precise and in keeping with internationally accepted norms. There are no visual representations of violence, injury or death carried out as a result of IDF operational activity. Information on the actions taken by the IDF are frequently provided in the form of infographics presented in a 'bloodless' and hygienic manner constructing a visualisation of 'clean war' (Der Derian, 2000, p 772). This finding is in keeping with Kunstman and Stein's (2015) study of social media in Israel in which there is a profound lack of embodiment and a total erasure of casualties as a result of IDF activity.

The findings of chapter six further reveal that Facebook was utilised to promote a narrative of the IDF as capable both in terms of its organisational culture and its serving personnel. Images revealed a focus upon skill, preparedness and training in the forces and the resilience, strength and camaraderie of its soldiers. This finding is aligned with studies by Maltby et al. (2015) and Woodward and Jenkins (2011) who found 'capability' to be a key narrative in their respective studies of the British military's use of media. Purposefully constructing a narrative of the institution as capable to its audiences can serve to contribute positively to the reputation of the defence forces amongst its networks online.

The visual representation on Facebook of the IDF as a progressive institution underscore attempts by military StratCom practitioners to engage broader and more diverse audiences online. These images perpetuated a narrative of progression through representations of groups and individuals not normally associated with the military. These images included service members from the LGBTQ community, those with non-combat related disabilities, women in superior combat roles and those from across multiple religious and ethnic groups. The benefits of this StratCom strategy online are threefold. First, by engaging in societal 'hot topics', such as equal rights for women the military can potentially reach and appeal to new networks which may not previously have engaged with its communications. Two, the visual representation of the military as accepting of all races and sexual orientations can challenge preconceived notions of the institution as archaic, male-dominated and conservative. And finally, constructing a narrative of the IDF as progressively minded allows it to create a distinction between itself and its adversaries.

As Mor (2012) has argued, the construction of credibility is an inherent part of social accounts, including those that pertain to the use of force. Chapter six of this thesis finds that the IDF visually constructed an image of itself on Facebook as credible and authentic through references to its international alliances, through the proactive dissemination of information and the use of more informal, colloquial language and content in keeping with the cultural norms of the platform. These findings are illustrative of the way in which a military actor has altered the nature of its communication in response to the unique vernaculars of this SNSs incorporating hashtags, emojis and an engagement in popular culture such as films, music and celebrity in its StratCom outputs. Further, this thesis finds that the tone of content on the official IDF page was one that incorporated humour and sarcasm in its posts. This informal and more relatable form of communication reveals a significant augmentation in the nature of traditional military StratCom made uniquely possible by the affordances of SNSs as popular culture becomes a vector for strategic messaging. Human interest stories and the personalisation of IDF service members were also used to encourage an emotional response from audiences and a positive association with the military institution. This study finds that the IDF draw on these broader narratives, cultural frameworks and codes of representation in their StratCom efforts on Facebook. Interestingly, in utilising SNSs as a tool to proactively disseminate information to its target audiences, the IDF appropriated some of the techniques and codes of representation traditionally associated with the logics of MSM. Live Q&As, and titles over images such as 'Breaking News' mimic informational formats typically associated with professional news and taps into audience perceptions of credible informational sources.

The unique affordances of SNSs facilitate a more interactive relationship between the military institution and the audience in its communications than previously possible in MSM. Ordinary social media users following these accounts can interact with this content in new ways and may also be encouraged to remediate military strategic messaging to their networks through the traditional online practices of liking, sharing and commenting. The findings of this study reveal that the IDF use the norms and vernaculars of the Facebook platform to make calls to action to their followers, using images and their content to encourage a behavioural effect (Miskimmon et al., 2015), that is, to like, comment, or share content disseminated by the military institution on its official Facebook page. The socio-technical affordances of the Facebook platform which facilitate, encourage and condone these sharing and communicative practices (Maltby and Thornham, 2016) are combined with the StratCom strategies of the IDF in a complex mediation that extends military practice into normative social networking practices. Once again, these findings highlight what Kuntsman and Stein refer to as 'digital militarism' in which SNSs have been mobilised as 'tools, sites and languages of militarist engagement' (p 6). In this way, the features and vernaculars of SNSs such as images, infographics, memes and gifs can be deployed for the purposes of collaboration between the average user and the military as a means of supporting state violence (ibid, p 37). These findings can be linked to broader discussions of the impact of these participatory digital technologies on practices and perceptions of contemporary war. Merrin and Hoskins (2020) assert that digital technologies such as multi-media smartphones, messaging apps and social media platforms create a global participative arena where the distinctions between combatant and civilian

implode (p 184-188). The nature of 'participative war' (Merrin, 2019) is the permeation of conflict throughout everyday life where multiple actors, governments, militaries, or civilians can all participate in and experience war. Whilst some scholars argue that participatory affordances encourage democratic participation and create opportunities for average users to challenge hegemonic actors through the diffusion of alternative frames and narratives, others warn of the potential for these participatory affordances to be appropriated by state actors as a means of surveillance and control (Patrikarakos, 2017; Pötzsch, 2013). Although digital technologies allow a broad range of opportunities for a diverse number of people to participate in conflicts without leaving their homes, as Asmolov (2021) asserts, an increase in participation does not necessarily result in increased agency for the user in the context of conflict (p 2). In his study exploring the transformation of domestic spaces, mediated via memes in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, he finds that the primary role of participatory affordances is to erode private space. Further, Pötzsch (2013) contends that these participatory affordances tend to support and reinforce political and economic authority whilst Bratich (2011) argues that social media becomes instrumentalised on behalf of traditional state-centric strategic objectives. In this climate of 'participative war', Merrin and Hoskins (2020) argue that we have moved from military aspirations of 'full spectrum dominance of all battlefield information' to a new military reality of 'full spectrum access' towards a 'military-social media complex' in which US made social media platforms and apps serve as a global informational warfare proxy (p 184). O'Loughlin describes the contemporary nature of warfare as 'post-digital' to illustrate how ideas of 'digital war' are already historical (p 123). He argues that

digital technologies and their logics have already been integrated into how militaries, media and societies wage, resist and understand war (ibid). He proposes a 'bricolage way of seeing' war which takes account of plural representations of war, the interaction of newer and older media logics that drive war, the manner in which different communities arrive at different meanings of war and one which takes account of infrastructure as the terrain upon which war is waged (p 129). This research adds to these perspectives and literatures by providing an empirical example of the manner in which an active military institution utilises the world's most popular SNS to revisualise military activity and to encourage the active participation of its followers in remediating their messaging from the comfort of their own homes. As illustrated in chapter six these calls to action on the official IDF Facebook page ranged from banal requests to participate in competitions and change one's profile picture to requesting followers to publicise, condemn and demand justice for violence taken against the Israeli state and its soldiers. The practice of 'liking' an image was explicitly linked to the support of its soldiers. This visibility and engagement of the IDF on Facebook can serve to obfuscate the very nature of the military institution that trains and engages in real-world violence and war. Public assent for military activity results in freedom of manoeuvre for these institutions which in turn results in real-world injuries and deaths of soldiers and civilians alike. The images and their narratives disseminated on the official IDF Facebook page neither reflect nor make intelligible these realities.

As military actors have appropriated SNSs as a tool to disseminate strategic narratives and have impacted upon the culture of these platforms so too have SNSs and their

vernaculars influenced the manner in which these institutions conduct their strategic communications. Although these platforms afford the ability of the IDF to present a narrative of the institution as legitimate and progressive military institutions are also constrained by the nature of strategic narratives (Miskimmon et al., 2015). In other words, they are constrained by their own histories, actions and place within the international system in the stories they can convincingly tell. The findings of chapter six reveal a juxtaposition between some of the images disseminated on the official IDF Facebook page and the narratives they present in their accompanying text. This dialogic tension was revealed in images that described the IDF and its life-saving activities which accompanied images of soldiers standing at the ready in full combat gear with weapons in hand, or in images visually depicting female soldiers in sexualised or passive poses to camera accompanied by narratives of female equality in the military. In order to be effective the narratives the IDF present need to be consistent with events on the ground and be coherent with narratives about the international system and their own identity within it (ibid). Images do not exist in a vacuum, it is not simply the content of an image that is significant but rather the broader narratives they represent (O'Loughlin, 2011). Thus, what the content represents will affect how the image is interpreted and understood by the viewer and how effective, the strategic narrative is at influencing the perceptions of that viewer. This is illustrative of the potential difficulties in projecting StratCom narratives through a medium in which contexts collapse many diverse audiences in one (Marwick and boyd, 2011)

This study finds that the key objective of military actors' use of SNSs as a means of StratCom is to influence. Influence amongst their online networks in garnering advocates, public awareness and support, influencing the perceptions of their target audiences and influence over the information that flows through the hybrid media system (Chadwick et al., 2016) about the institution and its activities. SNSs are inherently visual. Military StratCom practitioners mesh images, narrative and culture as part of their communicative strategies online in a way that is made uniquely possible by the technological structure of these platforms. Miskimmon et al. (2013) argue that the effects of image management are likely to be small when narratives around an issue are entrenched whilst Freedman (2015) has suggested that strategic narratives will be most effective when the changes in perspective required are not too radical. Further, O'Loughlin (2010) has posited that the ability of images to cut through prior beliefs and narratives and stick, may occur when these images contain personalised stories that can elicit empathy in the viewer. The findings of this study contribute to these discussions, revealing that military communications practitioners are acutely aware that emotive personalised messaging is key to audience engagement and to potentially adjusting their perspectives. Moreover, it is not the intention of military StratCom to target and overturn entrenched negative attitudes towards the institution. Rather, as this study has revealed, the intention is to bolster existing supporters, acquire advocates and influence the middle-ground. This StratCom work is taking place not only in times of conflict but in the day to day outreach increasingly orientated towards SNSs around topics unrelated to violence and warfare.

7.6. CONTRIBUTION AND WIDER APPLICABILITY OF THE RESEARCH

This study has made several contributions to research on the military and the media. It has provided a theoretical framework for the study of military use of SNSs, synthesising literatures that often exist only in parallel to one another across the disciplines of communications, security studies, and IR to provide a more holistic understanding of the potential affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom within the context of a hybrid media environment. In taking SNSs as its specific focus, the study has addressed a gap in the communications literature which has not adequately engaged with the way in which multiple military and defence actors have integrated social media into their StratCom planning despite the ubiquity of its use.

In articulating the theoretical framework this study has provided an empirically grounded account of the perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom through a direct engagement with military communications practitioners. Although other studies have explored the use of SNSs by military institutions (Crilley, 2016; Jensen, 2014; Olsson et al, 2016), this is the first study the researcher is aware of that provides in-depth semi-structured interviews with military communications practitioners (on record) from across multiple geographic locations, the US, Canada, Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, Israel and NATO to ascertain the ways in which SNSs are perceived and integrated into their broader communication and institutional strategies. In so doing it heeds calls from multiple scholars to include military practitioners in studies at the intersection of the military and the media (Corner and Parry, 2017; Gerodimo, 2019; Pauwels, 2019) and provides original insight into the aims and intentions of communications practitioners across several institutions. This

study further provides an empirical analysis of the use of SNS, Facebook in practice, by an active military institution at the forefront of utilising SNSs, the IDF. This study acknowledges the inherent visuality of SNSs and the importance of the visuals of social media as a potent means of political-strategic communication. It contributes to studies of the military and the media by illustrating how an active military institution utilises visuals to represent itself on a popular SNS (Facebook) to its target audiences. In so doing it heeds calls for a concerted investment in social media visual research (Highfield and Leaver, 2016) and one that recognises the value in examining the content of these images in a rigorous manner (Gerodimo, 2019). This study provides an account of how images and narratives intertwine in the StratCom work of an active military on Facebook. The focus of the analysis moves beyond episodic periods of conflict to illustrate the everyday battle for hearts and minds (Gow and Michalski, 2008) carried out by the IDF on their official Facebook page.

This study contributes to a conceptual typology for the study of visual military communication practices online. Further, it provides a systematic methodological approach to the collection and analysis of the images which clearly articulates the criteria and categories used for the analysis, a practice which some scholars argue is not always present in humanities and social sciences (Gerodimo, 2019). Despite a trend in social media research to privilege text over images as the most prominent site for analysis (Bruns & Burgess, 2015; Conover et al., 2011), this study takes a more nuanced multi-modal approach to the analysis of Facebook images, one that is cognisant of the role of the image, the accompanying text titles and the way in which

they are underpinned by broader narratives that speak to established societal values and beliefs.

The idea of hybridity permeates the ontology of this thesis. This is illustrated in terms of the nature of contemporary warfare, the complexity of the hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013), the interaction between humans and technology, the interdependent relationships between the military and the media, the state, and its perceived audiences, all of which have become increasingly intertwined and multiplex as a result of digital technologies. This study rejected simple binaries of old war versus new war, traditional and new media, censorship or cooperation, instead highlighting the overlapping nature of all of these areas and how they influence and intersect with one another. This thesis has demonstrated that media technologies (and in particular new media) have reshaped the StratCom practices of military institutions but also the ways in which traditional MSM and audiences may interact with and potentially remediate this content. This study thus contributes to broader discussions surrounding mediatisation of the military, military media management practices and the nature of the military-media relationship, providing empirical insights into the way in which militaries both influence and are influenced by digital technologies and the media and the manner in which they have adapted to the new media ecology through an appropriation of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom.

7.7. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Despite the contributions of this study, there are inevitably a number of limitations and scope for further research. Access to communications professionals working within the military and defence sector was a challenge for the researcher and is reflected in the number of interviews conducted and the geographic locations included. This study was carried out within a limited time frame and with limited resources and as such, securing interviewees that were willing to participate in the research, coordinating a suitable time in their schedules for the interviews to occur and travelling to their countries of work was a significant undertaking. Whilst the researcher cast the net widely in terms of approaching military communications professionals from multiple locations to participate in the research, not all of these were willing or responsive within the confines of this study. This also impacted upon the gender imbalance of the interview participants which consist of one female participant to seven male participants. This is both a product of the constraints outlined above and also the gender imbalance that persists in contemporary military and defence institutions. Another potential limitation is the language limitations presented by some of the interviewees. All interviews were conducted in English despite the first languages of two of the participants being German and Dutch respectively. Although all participants are fluent English speakers, interviews conducted may exclude potential indigenous phrases, expressions and contextual clues which may have been better expressed in their first language. The empirical analysis of the use of Facebook by a military actor as a tool of military StratCom focused on a case study of one institution, the Israeli Defense Forces. Whilst a comparative study of the manner in which other militaries visualise themselves online would no doubt be fruitful, within the confines of this project, I chose to conduct a more

in-depth multimodal analysis of hundreds of images disseminated over a three year period by a military at the forefront of utilising SNSs in its communications strategy, one that other militaries seek to emulate.

Further to this, this study is focused on one SNS, Facebook. This site was chosen as it is the most popular SNS in the world but also due to the fact that at the time of analysis, Facebook's 'Netvizz' application programming interface or API (Rieder, 2013) allowed for the relatively easy access, download and storage of official Group Page data. This resource has now been removed following a trend amongst other SNSs which make access to their sites increasingly difficult for researchers. The nature of the algorithms used by these sites and the exact manner in which content is promoted or demoted is also hidden. As SNSs such as Facebook and Instagram remove the APIs from their platforms there is an increased need for digital methods such as the use of R programming language and python scripts to access data from these sites and to facilitate visual cross-platform analysis (Pearce et al., 2018). This is a language not often spoken by communications researchers and requires training and the use of interdisciplinary skill going forward which may facilitate a more comprehensive cross-platform approach to social media research.

Finally, the idea of the audience is key to the use of SNSs by military actors as a tool of military StratCom. As illustrated by this thesis, StratCom efforts online are orientated towards reaching and influencing the militaries perceived target audiences. This study, however, focused upon the motivations and perceptions of military communications practitioners on the use of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom, the ways in which the

institution has altered its communications practices in response to SNSs and the manner in which a military institution in practice formulates and projects visuals and narratives to promote itself on Facebook. The aim of this thesis was not to measure or understand the reception or effectiveness of military StratCom efforts on SNSs on these audiences. Further, research into the ways in which audiences receive and interpret these military narratives would no doubt be illuminating and would call for alternative research methods such as audience interviews, participant observations and perhaps even neuroscientific laboratory experiments to measure responses to visual stimuli (Bleiker, 2015) to understand the effectiveness of the images and narratives perpetuated by military actors online.

Ultimately this thesis has contributed to an understanding of the perceived affordances of SNSs as a tool of military StratCom and I have provided a contextually and empirically grounded account of the ways in which SNSs have been integrated into military StratCom practices in a hybrid media environment, augmenting them both in terms of potential reach and tone. The purpose of this research is not to improve the effectiveness of strategic military messaging nor to offer recommendations but rather to explore the nature of how SNSs are utilised by military and defence institutions to promote themselves to their target publics and to illustrate that the key affordance of SNSs as a tool of military strategic communication may be the obfuscation of the very nature of the military and its activities.

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APPENDIX A: PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

1. Introduction to the Research Study

The research working title is 'Examining the use of Social Network Sites (SNSs) as a Tool of Strategic Communication in a Hybrid Media Environment'.

The research is being conducted by Lauren Teeling, a PhD student in the School of Communications, Dublin City University (DCU) supervised by Dr Jane Suiter and is funded by the School of Communications.

Lauren Teeling can be contacted at lauren.teeling2@mail.dcu.ie.

2. Personal Data- GDR Compliance

Data collected will be in the form of research participant consent forms and audio recordings of the interviews

The data controller is the principal investigator Lauren Teeling (lauren.teeling2@mail.dcu.ie)

The DCU Protection Officer is Mr. Martin Ward (data.protection@dcu.ie)

The data will be processed as part of the research project and will not be shared with anyone outside of DCU.

The personal data collected from interviews will be securely destroyed within three years from the initial date of collection.

3. Details of Involvement in the Study

Participants will be required to be available for at least one face-to-face interview with the principal interviewer.

It is possible that the researcher may request a follow-up interview.

Interviews should last no longer than 1 hour.

The researcher will request that interviews be recorded (audio only) in order to facilitate data gathering and subsequent data analysis.

Participants retain the right to decline the researchers request to record the interview.

Interviews will take place during the 2018/2019 academic year.

4. Should the participant wish to remain anonymous the following procedures will be employed to protect confidentiality

Every effort will be made to respect participants' anonymity.

The data collected will be analysed by the principal researcher alone.

Participants' actual names and identifying information will be protected.

Interview notes, transcripts and recordings will be held by the principal researcher and stored in a secure location.

Confidentiality of data is subject to some legal limitations and so cannot be guaranteed by the researcher if the data becomes subject to subpoena or a freedom of information claim.

5. Voluntary Participation

Participants may withdraw from the Research Study at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed.

6. Research Dissemination/ Output

The interviews will form part of the empirical research of a PhD thesis. Research may also be published within academic journals in the media and communications disciplines.

If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person please contact: The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000, e-mail rec@dcu.ie

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Research Study Title

The study which you are being requested to participate in has the working title of 'Examining the use of Social Network Sites (SNSs) as a Tool of Strategic Communication in a Hybrid Media Environment'. It is being conducted by Lauren Teeling, a PhD student in the School of Communications in DCU, supervised by Dr Jane Suiter.

II. Purpose of the research

This research aims to gain insight into the affordances of social network sites as a tool of strategic communication in the military and defence sector and also its limits. Research has predominantly focused upon how the media portrays conflict or upon the relationship between militaries and the media. There has been significantly less engagement with how militaries use official social network sites to engage directly with audiences. This study aims to generate new insights into this area.

III. Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement

As stated in the Plain Language Statement, participants in this research will be requested to participate in at least one face-to-face interview, which the researcher will request to record (audio only).

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)

Yes/No

I understand the information provided

Yes/No

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study

Yes/No

I have received satisfactory answers to all of my questions

Yes/No

I agree to be interviewed

Yes/No

I agree to have my interview audiotaped
Yes/No

I wish to remain anonymous in this study
Yes/No

IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

My involvement in this study is totally voluntary. As a participant I may withdraw from the Research Study at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed.

V. Signature

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

Participants Signature:

Name in Block Capitals:

Date:

APPENDIX C: GENERAL GUIDE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you please state your name and position within (Company/Military)?
 - 1a. Can you tell me about your role in the development of a social media presence for (Company/Military) and how this has evolved?
2. What do you perceive as the inherent benefits of social network sites (SNSs) as a tool of strategic communication within the defence and military sector?
 - 2a. What strategic communications objectives/goals can be met through the use of SNSs channels?
3. How important is tone and language in creating and maintaining an engaging presence online? How do you meet or go beyond followers' expectations of military social network sites?
4. How can militaries use SNSs to assert themselves as a credible information source? Is this increasingly important in an age of hybrid warfare and disinformation?
5. What do you perceive as the inherent risks in using social network sites as part of a communications strategy within the defence sector? Have you received any backlash?
6. Who is your target audience on these social media channels?
 - 6a. Does this differ across social network sites and between older and newer forms of media? How do SNSs facilitate the targeting of different, perhaps more marginalised groups?
7. Are different platforms, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat utilised for different communication objectives? Is it important to have a presence across all of these platforms?
8. Are Defence Forces personnel given the freedom to post on personal social media channels directly? Is there an official policy and doctrine governing their social media use and the use of social media more broadly?

9. Obviously SNSs do not exist in a communication vacuum, so how do they fit into a broader communications strategy alongside more traditional modes of communication?

10. What content or social media campaigns have been most successful for (Company/Military) and why do you think that is?

10a. What has been less successful and why? What strategies are employed to monitor this?

11. What is the perceived trajectory for the use of SNSs in the communications/marketing strategy of the (Company/Military) and how might technology such as virtual reality or AI play a future role in military social media platforms and campaigns?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEWS PHASE 3 CODEBOOK

Categories reorganised, relabelled and analysed to identify themes

Name	Description	Files	References
Building Networks and Advocates	The opportunity that social network sites afford to expand and build upon one's audiences for strategic communications at a relatively low cost. The ability to acquire advocates both from within the military and outside of it, who can engage on the military's behalf	8	439
A large audience can be reached through social media	References to the ability of social media to reach large numbers of people	3	5
Audience fragmentation		3	4
Audiences are fragmented across different mediums	References to a general fracturing of audiences across different mediums both traditional media and new media	2	3
People are increasingly choosing how and where they wish to obtain their information	References to individuals increasingly choosing how they wish to receive their information whether through social media platforms or messaging apps.	1	1
Average followers can act as advocates for the institution	References to average followers of the military/defence social media accounts acting as advocates of the institution and defending them of their own accord in times of crisis	3	7
Awareness of the different potential audiences' social media may reach	References to the different potential audiences the military/defence institution may reach through their social media presence	1	1
Collaboration with advocates and influencers	Reference to the collaboration between the defence forces and their advocates or influencers in relation to communications	2	4
Communicating defence messaging through advocates reduces risk	References to the use of advocates in the defence forces network that can communicate on their behalf when they're not 100% certain of information	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Communicating international alliances	References to the importance of communicating the international alliances of the military/defence institution	1	2
Communication as essential to defence forces	References to the need for defence forces to communicate with their audiences	1	2
Communication not only focused on military activity and capability	Reference to the communications strategy of the military/defence organisation as not focusing solely on their military activity and capability but also their work in diplomacy and development	2	3
Communications department plays a role in public outreach	References to the role of the communications department in the defence institution playing their part in public outreach	1	1
Culture of competition between soldiers encouraged in content creation	References to the creation and encouragement of a competitive culture between soldiers for whose content is chosen to be included in the defence forces social media platforms	1	2
Defence forces has more supporters than critics	Reference to more people supporting their campaign than criticising it	1	1
Defence spending is not a priority	References to spending on defence as not being a priority as reflected in their funding and resources	1	1
Difficult to promote the value of defence in traditional media	References to the difficulties of promoting the value of defence and tackling public apathy through traditional media	1	1
Discussion and collaboration between defence forces	References to discussion or collaboration between different defence forces in relation to their social media campaigns	1	2
Engagement in non-conflict issues in order to build an audience prior to the outbreak of conflict	References to the engagement of military/defence institutions in non-conflict issues on social media in order to build an audience or following for when there is a conflict	1	3

Name	Description	Files	References
Engaging in contemporary hot topics helps to reach new audiences	References to the military institution engaging in popular topics such as women's rights and tech to open up new audiences to them	2	3
Essential to highlight defence activities at home as well as abroad	References to the need to highlight what the defence forces do at home and not only focus on missions abroad in the Middle East and Africa	2	2
Facebook allows you to engage with your network	References to the use of Facebook to engage in conversations and to keep in touch with people in your network	1	1
Family members and veterans as potential advocates online	References to the possibility of using the family members of soldiers and veterans as advocates to respond to negativity online	1	1
Feeling of satisfaction in being a conduit between serving military members and their families through social media presence	References to a feeling of satisfaction in providing a link between serving military members and their families through social media presence	1	2
Followers can fight the information battle on the institutions behalf	References to average followers of the military/defence institutions social media platforms fighting misinformation or criticism on their behalf, unprompted.	1	5
High value content attracts followers to your social media platforms	References to high value content attracting followers to your social media presence	1	4
Importance of influencers and intermediaries in reaching target audiences	References to the spread of information from military/defence platforms to influencers and intermediaries and then to the target audiences	3	3
Importance of international audiences	References to the importance of communicating the activities of the military/defence institution to an international audience	3	8
Importance of the military for Israeli society	References to the importance of the military in Israeli society	1	1
Importance of tone		6	22

Name	Description	Files	References
Adopting an inappropriate tone on your social media is a risk	References to the need to be aware of the appropriate tone to take on social media on a case-by-case basis	3	7
Concerns around undermining the institutions brand through shifting tone on social media	References to concerns about undermining the military institutions brand through their tone on social media platforms	1	1
Fear of using humour on social media platforms	References to the difficulties in engaging with humour and social media norms such as emojis as a defence institution	2	5
If you don't adopt the tone and style of the social media platform you're engaging in your communications goals will fail	References to the need to adopt the tone and style of the particular social media platform you're engaged in	1	1
In order to reach new audiences you have to adjust your tone on social media	References to the need to adjust the tone of the military/defence institution on social media in order to reach new audiences and have them consume your content	1	2
It is not always appropriate to add humour to your social media posts	References to the need to know when it is and isn't appropriate to add humour to your social media posts as a military/defence institution	1	1
Shifting your tone across communications mediums is a commonsense strategy	References to the shifting in tone of the military/defence institutions communications across different mediums, old and new , as a commonsense strategy	1	1
The tone and language of the military social media presence must be adapted appropriately to each situation	References to the need to adjust the tone and language of your social media presence based on the situation being highlighted in the content	2	4
Increased public recognition of the institution is taken as	References to an increased awareness among the public about NATO being taken as	2	6

Name	Description	Files	References
a mark of social media strategy success	a measure of their social media strategy success		
Informality		6	72
Humour is important for maintaining audience engagement with your content	References to the importance of humour in maintaining audience engagement with the military/defence institutions social media presence	1	2
Importance of a personal tone and language on social media platforms	References to the importance of a personal tone and language in the social media engagement of the military/defence institution	2	4
Language should be plain and simple to make it accessible to a social media audience	References to the belief that using large words of more than four syllables make the military social media presence inaccessible to a social media audience	1	4
Military social media accounts try to avoid appearing as a corporate entity	References to the ineffectiveness of appearing as a corporate entity on social media as this will not resonate with audiences	1	2
Selling sex in military social media content	Reference to selling sex through through the social media platforms of the military/defence institution	1	3
Social media facilitates a less formal means of communication for the defence forces than traditional media	References to social media being a less formal means of communication for the military/defence institution than traditional media	1	2
Social media is a more personal medium than traditional media	References to social media being tailored towards a more personal medium than traditional media	2	4
Social media must be entertaining to appeal to younger demographics	References to the need for the social media content of the military/defence institution to be entertaining in order to attract younger audiences	1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Social media presence as a balance between entertaining and informing	References to the balance between entertaining and informing people in order to gain and/or hold their attention with your content	3	3
The tone of military communication is more casual on social media	References to the tone of military/defence communications being more casual on social media	1	2
Use of attractiveness and beauty to enamour the public to military social media content	References to the use of attractive men and women in military/defence social media content to attract audiences to their content	2	4
Use of Hallmark holidays	References to the use of Hallmark holidays in the social media content of the institution to promote military activity	1	1
Use of sarcasm in military social media content	References to the use of a sarcastic tone in the social media content of the military/defence institution	1	3
Language should be plain and simple to make it accessible to a social media audience	References to the belief that using large words of more than four syllables make the military social media presence inaccessible to a social media audience	1	4
Military social media accounts try to avoid appearing as a corporate entity	References to the ineffectiveness of appearing as a corporate entity on social media as this will not resonate with audiences	1	2
Information and social media as important tools in conflict	References to social media as important tools in conflict	4	26
Informational warfare is increasing in importance	References to informational warfare and the use of social media becoming increasingly important for military/defence institutions	1	3
Media is an important tool in asymmetric conflict	References to the media as an important tool for those engaged in asymmetric conflict to garner the attention of outside third-party support	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Social media as a battleground	References to social media being a battleground between competing groups	2	4
Social media as a dangerous tool	References to social media as dangerous tool within society	1	3
Social media content described as ammunition	References to the social media content disseminated by the military/defence institution as ammunition for their supporters	1	1
Social media described as a weapon for the defence institution	References to social media as a weapon for the military/defence institution	2	2
Social media facilitates covert actions in areas of operation	References to the ability to utilise social media as a shaping tool in areas of operation covertly and without attribution	1	3
Social media is a force multiplier for militaries and defence institutions	References to one of the benefits of social media being that it is a force multiplier for military and defence institutions	1	2
The use of social media for cyber operations can be deployed without the same permissions required for traditional military operations	References to the fundamental difference between classical military operations that require the consent of the military institution's government and parliament and cyber operations that can be deployed more easily	1	2
The use of social media to shape an area of operations is less risky than putting boots on the ground	References to the use of social media as a shaping tool in an area of operations as less of a risk that putting troops on the ground	1	1
Use of social media to shape the battlefield	References to the use of social media by the military/defence institution to shape the battlefield	1	2
Use of social media to target enemy audiences	References to the use of social media to target enemy audiences	1	2
Justification and survival	References to the need to justify their existence and the money allocated to them	4	15

Name	Description	Files	References
Lack of domestic understanding of the defences forces	References to a lack of domestic understanding of the defence forces, what they do and why they exist	1	3
Lack of investment in public communications outreach can have serious political consequences	References to a lack of investment in communicating with the public about your institution and why it exists as resulting in potentially serious political consequences	1	2
Lack of public awareness of defence activities	References to the lack of public awareness of the organisations activities despite the information being available	2	5
Lack of public support for defence capabilities can be demoralising	References to the lack of public support for high end military capabilities as demoralising	1	1
Lack of public support for defence is a factor in influencing their budget	References to the lack of public support for high end military capabilities as effecting their budgets and pay conditions	1	7
Military high end capabilities not valued by the public	References to the lack of value placed by the general public in high end military capabilities.	1	2
Military high end capabilities not valued by the public (2)	References to the lack of value placed by the general public in high end military capabilities.	1	2
Military social media accounts provide a connection between deployed military members and their families	References to the social media accounts of the military/defence institution providing information and a connection for the families of serving military personnel with their loved ones when they're deployed	1	1
Military social media strategy is less about one big hit than it is making slow encroaching progress with audiences	References to the unlikely event that the military institutions social media will have one big hit rather it can make slow encroaching progress with audiences by engaging in contemporary issues such as women's rights	1	1
Multiple audiences present on social media	References to the multiple audiences that are present online and who may be exposed to your content	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Need soldiers to be posting their individual stories on their social media channels	References to the need for soldiers to post their individual stories online to encourage a positive association with their military institution	1	1
Need to be accountable to the public for tax spending	References to the need for the military/defence institution to be responsible with taxpayer's money and to inform them of how their money is being spent	1	4
Need to break out of the standard communications bubble of the military institution	References to the need for military StratCom to break out of its traditional communications bubble to reach younger demographics	1	1
Need to break out of your own echo chamber to reach new audiences	References to the need to break out of your own echo chambers to reach new audiences with your communications	1	1
Need to establish legitimacy with the public	References to the need to build legitimacy in the eyes of the population	3	11
No hard law preventing cyber operations that build networks on social media when not engaged in conflict	References to their being no hard law on whether the military/ defence institution can build social media networks through creating false accounts when they're not in conflict	1	1
Online echo chambers	References to echo chambers online	3	3
Patriotism	References to the support of one's country and military	0	0
Potential to use soldiers as advocates online	References to the possibility of using internal soldiers as advocates online to respond to negativity	4	6
Pride	References to feeling pride in what the military/defence institution does and wanting to show that to people	1	8
Promotion of military capabilities on social media	References to promoting the capabilities of the military on social media	2	16
Public approval of military social media presence	References to public approval of the professional nature of the military/defence institutions online presence	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Public support can lead to political support and resourcing	References that if the public value the defence forces this may result in the government providing greater resources to them	1	1
Reaching new audiences		3	9
Belief that young people, women and the less educated don't impact upon policy decisions	References to the belief that young people, women and the less educated don't impact upon policy decisions	1	1
Polling shows that young people, women and the less well educated don't know or care about NATO	References to polling conducted by NATO that shows that young people, women and the less well educated do not know or care about NATO	1	1
Reaching new audiences through social media	References to the ability to engage new audiences through social media not previously interested in defence	2	2
Recognition that StratCom approach needs to engage demographics other than middle aged white men	References to the need for the StratCom approach of the military/defence institution to engage demographics other than middle aged white men	1	1
Social media allows you to access hard to reach audiences	References to the use of social media as a tool to reach hard to get audiences	1	2
Social media as a more effective means of reaching female audiences than traditional media	References to social media as a more effective means of reaching female audiences than traditional media	1	1
Social media represents a younger more open minded audience for military communications	References to social media offering a younger and more open-minded audience for military communications	1	1
Reaching out to diaspora through social media	References to defence social media campaigns being viewed by diaspora audiences	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Relatability		3	7
Content focused on lower ranking troops performs better than content about senior leaders	References to the popularity of content focused on lower ranking troops over that about senior leaders	1	1
Content related to sports and fitness performs well on military social media accounts	References to content focused on sports and fitness as a high performer for military social media accounts	1	1
Objective to be personable in communications outputs discussing military activities	References to the desire to appear personable and relatable to the audience when communicating serious military activities	0	0
Production of social media content by the military institution that the public can relate to	References to the use of social media to create content that the public audience can find relatable	1	3
Use of individual human stories obscures corporate messaging	References to the use of individual stories that have a human component obscuring the corporate messaging of the institution	2	2
Social media networks can be utilised to communicate on behalf of the defence forces	References to the use of advocates in their network to communicate messages on the defence forces behalf when they're unable to do so.	2	2
Social media presence can act as an audit trail of military transparency	References to the social media record of the military/defence institution being a useful audit trail of their activities and their transparency in information sharing should they be questioned	1	2
Social media used to inform the public of the institutions activities	References to the use of social media to reach domestic audiences and inform them of the institution's activities	4	11
Soldiers as content creators	References to the use of soldiers in communications departments and on deployment to generate positive social media	4	7

Name	Description	Files	References
	content		
Soldiers permitted to use social media	References to soldiers being permitted to use their own social media but with some advised restrictions	2	4
Storing up of support with the public through online StratCom	References to the storing up of public support and credibility through online StratCom approach to avoid a future existential crisis	2	2
Strategic storytelling	As a means for political actors to construct a shared meaning of the past, present and future (Miskimmon et al, 2015)	7	67
Emotional appeals		3	6
Appeals to a sense of national pride through social media	References to appeals to national pride through social media campaigns	2	2
Audiences pay most attention to stories that illicit emotion	References to audiences paying the most attention to emotional news stories	1	1
Commemorative content resonates on military social media accounts	References to the popularity of commemorative content with social media audiences	1	1
Content with emotional appeal performs best on military social media accounts	References to emotional , empathetic content being most successful for the military/defence institutions social media accounts	1	2
Strategic storytelling		7	47
Hero content performs well with audiences	References to hero content where the military helps people in distress as performing highly with social media audiences	1	1
High end capability content is most popular online	References to the high-end military capability content (air force, navy etc.) as the best performing content online.	1	1
Importance of personal stories in StratCom	References to the importance of highlighting the personal, human stories in StratCom outputs in both traditional and online media	1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Link between values of sport and the military	References to the link in values between team sports players and the military	1	2
Need to design content that may be accepted by multiple audiences	References to the need to produce content that may be acceptable to multiple audiences online	3	8
Operational content performs better than content related to institutional priorities	References to content on the operational activities of the military performing better than content focused on their institutional priorities	1	1
Perception that females are more attracted to personal human interest stories in magazines than hard security news in leading newspapers	References to the targeting of women through women's magazines due to the perception that they will be more attracted to a human-interest personal story than reading hard security news in the newspaper.	1	1
Promotion of military perspectives through social media content	References to the use of social media to present content and issues from the perspectives of the military/defence institution	1	2
Promotion of official messages online	References to the dissemination of content online that is 'on message' for the defence or military institution.	2	4
Promotion of sacrifice made by soldiers	References to the sacrifices made by military personnel and the promotion of that online	1	2
Social media used by the military to communicate issues outside of conflict	References to the use of social media by the military/defence institution to communicate issues outside of conflict to its target audience	1	6
Strategic messaging	Communicating messages through the media which serve the operational goals of the organisation	2	7
The best way to tell complicated stories is through individuals affected by them	References to the best way to tell complicated stories as being through the eyes of those individuals it affects.	2	2

Name	Description	Files	References
The use of personal, individual stories in social media content	References to the use of individual, personal stories on the military/defence institutions social media accounts	3	8
Visual storytelling		5	14
Audiences on Instagram are less likely to read text	References to audiences on Instagram scrolling through images but not reading the text caption that accompanies them	1	2
Imagery content has been outperforming video content recently	References to content containing still images outperforming video content in recent times	1	1
Importance of visual content	References to the use and importance of visual content such as photos and videos on their social media platforms	4	9
No content is posted without an image or video associated with it	References to the use of video or imagery with every post	1	1
Text only content does not perform well	References to text only content performing poorly on military social media accounts	1	1
The personal social media presence of individual soldiers can result in a positive association with the military organisation	References to the individual social media presence of a soldier, telling his story resulting in positive associations with the military/defence institution and an overall positive knock-on effect for them	1	1
Those engaging with and sharing military social media content feel they are a part of the institutions communication strategy	References to those engaged with and sharing the social media content of the military/defence institution as feeling they are part of the communications strategy	1	2
University students contributing to the social media	References to the use of university students in creating content and combating criticism on behalf of the military/defence institution	1	5

Name	Description	Files	References
campaigns of the military			
Use of personal social media by soldiers is much more authentic than the institutions social media content	References to the social media content of soldiers being more authentic than that of the overall military/defence institution	1	1
Use of social media to build online networks for the military institution	References to the use of social media to build online networks for the military/defence institution	2	2
Use of social media to communicate with domestic audiences	References to the use of social media to communicate with the domestic audience of the military/defence institution	3	6
Use of social media to communicate with Internal audiences	References to the internal audiences of the defence forces being their soldiers, veterans and their families	3	5
Use of social media to communicate with military stakeholders	References to military stakeholders as an important target audience of their social media communications	1	1
Use of social media to communicate with multiple audiences	References to the use of social media to communicate with multiple audiences	5	7
Use of social media to mobilise support for the military institution	References to the use of social media to mobilise support for the military/defence institution	2	4
Use of social media to target government and policy makers	References to the use of social media to reach government and lawmakers and those that can affect policy	2	4

Name	Description	Files	References
Impression Management	The opportunity afforded by social network sites to allow military actors to manage the impressions or attributes associated with their institutions, to challenge or change the perceptions of those within their networks. Visibility management as part of this affordance allows military actors to manage their online visibility through the production of high-end content, micro-targeting, paying for reach and tracking through back-end analytics.	8	512
Authentic communication	References to the communications output of the defence forces being authentic	2	5
Creation of hybrid unit to counter adversaries narratives	References to the creation of a hybrid unit within the military/defence institution to actively counter narratives promoted by adversaries	1	2
Credibility and authenticity are important on social media	References to the importance of credibility and authenticity on social media	3	3
Credible information source	References to integrity and trustworthiness as a source of information for people	5	14
Criticism from mainstream media and the public influences social media output	References to altering social media content and information output as a reaction to criticism from the media and or public about a lack of transparency from the military/defence institution	1	1
Defence Forces involvement with LGBT issues is received positively by audiences	References to the LGBT content produced by the defence forces and their offline involvement being positively received by audiences	1	1
Engagement		7	32
A lack of audience reaction or comments on a post is a	References to a lack of reaction or comments on an individual post being understood as a failure to reach your target audience	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
failure to reach your target audience			
Audience reaction to a post guides future content	References to audience comments and responses as guiding the nature of future content	1	1
Followers will highlight errors in your grammar or information	References to followers highlighting errors in the social media posts of the military/defence institution	1	1
Importance of online engagement	References to the importance of engaging with the public through the military/ defence forces social media platforms	5	12
One to one engagement in VR	References to the ability to have one to one engagement with an individual in the VR helmet	2	2
Positive emojis are understood as audience engagement and approval of content	References to receiving positive emojis such as a thumbs up or smiley faces as indicating a positive reaction to the content by the audience	1	1
Rules of engagement online	References to the rules when engaging with audiences on social media platforms	1	1
Social media facilitates direct communication and engagement with the audience	References to the ability of social media to facilitate direct communication and engagement between the military/defence institution and the public	3	9
Use of popular hashtags resonate more than any created by the military organisation	References to the ineffectiveness of military organisations trying to create their own hashtags on social media	1	1
Young people as social media or net natives	References to the use of social media from a very young age	1	2
Young people can communicate with the defence institution on eye level through social media	References to the ability of young people to communicate directly and at eye level with the military/defence institution	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Failure to share information on military activities can breed distrust	References to the failure to share information on military activities as breeding distrust and criticism of the institution	1	1
Importance of being forthcoming and transparent with information	References to the importance of the military/defence organisation being forthcoming and transparent with information where possible.	2	5
Increasing internal morale through social media	References to the use of social media to invigorate the internal audience to avoid undermining recruitment	3	7
Influencing perceptions		7	68
Attempt to influence the middle ground	References to the attempt to influence audiences that neither love nor detest the defence forces but rather sit in the middle.	4	5
Combat suspicion of the military institution online	References to the use of social media to combat traditional grievances or suspicions towards the military/defence organisation	1	1
Communications attempt to shape public opinion	References to the goal of communications to shape public opinion	3	6
Different audiences influencing each other online	References to the ability of different audiences online to influence each other's perceptions	1	1
In reality social media is also used to influence the home front	References to the use of social media to influence the military/defence institutions home front	1	1
Influencing perceptions of the military through social media	References to the use of social media platforms by the institution to influence or alter perceptions of the military	6	20
Influencing audience perceptions of the military through social media	References to influencing public perception of the military through social media	3	6
Military and defences institutions have always	Reference to military operations as always being aimed at influencing people with social	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
aimed to influence people and social media is no different	media being just another avenue for that		
Military operations are unpopular with the public	References to the lack of support in 2019 amongst the public for military operations	1	1
Only western militaries insist there is a distinction between psyops and info ops	References to western military thinking dividing pysops and info ops when almost all other armed forces such as Russia and China do not clearly distinguish between them	1	1
People are fearful of attempts by a military to influence attitudes and behaviours	References to people being fearful of military attempts at influence, reminiscent of Orwell's 1984	1	2
Promotion of favourable attitudes towards the institution through social media	References to the use of social media to create more favorable attitudes towards the defence institution	1	1
Social media as a tool to influence attitudes and behaviours	References to the use of social media to influence the attitudes and behaviours of the people on the ground in an area of operations	1	8
StratCom as a means to influence and secure interests	References to the use of StratCom to influence and secure the interests of the military/defence institution	1	1
The sense of emotional connection facilitated by social media assists in influencing perspectives	References to the sense of connection facilitated by social media platforms can assist in emotionally connecting with audiences and in changing their perspectives or opinions	2	3
There is no clear division between psyops and info ops	References to there being no real division between military psyops and info ops campaigns but rather a hybrid mix	1	4
Use of social media for reputation management	References to the use of social media by the military/defence institution to manage their reputations	1	3

Name	Description	Files	References
Use of social media to promote a desired image of the defence institution	References to the use of social media to promote a positive image of the military/defence institution	1	1
Use of social media to counter negativity towards the institution	References to the use of social media to address and counter negativity towards the defence/military institution	1	2
Innovation		5	22
Creation of YouTube recruitment series	References to the creation of a YouTube series by the military/defence institution	1	3
Defence forces as early adopters of social media within their governments	References to the military/defence force as being an early adopter of social media within their own governments	3	6
In order for StratCom to be successful in reaching younger demographics you need an innovative approach to social media	References to the need for an innovative social media approach in order to meet StratCom objectives of reaching younger demographics	2	3
Israel as an example of an innovative military social media presence	References to Israel as innovative in their use of social media for military communication	3	6
Need to adapt to where audiences are online	References to the need to adapt to where audiences are moving on social media	1	2
Need to be nimble and fast if you're going to successfully use social media	References to the need to be nimble and fast moving if you're going to be successful in using social media.	1	2
Lack of information sharing can impact your credibility	References to the inability to share or release information in a timely way damaging the credibility of the military/defence institution	2	4
Messages of inclusion and diversity build legitimacy	References to communicating the inclusive and diverse nature of the defence forces building legitimacy in the population	2	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Military social media content as defying expectations	References to the content produced by the military/defence institution as defying traditional expectations of military communications	1	1
Need to be proactive in information sharing	References to the need to be proactive in information sharing rather than reacting to information posted about your organisation	1	2
Need to provide truthful and factual information	References to the information provided by the defence institution online as truthful, objective, accurate and factual.	3	13
Progressive values	References to support for social reform and equality	2	6
Promote your own narrative rather than countering false narratives	References to the strategy of consistently promoting your own narrative rather than countering false narratives	2	7
Sharing negative stories as well as the positive lends credibility to the social media presence	References to the willingness of military/defence institutions to share negative or bad news stories on their social media as building and maintaining credibility	1	2
Social media engagement with the public builds credibility and authenticity for the organisation	References to the importance of engaging with the public on your social media platforms in order to build a credible, authentic, voice for the military/defence institution	3	3
Social media engagement with the public humanises the organisation	References to the ability of social media engagement with the public to humanise the organisation	2	7
Social media facilitates a two way interactive communication in contrast to traditional media	References to social media as facilitating two-way interactive communication between the military/defence institution and the public in contrast to traditional modes of communication	2	3
Social media facilitates the influencing of an area of operations from a distance	References to the ability of social media to facilitate the shaping of the battlefield at a distance, from the military institutions home base	1	2
There has been greater transparency over time on	References to the willingness to share bad news stories on military/defence social media accounts in recent years, rather than just	1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
military social media accounts in relation to negative stories	positive promotional material		
Trust is gained through information sharing	References to the importance of forthright information sharing in gaining trust and credibility with the public	1	1
Visibility Management	Visibility management as part of Impression Management allows military actors to manage their online visibility through the production of high-end content, micro-targeting, paying for reach and tracking through back-end analytics.	8	296
(Strategic) visibility		7	41
Benefits of recognition trump any potential criticism of online presence	References to recognition of the military/defence institution as more important than any potential criticism it may draw	1	1
Competition through communications	References to the defence forces competing in the public sector through their communications	1	3
Conflict content attracts more followers to military social media platforms	References to the increased popularity and follower numbers for military/defence social media accounts during periods of conflict, that tends to drop off again once the conflict has ended.	1	1
Content related to war and conflict news is most successful	References to content related to war and conflict news as the most successful content for the military/defence institution	1	2
Controversy can lead to a conversation on defence	Reference to controversy leading to a conversation around defence	2	4
Everyone is engaged in StratCom so need to differentiate your own institution	References to everyone as being engaged in StratCom so an organisation must differentiate themselves	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
International crisis sparked by a tweet by the military institution	References to a crisis sparked by a tweet posted the by military/defence institution	1	3
Ireland competes with other militaries in communications	References to Ireland competing with other militaries on their communications content	1	1
Need to have a presence across multiple platforms	References to the need for the defence institution to have a presence across multiple social media platforms	2	3
Not attempting to cause controversy but accepting it	References to a lack of intention to create controversy around a campaign but being ok when it arises	1	1
Recruitment through social media	References to the use of social media as a tool for recruitment	3	14
Risk versus reward in communications	References to the risk of criticism from communication campaigns weighed against the potential rewards	3	3
Social media can be used to provoke a reaction from the audience that creates a discussion around the defence forces	References to the use of social media as a provocation to the audience that results in a discussion about the military/defence institution	1	2
Some content can go viral across multiple populations and audiences	References to some pieces of content transcending across multiple populations and resonating in a way that's unique to social media	1	2
Commercial branding		6	34
Advertising and marketing industry awards for defence social media campaigns	References to defence social media campaigns winning advertising and marketing awards	2	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Creation of digital campaigns and products	References to the creation of strategic digital campaigns and products that serve the overall organisational strategy	1	1
Difference between a defence institution and a commercial brand or organisation	References to the defence institution not having the freedom online that a commercial brand such as Coca Cola may have as they are an organ of the state	3	5
Military institutions need to utilise professional marketing tools in their social media strategies	Reference to the need to adopt professional marketing tools in the social media strategies of the military/defence institution	1	2
Military social media communications should learn from marketing and political campaigns	References to the opinion that military social media communications can learn from marketing and political campaigns in their use of tools such as bots	1	1
Need for more trained marketing personnel within the military	References for the need for more trained marketers within the military communications departments	1	2
StratCom approach is an objective driven campaign model	References to the StratCom strategy being an objective driven campaign model which considers what is trying to be achieved through communications	1	2
Taking a commercial branding approach to military strategic communication	References to adopting a commercial branding approach to military communication strategy	4	14
Traditional marketing techniques used to bolster military social media campaigns	References to the use of traditional marketing techniques (billboards, posters) by the military/defence institution to bolster their social media campaigns	1	5
Commercial collaboration		3	12
Co-ordination between social media	References to coordination between the military institution and Snapchat	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
companies and the military institution			
Collaboration between inhouse content creation and commercial agencies	References to the combination of in-house content creation within the defence institution and research and content provided d by commercial agencies	2	3
Defence collaboration with advertising agencies	References to defence institutions collaborating with professional advertising agencies in their communications campaigns	1	8
Customisation		5	16
Content and timings tailored to suit different audiences	References to the tailoring of content to suit different audiences online	4	7
Content tailored across different platforms	References to the tailoring of content to suit different social media platforms with different functionalities and audiences	2	5
Difference in tone between social media platforms	References to the difference in the tone and nature of content on different social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter	1	2
Differentiation between objectives across different platforms	References to the belief that different social media platforms should be used to achieve different communications objectives	1	1
Social media allows you to tailor your information	References to the ability to tailor your information for audiences through social media platforms	1	1
Datafication and tracking		5	18
Conducting experiments could prove tangible effects of the use of social media	References to experiments as a possible way to prove the tangible effects of social media use	1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Development of data mining and social media apps within the defence forces	References to the development of data mining and social media apps within the defence institution by an officer for practical application in military operations	1	2
Facebook business tools are easy to use	References to Facebook's business tools, targeting and analytics being easy to use without much technical ability	1	1
Monitoring of conversations around the military institution on social media	References to the monitoring of conversations on social media centered around the defence/military institution	1	1
Polling is useful to gauge success of social media impact with the public	References to the benefits in polling to establish the effectiveness of a social media campaign	1	1
Social media as a tool to monitor sentiment on the ground	References to the use of social media to monitor sentiment on the ground in an area of operation	1	7
Social media impact measured through back end analytics	References to the measuring of their social media outreach impact through back end analytics	1	2
Use of tracking tools to identify threats online	References to the need to use tracking tools to identify threats online such as doctored images or videos	1	1
Use of Web scraping to keep track of stories	References to the use of web scraping to keep track of what is being published online about the military institution and to factor that into to communications planning	1	1
High quality content	References to the high-quality social media content produced by the institution	2	6
In house content production	References to inhouse production teams creating content for defence social media platforms	4	14
In order to be effective on social media you need to be well	References to the need to be well resourced and to engage with audiences in order to be effective on social media	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
resourced and to engage with audiences			
Individualism		1	5
Broadcast social media may be replaced by narrow cast social media	References to a shift away from social media platforms with broad audiences towards more individual and community centric groups on messaging apps	1	2
Social media will become more tailored and individual centric	Reference to social media platforms becoming more individual centric with more narrowly targeted content	1	3
Professionalisation		3	10
Increased professionalisation of military social media platforms	References to the increased professionalisation of military social media platforms	2	3
Professionalism	References to the professional use of communications	2	7
Resources matter		7	34
Access to resources impacts the level of influence you can exert on social media	References to the importance of resources in the level of influence you can exert on social media	1	1
Access to significant resources for social media communications strategy	References to the significant resources at the disposal of the defence/military institution for their social media communications strategy	2	4
In order to be effective on social media you need to be well resourced and to engage with audiences	References to the need to be well resourced and to engage with audiences in order to be effective on social media	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Investment in social media, research and content creation	References to an investment in social media training, education, equipment, content creation and outside reports/research, collaboration with advertising agencies and production companies	3	7
Paid social media allows for very specific audience targeting	References to the use of very specific targeting options on social media platforms through paid posts	2	3
Paying for reach	References to paying for reach in order to compete on social media	1	1
Resources are required to utilise social media analytics in house	References to the need for resources in order to use social media analytics in house to establish who their social media campaign has reached and how impactful it has been	1	1
Skills are required to utilise social media effectively	References to the need for certain skills to utilise social media effectively	1	1
Social media is a cost effective tool of strategic communication	References to social media as being a cost-effective method or tool for strategic communication	1	3
Social media requires less financial and human resources	References to social media as requiring less cost and resources to communicate under budget constraints	5	7
Use of paid or boosted social media content	References to the use by the military/defence institution of paid or boosted content on social media platforms	2	3
Use of soldiers as free labour for social media communications strategy	References to the use of soldiers working within the military/defence institution as free labour for social media communications outreach	1	2
Targeting		6	105
Demographics of each platform are an	References to the different demographics of each platform being an important factor in which platforms the defence institution chooses to participate in	2	4

Name	Description	Files	References
important factor in participation			
Different audiences being targeted on different platforms	References to the targeting of different audience groups on different social media platforms	3	4
Direct micro-targeting of audiences is possible through messaging apps	References to the possibility of using messaging apps such as WhatsApp to micro target groups and individuals with your messages	1	1
Diversification of platform use to reach different audiences	References to using different social media platforms to reach different audiences of differing demographics	3	7
Facebook is targeted towards the general public, military members and their families	Reference to the military institution's Facebook being positioned more towards the general public, military members and their families. A softer, more personal approach as opposed to the targeting of journalists on Twitter	3	3
Facebook messenger facilitates direct communication with target groups	References to messaging apps such as Facebook messenger facilitating direct communication with target groups	1	2
Facebook platform still attracts significant numbers of older users	References to the large numbers of people still engaged in Facebook but of an older demographic	1	1
Instagram and Snapchat are more important than Facebook for reaching young people	References to Instagram and Snapchat as more important platforms than Facebook for reaching younger audiences	2	2
More niche audiences can be targeted through social media	References to the targeting of niche audiences online such as the women in defensive security account	2	4
Multiple platform use	References to the use of multiple social media platforms by the defence institution	1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Need to consider what audiences you want your StratCom to reach and to what effect	References to the need to be aware of the audiences you're trying to reach and what affects you wish that to have	1	1
Paid social media allows for very specific audience targeting	References to the use of very specific targeting options on social media platforms through paid posts	2	3
Reliance of young people on social media as an information source	References to the reliance of young people on social media for information rather than conducting their own independent research	2	2
Snapchat offers a means to communicate with very young people	References to Snapchat as a means to reach very young audiences	1	1
Social media is the most effective way to communicate with young people	References to social media as the most effective way for the military/defence institution to communicate with young people	1	5
Specific content targeted at specific demographics	References to targeting specific content to specific demographics on defence social media platforms	1	4
Strategic targeting of different audiences for recruitment	References to the strategic targeting of multiple diverse audiences for recruitment	1	3
Strategy in choosing the social media platforms to participate in	References to the need to carefully consider what platforms are worth engaging with	4	9
Targeting of children to young adults in social media presence	References to the need to engage children as young as 14 to adults of 24 in creating recognition of the military/defence institutions	2	4

Name	Description	Files	References
Targeting of females in social media campaigns	References to the targeting of females through defence social media campaigns	4	16
There is less critical debate on Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube than on Facebook	References to the lack of critical debate present on the Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube platforms , rather this is present on Facebook	1	1
Targeting of LGBT audiences online	References to the use of LGBT relevant content on their social media	3	6
Twitter is a more credible platform for news and information	References to Twitter being a more credible platform to source news and information	3	4
Virtual reality allows the defence forces to compete with other employers who pay more	References to virtual reality allowing the defence forces to compete with other employers that may pay more	1	1
Virtual reality is used in recruitment	References to the use of virtual reality in the recruitment of new personnel at trade fairs	1	2
Virtual reality to depict the reality of life in the defence forces	References to virtual reality being used to show potential recruits the 'reality' of working for the defence forces	1	1
VR allows you to access audiences free of ad blockers	Reference to VR being a means to catch people's attention and cut through online barriers such as ad blockers	1	3
VR allows you to immerse the audience in you messaging	Reference to the ability to immerse an individual in the world of the defence forces and their messaging whilst in a VR headset	1	1
Younger demographics are less engaged with traditional media	References to younger generations being less engaged with traditional media such as TV, Radio, newspapers	3	5
Younger demographics use YouTube as a	References to YouTube as a platform utilised by young people for communication and	1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
platform for communication and discussion	discussion		
Younger demographics want choice and control over the social media content they see	References to young people wanting to have choice and control over the content they see on social media, being able to skip or swipe past content should they chose.	1	1
Intervention in Hybrid Information Flows	The opportunity for social network sites to facilitate the direct dissemination of military messaging, to bypass traditional mainstream media in their communications and to potentially impact upon mainstream media agendas. Adoption of hybrid communication strategies	8	396
Agenda setting function of social media	References to the ability of social media to influence the agenda of traditional media	2	5
Control of information	References to one of the benefits of social media being the ability to write about oneself in your own words with your own angle on it	2	2
Digital media is more important than traditional media for getting your message out to a wider audience	References to digital media being more important than traditional media in getting your message out to larger audiences outside of the normal bubble	1	3
Hybrid Communication Strategies	Built upon the logics of older and new media technologies and communications practices. Actors create, tap, or steer information flows in ways that suit their goals and in ways that modify, enable, or disable others' agency, across and between a range of older and newer media settings (Chadwick 2013: 4).	8	208
Evolving communications environment		8	34
Changing media consumption habits	References to a change in the media consumption habits of the audience, in particular younger audiences	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Collapse of boundaries online	References to the collapse of boundaries between the defence institution and government on social media	1	6
Decline in the financial resources of traditional media institutions	References to the decline in budgets and financial resources for traditional new media	1	3
Decreased trust in traditional media, fake news	References to a decrease in trust for traditional media and the emergence of fake news	1	3
Distrust of traditional media		6	29
All media mediums spread negativity and disinformation	References to all media as spreading disinformation and hate	1	1
Dislike of traditional media by government and senior politicians	References to a dislike of traditional media by the government and senior politicians	1	1
External news media place their own angle on information	References to the ability of the traditional news media to place their own angle on information related to the military/defence institution	4	5
Low opinion of traditional media news gathering practices	References to a negative opinion on the news gathering practices of traditional media and journalists	2	7
Mainstream news media can marginalise the voices being heard	References to mainstream media restricting the number of voices and perspectives given on some stories	1	1
Question of reliability of information gathered through social media by journalists	References to questions of reliability around information gathered through social media by journalists	1	3
The military institution feels that the traditional media can be biased against them	References to the belief of the military/defence institution that the traditional military can be biased against them	2	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Traditional media as having prescribed simplified news stories	References to the traditional media's reluctance to cover stories that aren't easily understood, reliance on established stories such as 'woman wins lotto'	2	3
Traditional media can censor what the military institution wishes to communicate	References to traditional media censoring what the defence/military institution has to say	1	1
Traditional media is most beneficial to terrorists and hate groups	References to traditional media being of most benefit to terrorists and hate groups agendas	1	1
Traditional news media tends to focus on negative stories about the defence institution	References to the focus of negative and scandal driven news stories within traditional news media when writing about the military/defence institution	2	4
In contemporary society social media is now equally as important as traditional media	References to the importance of social media and traditional media in contemporary society being equal (50/50)	1	1
Messaging apps have altered the nature of communication	References to messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Signal changing the way people communicate	2	3
Polarisation	References to division, sharply contrasting sets of opinions and beliefs	1	1
Post- truth era	References to whether we have entered a post truth era where the public doesn't know what's true and what's false	1	5
Question of truth online	References to competing narratives online, the staging of photographs and the difficulty for the audience in establishing who is telling the truth	1	2
Social media is the primary medium of communication in fast moving situations	References to social media as the primary way of disseminating information in a fast-moving situation or crises	1	1
Spirit of the times	References to social media as a zeitgeist, the spirit of a generation or period of time	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
The communications environment has changed over time	References to an overall change in the communications environment over time	2	2
Those that obtain their information from social media are less well educated	References to the people that obtain information from social media as having never read the New York Times and traditionally got most of their news from broadcast TV	1	1
Traditional media no longer useful for military recruitment	References to traditional media campaigning as no longer being useful for military recruitment, placing all of their efforts into social media	1	3
Traditional military communications strategy will no longer work	References to traditional military communication strategies and audiences no longer being effective in the contemporary environment	1	1
Evolving use and role of tech and social media		6	48
Decline in the popularity of Facebook with younger demographics	References to the decline in popularity of Facebook with younger demographics	2	4
Future trends in social media communication	References to the perceived trajectory of social media platform use	2	12
How the institution uses social media has evolved over time	References to a change in the way social media is used by the defence and military institution and also a change in the type of content they put out on their platforms	4	10
Increasing importance of voice in communications	References to the increasing importance of voice in communications strategy, e.g. the use of podcasts and search capabilities	1	2
Lack of external audience engagement in early social media presence	References to the lack of engagement of external audiences with early social media presence and content, not deriving any value from it	1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Lack of value for audiences in early social media presence	References to a lack of value derived by audiences from the institutions early social media presence.	1	1
The culture and regulation on social media use has changed over time in the defence forces	References to a change in the culture and regulation towards social media use within the defence forces	1	2
The use of social media for internal communication	References to the use of social media for internal communications purposes within the defence institution	2	4
Training and education in social media	References to undertaking additional professional training or education in the use of social media	2	5
Use of social media has become more strategic over time	References to the use of social media being used less strategically in the past, having a more fun and lighthearted nature and failing to reach the right audiences	2	6
Hybrid communications environment		5	7
Importance of traditional media in driving political agendas	References to the importance of traditional media in driving political agendas	4	6
Increased importance of social media and messaging apps in political campaigning	References to the increased importance of social media and messaging apps in political campaigning	0	0
Mainstream traditional news cycle can impact social media	References to the mainstream news cycle playing into what appears on social media	1	1
Hybrid strategic communication strategies		8	35

Name	Description	Files	References
Balance between the use of traditional and social media in political communication	References to the use of both traditional and social media in political communication	1	1
Combination of traditional and social media techniques in military communication	References to the combination of social and traditional media techniques in the communications strategy of the military/defence institution	1	3
Continued importance of traditional media	References to the continued importance of traditional media in promoting high profile events	5	10
Continued importance of websites	References to the continued importance of websites in a digital strategy, not just social media platforms	1	2
Social media and website presence should complement each other	References to the use of both websites for long form content and social media platforms for more brief details which should link with each other	2	4
Social media does not represent a silver bullet for the military but rather is just one tool they can utilise to achieve their goals	References to social media as not being a silver bullet for the military/defence institution but rather as being one tool they can utilise to meet their strategic goals	1	2
Symbiotic relationship between the use of traditional and social media for strategic communication	References to the symbiotic nature of the use of traditional and social media for military strategic communication	1	2
Text messaging is highly suited to military strategic communications	References to text messaging as being highly suited to military operations due to its significant global reach, including Africa and other countries with low internet penetration as a channel to communicate with target audiences	1	1
The level of importance given to the communication medium	References to the level of importance of a medium for military/defence communication being dependent upon the audience they wish to reach.	1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
is dependent on the target audience			
Traditional and online StratCom strategies should work in tandem	References to the use of traditional and online media in tandem with each other to meet StratCom objectives	1	1
Traditional media should still be respected and not undermined in the political environment	References to the need to respect and not completely undermine the traditional press	1	1
Traditional media is used for the set piece engagements	References to the traditional media and press being utilised for set piece engagements	1	1
Use of music and Spotify to enhance military social media presence	References to the use of music and the streaming application Spotify to enhance the military/defence institutions social media outreach	1	2
Use of online gaming for StratCom	References to the use of online gaming as a tool of StratCom for the military/defence institution	1	1
Value in multiple media types	References to the value and importance of different media types, traditional and social media	1	2
Impact of social media on military communications		8	39
Agility and durability are challenges for the use of social media for StratCom	References to the challenges of durability, growing an audience month on month and agility, creating different types of content and setting up new social media channels	1	1
Brevity of information possible on social media	References to the short and fast nature of social media which does not facilitate large amounts of information	1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Growing importance of social media for military communication	References to the continued growth in importance of social media for military/defence communications	1	4
Importance of social media as a medium	References to the importance of social media as a medium of communication	1	1
Increased importance of social media in military communications	References to the use of social media beginning to eclipse the importance of traditional media in military communication	1	1
Internal cohesion is an important StratCom objective for NATO that is assisted by social media	References to the internal cohesion of 29 sovereign nations as an important StratCom goal for NATO	1	3
It's easier to reach your internal audience through social media than through internal communication structures	References to social media being an easier way to communicate with the internal audience of the military/defence institution rather than existing internal communication mechanisms	2	2
Key role of social media in communications strategy	References to the key role played by social media in their communications strategy	2	9
Most of the communication goals met by social media were once met by the traditional media	References to the communications goals met through the use of social media previously being met by traditional media (they're not necessarily new or unique)	1	1
Need to embrace the contemporary communications environment	References to the need to embrace the contemporary communications environment in which social media is so prevalent	1	3
Need to reinterpret how strategic goals can be met in the 21st century	References to the need to reinterpret how military strategic goals can be achieved in the 21st century and to integrate new	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
by integrating new technologies	technologies in service of those goals		
Overarching digital strategy	References to an overall digital communications strategy with a broader focus than just social media platforms	1	2
Practical application of social media in military operations from a communication and engagement perspective	References to the practical application of social media in military operations from a communication and engagement perspective	1	1
Press conferences have been discarded as social media is a more effective way to release information	References to social media as a more effective channel in this fast-paced communication environment for information dissemination than the traditional press conference	1	1
Publishing of military press releases on Twitter	References to the release of press releases by the defence/military institution on Twitter	2	3
Social media has altered the traditional communications practices of the military	References to the ways in which social media has impacted upon the traditional communications practices of the military/defence institution	2	2
Social media is more important than the organisations website	References to social media being more important as a means to disseminate information than placing news on the military/defence organisations webpage	1	2
Impact of social media on traditional media practices		4	13
Impact of social media and the internet on mainstream news practices	References to the impact of digital media upon traditional news practices	1	1
Influence of Trumps Twitter use on driving	References to the Trumps use of Twitter as influencing traditional media agendas and	1	3

Name	Description	Files	References
traditional media agendas	shifting the power from larger organisations to powerful individuals		
Journalists are reliant upon social media as a source of information in areas they cannot access	References to the reliance of traditional journalists upon social media platforms for information gathering particularly in areas they cannot access.	1	4
Social media acts as a subsidy for traditional media as their budgets decline	References to the decline in budgets for traditional news and journalism and how social media has filled this gap through the provision of cheap and easily accessible copy	1	3
Social media is a more important communications medium for recruitment than traditional media	References to social media as being the most important communications medium for the purposes of recruitment	1	2
Integration of digital components in military activity		2	3
Increasing digital component to the nature of military activity	References to the increased role of digital and information within military/defence activities	1	1
Reluctance to refer to digital tools as a weapon as that may prompt a military weapon review	References to the need to refer to digital media as a tool in conflict rather than a weapon in order to avoid a military weapon review process	1	2
Social media as part of overall strategic goals		7	29
Social media as an instrument of the state	References to social media as another tool that can be blended into the mix of instruments of the state	1	1
Social media can contribute to the	References to social media as one instrument that can contribute to achieving all of the	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
institutions overall strategic goals	military/defence institutions strategic goals (such as prevention, deterrence)		
Social media strategy	References to how the institution uses social media to achieve its communication goals	6	25
Social media strategy has to fit into the overall communications strategy	References to the need for social media to fit into the broader communications strategy of the institution	2	2
Importance of digital relationships with journalists	References to the importance of relationships with journalists which have been built on digitally to ensure any information the journalists may hear about the organisation are fact checked with them	2	5
Importance of knowing who your audience is	References to the importance of knowing who your audience is when communicating information online	1	1
Information Dominance	References to the use of social media as a means to dominate the information space	1	5
Intervention in information flows	the ability of actors and the technology of social media to intervene in, disrupt, and challenge information flows in the communications environment	8	121
Addressing misinformation and disinformation		6	37
Addressing misinformation or disinformation	References to methods of addressing or dealing with misinformation/disinformation	3	8
Counter radicalisation efforts are focused online	References to the military/defence institutions counter radicalisations programs, countering ISIS narratives as being focused online	1	1
Disinformation	References to false information online which is deliberately misleading	4	9
Disinformation can become a distraction from your own communications objectives	References to disinformation becoming a distraction to your own communications objectives	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
How you respond to disinformation is more important than focusing on how it works	References to the response to disinformation being more important than getting caught up in how it works	1	2
If disinformation is not affecting your ability to achieve your objectives just ignore it	References to ignoring disinformation and moving on if it is not affecting your ability to achieve your own objectives	1	1
Misinformation online	References to false or inaccurate information posted on social media regardless of whether there is deliberate intent to deceive	2	9
Russian disinformation campaigns	References to disinformation campaigns orchestrated by the Russians	1	2
Staying true to one's own values and message is the best way to undermine disinformation	References to the need to stay true to the institutions own values in order to undermine the credibility of the disinformation that's out there	1	4
Agenda setting function of social media	References to the ability of social media to influence the agenda of traditional media	2	5
Bypass traditional media		6	25
Social media as a means for the military institution to put their own argument forward	References to the use of social media by the military/defence institution to put their own arguments forward	1	1
Social media as an outlet for the stories the defence institution wants to tell	References to the ability of the defence forces to tell the stories they want to tell on social media, directly, without relying on traditional media to cover it.	4	10
Social media can cut out the intermediary of traditional media	References to the ability to put out your own information in your own words on social media rather than being subject to any angle or phrasing imposed upon it by traditional news media	4	6

Name	Description	Files	References
Social media facilitates direct messaging	References to the ability to communicate directly with audiences through social media	2	5
Social media facilitates the communication of the point of view of the institution	References to the use of social media to communicate the point of view of the military/defence institution	1	1
The key difference between use of traditional media and use of social media is independence	References to the key difference between using traditional media communication and social media for military communication as being independence	1	2
In house production of news stories	References to the production of news stories within the department of communications and/or public affairs for dissemination on websites and social media platforms	2	3
Journalists reliance on social media as a source of information is beneficial to the military institution	References to the reliance of journalists on social media as a source of information as beneficial to the militaries' communications objectives	1	1
Leveraging of journalists monitoring military social media accounts to share information	References to the leveraging of journalists monitoring the military/defence institutions social media accounts in order to share information with them	1	1
Military social media tweets embedded in traditional news articles are a measure of success	References to the embedding of military tweets in a news article as a measure of success for their social media outreach	1	1
Need to stay ahead of the information curve	References to the need of military/defence institutions to stay ahead of the information being released about their own activities	1	2
Social media can influence traditional media agenda	References to the use of social media to influence what appears in the traditional media	3	8

Name	Description	Files	References
Traditional media directly quoting the military's Twitter feed	References to traditional media taking direct quotes from the military/defence institutions Twitter feed and using them in their reporting	3	4
Use of social media as a tool of news management	References to the use of social media as a tool of news management for the military/defence institution	1	1
Journalists can act as conduits between military social media platforms and their target audiences	References to journalists sharing and translating their content online reaching target audiences which may not have direct access to their messaging	2	5
Journalists use military social media accounts as information sources	References to the use of military/defence social media content as sources of information by journalists	4	7
Social media can influence traditional media agenda	References to the use of social media to influence what appears in the traditional media	3	8
Tagging of military social media accounts by journalists lends credibility	References to the tagging of military/social media accounts by journalists in their own posts as lending credibility to the institution	2	2
Traditional media reporters are an important target audience on military social media	References to the importance of traditional news reporters as an audience of military/defence social media platforms, in particular, Twitter	3	8
Twitter is predominantly used by journalists and politicians	References to Twitter as a platform predominantly used by journalists and politicians	2	2
Use of social media as a tool of news management	References to the use of social media as a tool of news management for the military/defence institution	1	1
Use of social media for strategic narratives	References to the use of social media to put out information and stories of their choosing in their own words	2	3

Name	Description	Files	References
Limitations and constraints	upon the goals of actors utilising social network sites as a tool of strategic communication which include their own institutional culture, internal factors around fears of damage to reputation and OPSEC, external factors such as algorithms, adversaries, inability to control the message and how multiple audiences may perceive it	8	492
Challenges in strategic communications objectives	References to the challenges faced by the defence forces in their strategic communications strategy	4	19
Speed and ubiquity of social media is a challenge	References to the nature of social media as being constant, fast paced and brief	2	9
External factors		8	73
AI and machine learning needs several years to develop and advance	References to AI and machine learning needing time to advance and develop	1	1
Algorithms influence what content is seen	References to the algorithms in social media impacting what content is made visible to audiences and favoring some type of content over others, video for example	2	2
Bots and AI are not yet sophisticated enough to engage with the public on the military's behalf	References to bots and AI not yet being sophisticated enough to interact with and influence the public on the military's behalf	1	1
Change in online environment	References to a change in the social media environment over time	1	1
Communications through messaging apps are difficult to track	References to the difficulty of tracking and evaluating communications through encrypted messaging apps such as WhatsApp	1	1
Content being misconstrued or misinterpreted is a risk	References to the risk of content posted by the military/defence institution being misconstrued accidentally or deliberately by hostile actors	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Different audiences may respond differently to the same content	References to different audiences reacting differently to the same content based on their own viewpoints	2	2
Difficult to control information online	References to the difficulty in controlling the release and spread of information online about your own activities and institution	3	6
Difficulties in online monitoring and curation	References to the challenges of monitoring and curating social media platforms	1	1
Doctored videos and deep fake statements pose a risk to legitimacy	References to the risks of doctored videos and deep fake statements online impacting the legitimacy of the military/defence institution	1	1
Facebooks own analytics are superficial and unreliable	References to Facebooks own analytics being superficial and unreliable in establishing the reach and impact of your social media campaign	1	2
Fear of reprisals online	References to the possibility of backlash or reprisals online in response to their social media content	1	3
Hard to anticipate how different audiences on social media will react to your content	References to the difficulty of having multiple audiences following your content and not knowing how different groups may react to it	1	1
Held to higher standards of accuracy	References to the need for a defence force to be right and accurate in their communications	2	5
It's difficult to establish tangible effects from the use of social media	References to the difficulty in proving tangible results from the use of digital tools by the military/defence institution	1	3
It's difficult to predict what information will be deemed important by the traditional media and the public	References to the inability to predict what information about the military/defence institutions activities will be deemed pertinent by the media or the public	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Military and defence should not use bots to interact with the public	References to the use of bots not being appropriate in military and defence to interact with people	1	1
Need for more tactical online tooling that can have practical results for military commanders	References to the need for more tactical online tooling that can give practical results a military commander can act upon	1	1
Need to be creative to combat Facebook algorithms	References to the need for military/defence institutions to be creative in combating Facebook algorithms that restrict content from large organisations	1	2
Questions of morality of the use of AI	References to moral questions surrounding the use of AI on social media platforms by the military and defence sector	2	2
Social media has been the most beneficial to terrorists and hate groups	References to social media as having been of most benefit for terrorists and hate groups communication strategies	1	2
Social media platform analytics traditionally inadequate and limited from a military perspective	References to the traditional inadequacy of social media dashboards from a military perspective as they didn't map users by geographical location and so information cannot be acted upon by a military commander	1	3
Social media platforms are vulnerable to hacking and sabotage	References to social media platforms as being vulnerable to hacking attacks and sabotage from adversaries	1	1
Social media platforms can be ephemeral	Reference to social media platforms that do not sustain their popularity	3	3
Social media used as an informational weapon by adversaries	References to the use of social media as an informational weapon used to further terrorist agendas and sway public opinion	3	4
Tensions exist between the defence institutions and government	References to the tension that exists between the need for the military/defence organisation to be an a-political government organisation and the government itself	2	9

Name	Description	Files	References
The Cambridge Analytica scandal really damaged data mining and sentiment analysis gathering	References to the Cambridge Analytica scandal damaging sentiment analysis activities on social media	1	1
The historical, political and domestic environment of the country will influence social media content	References to the historical, political and domestic environment influencing the nature of the military/defence institutions social media communications content.	1	1
The political environment impacts upon the defence institution	References to the nature of the political environment in the country of the military/defence institution impacting upon them and their activities	1	1
Use of automated response technology to respond to queries	References to the use of automated response programs to respond to recruitment queries	1	1
Use of Bots online	References to the use of bots by the institution on their social media platforms for standardised responses	3	3
Use of social media by terrorist groups	Reference to the use of social media by terrorist groups	2	6
Institutional culture		8	234
A rush to adopt the latest online platform	References to a rush to participate in the latest platform or app in haste	2	2
Access to social media dashboards need to be decentralised from the operational level to the tactical level	References to the need to decentralise access to the social media dashboards from the operational level to the tactical level where they could be used and tested	1	1
Age of those engaged in military communications can impact social media effectiveness	References to older demographics engaged in military communications as impacting the effectiveness of their social media outreach to younger people	1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Ambiguities in permitted social media conduct	References to ambiguities in permitted social media use within the defence forces	1	6
Being a small social media team can be beneficial	References to a small social media team as being beneficial to maintaining a consistency of language and tone on the social media platforms of the military/defence institution	1	1
Better to address internal criticism than ignore it	References to the need to address internal dissatisfaction rather than suppress it.	1	1
Communications department as a filter or check on soldiers social media content	References to the communications department within the defence institution judging what is appropriate social media content for the soldiers to post	1	1
Communications department provides the briefings to soldiers on the risks of social media	References to the communications department within the defence institution providing the briefings to soldiers on the risks of using social media whilst on duty (as opposed to Op Sec for example)	1	1
Competing values between the defences forces and their internal audience	References to competing values between the defence forces promoting female recruitment and LGBT rights and their own internal audience who reacted negatively to these campaigns	1	7
Critical of NATO bureaucracy around communications engagement	References to the bureaucracy around communications engagement in NATIO	1	1
Culture of competition between soldiers encouraged in content creation	References to the creation and encouragement of a competitive culture between soldiers for whose content is chosen to be included in the defence forces social media platforms	1	2
Defence force policy restricts what operations can be carried in advance of official conflict	References to military armed forces only being deployed only after they are officially in conflict, so defensive or cyber operations cannot be carried out in advance of this	1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Defence forces are traditionally conservative in their communications	References to the military/defence force as traditionally conservative in their communications	1	1
Defence forces as a value based organisation	References to the defence forces being a value based organisation	1	1
Early lack of regulation and strategy	References to a lack of rules, regulations and strategic planning in the early period of social media use in the defence forces	2	2
Experience not age is a factor in support for social media within the institution	References to experience and not age being a factor in support for social media use in the military/defence institution	1	1
Failure to engage on social media is a significant risk	References to a failure to engage and to stay behind a digital wall online as a risk in military social media use	1	1
Fear of authorising young people to engage on the organisations behalf on social media	References to fears of authorising young 20 somethings to engage on social media on the organisations behalf	2	3
Fear of influencing the home front through social media use	References to fears of influencing the home front through the use of social media	1	2
Formality	References to comments on defence social media platforms being formal, having to observe certain conventions and etiquette. Potentially spilling into the political realm	1	2
Gaps in support for social media use within the military institution	References to gaps in support for the use of social media as an important non kinetic tool within the military/defence institution	1	3
Guidance provided to soldiers on the use of social media	Reference to guidance provided to soldiers on the sensible use of social media	4	5

Name	Description	Files	References
If young soldiers can be trusted with weapons they should be trusted with social media	References to the opinion that if the military trusts young soldiers with guns, they should trust them to use social media responsibly	1	1
Incompatibility between tone of social media and nature of military institution	References to traditional press releases, statements and bureaucratic responses from the defence forces being incompatible with the nature of social media communication	4	9
Institutional resistance to the use of social media within the military institution	References to resistance or reticence within the military/defence institution to embrace social media	2	8
Institutional support	References to support for the use of social media as a tool of communication from military chiefs and the broader military institution.	4	7
Integration of digital media is still a work in progress	References to the need to integrate digital media on a larger scale within the communications strategy of the military/defence institution	1	2
Lack of official doctrine or guidelines on social media use for soldiers	References to a lack of official doctrine or guidelines in place within the military/defence institution which govern the use of social media by soldiers	1	2
Military and Defence culture is not naturally innovative in social media	References to the institutional culture within military and defence not being naturally innovative in its use of social media	2	3
Military cadets prefer traditional kinetic means over non kinetic means	References to the preference of military cadets for the traditional, physical kinetic means of warfare as opposed to non-kinetic informational warfare	1	3
Military institutions can be risk adverse in their communication strategy	References to the military/defence institution being risk averse in its communication strategy	1	1
Moral authority	References to the military institution as being of good character, trustworthy, to make decisions that are right and good, loyal,	3	8

Name	Description	Files	References
	selfless, courageous		
Need to address engagement deficit	References to the need to further engage either directly or through others	2	2
Need to balance the speed of social media with responsible reporting of information	References to the need to balance the speedy nature of social media with being responsible with the information and content you release as a military/defence institution	1	3
Need to be an a-political institution	References to the need for the defence forces to be a-political, not involved in political affairs	2	6
Need to respect the other bodies of government when communicating	References to the need for the military/defence institution to be cognisant of their position as a government institution that cannot speak louder than the others	1	2
Negative internal response to the female focused campaign	References to a negative response by male internal personnel to the female focused recruitment campaign	1	4
Negative internal response to the defences forces participation in Pride march	References to the negative internal reaction to the defence forces participating in the Pride parade	1	4
Operational security departments are slow to recognise and adapt to changing social media trends	References to the operational security department within a military institution being slow to adapt to changing trends in social media	1	1
Perceived dangers of social media hamper its use for communication engagement in defence	References to the idea promoted within the military/defence institution that social media is dangerous as hampering its use in communications engagement	1	1
Political correctness is a factor in the nature of communications	References to political correctness being a factor in the nature of communications content produced by the defence forces	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Restrictions on what soldiers can post on social media	References to restrictions placed on soldiers on the nature of information they can share on their own social media accounts	6	8
Restrictions to being transparent	References to instances where information cannot be shared by the military/defence institution with the public	1	5
Restrictions to engagement	References to restrictions on or the inability of the military/defence organisation to engage	3	8
Risk of self-censorship online for fear of political blowback	References concerns that the defence social media presence will become self-censored and more like a traditional press release or bureaucratic response due to a collapse of boundaries between the political and operational	1	1
Risk of soldiers or personnel releasing information the military institution doesn't want out there	References to the risk of soldiers or personnel associated with the military/defence institution releasing information that they don't want out there	2	2
Social media as a broadcast medium	References to the use of social media as a broadcast medium rather than a site for interactive dialogue (code derived with the question asked in mind)	2	10
Social media as a risk to operational security	References to the risk of exposing sensitive information affecting operational security through social media	5	6
Social Media policies & regulation	References to the introduction of social media policies regulating the use of social media by the defence forces.	3	20
Soldiers are responsible with the content they put on their social media platforms	References to soldiers generally being responsible with what content they put on their own social media channels	1	1
Soldiers become scared to use social media due to Opsec briefings	References to soldiers being afraid to use social media due to being scared off by military Opsec briefings	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Soldiers frustrated by lack of independence and institutional trust in their social media use	References to soldiers being frustrated by the lack of independence they had within the military/defence institution to use social media	1	1
Tensions between Cyber units and PA PR units	References to the difference between those that work in cyber operations and units and those that work within PA/PR	1	3
The defence forces are predominantly male	References to the majority of the defence forces personnel being male.	1	1
The immediacy of social media is often incongruent to how the defence forces can share information	References to the timeliness and speed of social media being a challenge when it may not be possible for the defence forces to release information immediately	3	8
The nature of a military organisation restricts the level of humour and personality they can exhibit in their online presence	References to the inability of military organisations to engage in too much humour, frivolity or unique personality online due to the nature of their function and the possibility of casualties and conflict	0	0
There are ethical guidelines for the use of social media by military personnel	References to the presence of ethical guidelines for military/defence personnel in their use of social media, for example they cannot bring discredit to the institution	1	1
Traditional predominance of middle aged white men in defence institutions	References to the predominance of middle-aged white men in the military/defence institution	2	4
We shouldn't be fearful of social media	References to social media as something people should not be afraid of	1	1
Internal Factors		7	43
Content created by soldiers can be inadequate	References to the inability of soldiers to take good photographs and produce high end content for the defence forces platforms	1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Effectively integrating cyber units into traditional military operations is difficult for many military institutions	References to several military institutions experiencing difficulties in integrating cyber units with traditional military operations	1	2
Fears of Russian hacking and influence deters social media use among soldiers	References to ideas of 'the big bad Russian' hacking social media accounts and influencing followers, deterring soldiers from social media use	1	2
Limited resources	References to limited or a lack of resources, budget and personnel for media and marketing	4	19
Militaries can be too focused on reinforcing their own audience and not reaching new ones	References to military/defence institutions being too focused on reinforcing the audiences they already have and not reaching out to new ones	1	1
Need to effectively communicate internally through existing structures	References to the need to communicate effectively with the internal audience through existing platforms or means	1	1
Need to train soldiers in their use of social media to avoid reputational damage	References to the need to train soldiers in their use of social media so that they don't damage the reputation of the military/defence institution	1	2
Reluctance of soldiers to be used for social media content	References to the reluctance of soldiers to provide content (videos, photos) when they're on duty to promote the defence forces	1	1
Tensions between NATO and the military system on social media resourcing	References to tensions between NATO StratCom and the military system in relation to resourcing their social media presence	1	1
Tensions exist within the military institution around communications strategy	References to tensions that exist between the broader institution and those working within communications on the best strategy for the organisation	4	9

Name	Description	Files	References
The most visceral negative response to campaigns has come from the internal audience	References to the kickback from campaigns often being internal rather than external	1	1
Weighing priorities	References to balancing the level of resources available and the communication priorities of the institution	1	2
Lack of choice		5	13
If you're not present on social media you're irrelevant	References to the idea that if you're not present on social media you are irrelevant in today's communications environment	1	1
If you're not producing content you concede ground to others in the information environment	References to the need to continue to produce content to avoid conceding ground to others who will fill that void in the communications environment	3	4
Need to engage in social media in order to mitigate the risks it poses to the institution	References to the need to embrace social media in order to mitigate the risks it poses the military/defence institution	0	0
No choice but to have a social media presence	References to the need for the military/defence institutions to be present on social media platforms. There is no choice.	4	8
Risks and limitations of social media		8	105
A site of negativity and harassment	References to social media as a site of negativity, harassment or criticism	3	8
Abuse online	References to people being abused online on social media platforms	1	1
Adversaries will capitalise on a lack of, or delay in, information	References to the need to be out in front of a story or information as adversaries will capitalise on any delay or lack of information in order to paint the organisation as untruthful and sway public opinion	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Concerns about the home front being target by adversaries cyber operations	References to the concerns around the military/defence institutions home front being targeted by adversaries cyber operations	1	2
Conflicting messages from official sources online	References to conflicting messaging online from official sources	1	2
Exposure to negative comments online	References to the defence forces being exposed to negative comments online	1	1
Feeling of being defenceless against online negativity	References to being unable to defend against online attacks and just having to take them without reprisal	1	4
It's difficult to establish tangible effects from the use of social media	References to the difficulty in proving tangible results from the use of digital tools by the military/defence institution	1	3
Little risk in using social media for military communications	References to the lack of serious risk involved in using social media as a tool of military communication	1	2
Military communications will never be universally well received	References to the inability for the military/defence institution to create communications that will be well received by everyone as the audience is too diverse	1	1
Political backlash to screening of defence campaign at a sporting event	References to a political backlash to the defence forces Ranger Wing video screening at the GAA final	1	2
Public demand for information	References to the public demand for immediate response and information	1	1
Risks and challenges of online presence	References to the risks of engaging in an online social media presence	8	26
Sensitive situations can be further inflamed by social media	References to the risk of situations becoming further inflamed through comments and engagement on social media	2	4

Name	Description	Files	References
Scepticism of the defence forces	References to skepticism towards the military/defence institution	3	5
Social media as a tool for a vocal minority	References to social media as a tool for a vocal minority on either side of an issue	1	1
Social media can blow a situation out of proportion	References to social media creating hyperbolic reactions to incidents and labelling them a scandal or a disgrace.	1	1
Social media can pose risks to a soldier or his family	References to the exposure of sensitive information through social media placing a soldier or his family in danger	2	5
Social media cannot alter negative perceptions of the military institution held by staunch critics	References to the inability of social media to alter the negative perceptions of the military/defence institution amongst its staunch critics	4	4
Soldiers encouraged to leave their phones behind when deployed due to hacking fears	References to the military/defence institution training soldiers to leave their phones at home in order to avoid being hacked	1	2
Soldiers need to be aware that they could be filmed when on operational duty	References to the need for soldiers to be aware that they could be being filmed when on operational duty and so to behave responsibly	1	1
The abundance of information online makes it difficult to get people's attention	References to the abundance of information online and on social media platforms that makes it difficult to get people's attention	3	4
The level of competition on social media can make it difficult to gain attention		1	1
The public can view the military as a source of propaganda	References to the public viewing the military as a tool of propaganda	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
The public perceives western military operations over the last decade as ineffective	References to the public perceiving every western military operation over the past 10 years as ineffective	1	1
There will always be some level of criticism	References to the fact that there will always be some criticism in response to a campaign by the defence forces	3	6
Uncertainty in how to portray women in social media content	References to uncertainty around how they can portray women on their social media, if they can exploit the attractiveness of women in the same way that they do men	1	2
Unpredictable nature of what stories will gain widespread attention and become an organisational crisis	References to the inability to predict what stories on military activity will gain traction in the mainstream media and with the public and escalate into an organisational crisis	2	3
Use of social media can pose a reputational risk	References to the use of social media being a potential risk to the institution's reputation	2	7
With social media it's not just the soldier that's vulnerable to enemy cyber operations but his entire network	References to the dangers posed by social media to the soldier in terms of being targeted by enemy cyber operations but now also his entire network which can be used as a vector of possible influence of the soldier	1	1
Your content can be appropriated by hostile actors to undermine your credibility	References to the risk of hostile actors utilising content posted by the military/defence institution to damage their credibility and legitimacy	1	1
Your content may reach an unintended audience	References to audiences that may be exposed to your content when it has not been tailored or targeted to them	1	1
Technology as a double edged sword		1	5
Communications technologies are a double edged sword	References to all new technologies including communications, representing a double-edged sword of risk and benefits	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
The internet as partly responsible for this post-truth era	References to the internet as being partially responsible for the rise of conspiracy theories and the emergence of a post-truth era	1	4

APPENDIX E: FACEBOOK IMAGES PHASE 3 CODEBOOK

Categories reorganised, relabeled and analysed to identify themes

Name	Description	Files	References
Calls to action	Defined as a piece of content intended to induce the viewer or follower to perform a specific act for example to like, comment or share	72	81
Asking for actions	Image or accompanying text explicitly requests an action from IDF Facebook followers such as to like, share and vote in relation to their timeline posts	53	56
Competition	Image or accompanying text makes reference to competition, winner or loser	3	3
Asking questions	image or accompanying text poses questions to the followers of the IDF Facebook page	25	25
Asking Questions	image or accompanying text references questions posed to the Facebook followers of the IDF	24	24
Capability	Image refers either overtly or implicitly to capability. Both within the institution and culture of the military and of military personnel, ' that is having the needful capacity, power or fitness (some specified purpose or activity, having general capacity, intelligence, or ability; qualified, able, competent. - Maltby 2015.	541	2292
Celebration and ceremony	defined as a celebratory event, a ceremony for graduation, wedding or national, religious holidays	54	59
Celebration	Image depicts a celebratory event	23	23
Ceremony and graduation	image depicts training, graduation, commemoration ceremonies	25	25
Congratulations	image or accompanying text offers congratulations	11	11
Corporeal capability	defined as representations of mental and physical capability such as strength, endurance, mental resilience	199	341
Awards of Excellence	image or accompanying text makes reference to awards presented to IDF members for their service	5	5
Courage and bravery	image or accompanying text makes reference to the courage and bravery of IDF soldiers	20	23

Name	Description	Files	References
Dedication	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the dedication of IDF soldiers or Israeli government officials in their service of the country	2	2
Exemplars	image or accompanying text makes reference to members of the IDF as setting an example for others	1	1
Extreme Weather	image or accompanying text makes reference to extreme weather conditions, snow, sun, rain etc.	8	8
Growth and learning	image or accompanying text makes reference to learning and growth through service	13	13
Hard work and dedication	image or accompanying text makes reference to the IDF's hard work and dedication	6	7
Heroes	image makes reference to heroes, may be either service personnel or civilians	4	4
Israeli Icons	image or accompanying text makes reference to icons of Israel, those worthy of veneration	8	8
Leadership	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the leadership qualities of IDF personnel or Israeli government officials	1	1
Marches	image or accompanying text references IDF marches	12	12
Preparedness	image references IDF service personnel's preparedness, readiness for duty/training	72	72
Recollect and Refresh	image or accompanying text makes reference to the IDF taking time to refresh after a difficult week	4	4
Responsibility	image or accompanying text makes reference to IDF personnel being responsible in the sense of a having a duty to deal with or do something	8	8
Role models	image or accompanying text makes reference to role models, either service personnel or civilians	4	4
Sacrifice	image or accompanying text makes reference to sacrifices made by IDF soldiers	11	11
Service	image of accompanying text makes reference to military service	18	18
Sport	Individual or team competition involving physical activity and skill	9	14
IDF Athletes	image or accompanying text makes reference to 'IDF Athletes'	1	1
Representing Israel in Competition	the image or accompanying text makes reference to military personnel representing Israel in sports competitions	6	6
Sport and service	image or accompanying text makes reference to the parallels between sport and military service	7	7

Name	Description	Files	References
Strength and Resilience	image of accompanying text references the ability to endure an unpleasant or difficult process or situation without giving way.	30	31
Training	image depicts IDF soldier training exercise, or refers to other training, for example, fitness and sports that compliments soldiers' activities	94	95
Deterrence	References to the maintenance of military power for the purpose of discouraging an attack	62	70
Control and Power	image or accompanying text makes reference to the IDF's exertion of power or control	1	1
Defiance	Image or accompanying text makes reference to an open resistance to terror activities and attacks	11	12
Deterrence	image or accompanying text makes reference to the maintenance of military power for the purposes of discouraging attack	48	52
Threats	reference to threats of harmful consequences in response to actions against Israel	5	5
Institutional, Cultural capability	Defined as representations emphasising a particular 'culture' of teamwork, professionalism, discipline and skill. Maltby 2015	418	925
Adventure	image or accompanying text makes reference to exciting or daring experiences	1	1
Camaraderie	references to mutual trust, friendship and unity between those that spend significant time together and share experiences	58	61
Brotherhood and Unity	Image or accompanying text make reference to the brotherhood and unity between IDF soldiers	8	8
Camaraderie and friendship	image depicts gestures of trust, friendship affection between soldiers and others towards the IDF	52	53
Capability	Defined as representations emphasising a particular 'culture' of teamwork, professionalism, discipline and skill. Maltby 2015	187	255
Challenges and dangers	image or accompanying text makes reference to the challenges and dangers of being part of the IDF	22	22
Co ordination	Image or accompanying text makes reference to coordination between different arms of the IDF and between the IDF and other institutions, for example the UN	8	8
Decrease in terror	image or accompanying text makes reference to a decrease or reduction in terrorist attacks/incidents within Israel	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Eliteness and exceptionalism	image or accompanying text makes reference to a select group that is superior in skill to the rest of a group or society	6	6
IDF achievements	image or accompanying text makes reference to successes/ accomplishments attributed to the IDF and/or individual soldiers	24	24
Military Exercises	image or accompanying text makes reference to military exercises conducted by the IDF, or in coordination with other military allies.	4	4
Negotiation	Image or accompanying text makes reference to negotiations such as prisoner exchanges	1	1
Operational Activity	coordinated military actions, active units	73	83
Behavioral Science	image or accompanying text makes reference to behavioral science units within the IDF	1	1
Concealed identity	image hides or obscures the identity/face of the subject of the image	36	36
Camouflage	image of accompanying text makes reference to camouflage, the disguising of military personnel, equipment by painting/covering them to blend into surroundings	22	22
Covert Missions and divisions	image references top secret, covert missions and divisions within the IDF	6	7
Cyber Defence	image or accompanying text makes reference to cyber defences and/ or units within the IDF	2	2
Electronic Warfare	image or accompanying text makes reference to combating electronic warfare	1	1
Escalation	image or accompanying text makes reference to an escalation on behalf of the IDF in operations and/or training	1	1
IDF Operational Activity	image or accompanying text makes explicit reference to IDF operational activity	13	15
In pursuit	image or accompanying text makes reference to the IDF being in pursuit of a terrorist or criminal	1	1
Intelligence and spying	Image or accompanying text makes reference to intelligence operations within the IDF	2	2
Preemptive strikes	image or accompanying text makes reference to Israel engaging in preemptive strikes	1	1
Prevention	image or accompanying text makes reference to the prevention of attacks by the IDF	3	3

Name	Description	Files	References
Surveillance and monitoring	image or accompanying text makes reference to surveillance and monitoring carried out by the IDF	7	7
Threats Neutralised	image or accompanying text makes reference to the IDF disarming a threat	2	2
Thwarted Attacks	image references attacks, terrorists that have been thwarted by the IDF	4	4
Preparedness	image references IDF service personnel's preparedness, readiness for duty/training	72	72
Professionalism	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the professionalism within the IDF	2	2
Skills and qualities	image or accompanying text makes reference to the skills of IDF personnel	16	16
Teamwork	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the combined action or work of a group	15	15
Uplifting moments	Image or accompanying text makes reference to uplifting moments within the IDF and its history	1	1
Duty	image or accompanying text makes reference to IDF military personnel's duty of care to soldiers and civilians	16	16
Equipment	References to the large-scale physical resources of the Israeli Defense Forces such as helicopters, naval vessels, aircraft and tanks	268	296
David's sling missile defence system	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the David's Sling Aerial Defence System	1	1
Iron Dome Missile Defence	contains reference to the Iron Dome Missile Defence system and the number of iron dome interceptions of rocket and mortar fire	5	5
Light weaponry of the IDF	References to or depictions of, small scale weaponry of the IDF such as guns and rifles	188	188
Military Equipment	References to the large scale physical resources of the Israeli Defense Forces such as helicopters, naval vessels, aircraft and tanks	98	98
Family	image references family, siblings, children, parents, grandparents, cousins etc.	70	70
Honour	image or accompanying text makes reference to the honour of serving in the IDF	1	1
IDF achievements	image or accompanying text makes reference to successes/ accomplishments attributed to the IDF and/or individual soldiers	24	24
Military Exercises	image or accompanying text makes reference to military exercises conducted by the IDF, or in	4	4

Name	Description	Files	References
	coordination with other military allies.		
Motivation	image or accompanying text makes reference to reasons for acting in a certain way	9	9
Negotiation	Image or accompanying text makes reference to negotiations such as prisoner exchanges	1	1
Operational Activity	coordinated military actions, active units	73	83
Behavioral Science	image or accompanying text makes reference to behavioral science units within the IDF	1	1
Camouflage	image of accompanying text makes reference to camouflage, the disguising of military personnel, equipment by painting/covering them to blend into surroundings	22	22
Covert Missions and divisions	image references top secret, covert missions and divisions within the IDF	6	7
Cyber Defence	image or accompanying text makes reference to cyber defences and/ or units within the IDF	2	2
Electronic Warfare	image or accompanying text makes reference to combating electronic warfare	1	1
Escalation	image or accompanying text makes reference to an escalation on behalf of the IDF in operations and/or training	1	1
IDF Operational Activity	image or accompanying text makes explicit reference to IDF operational activity	13	15
In pursuit	image or accompanying text makes reference to the IDF being in pursuit of a terrorist or criminal	1	1
Intelligence and spying	Image or accompanying text makes reference to intelligence operations within the IDF	2	2
Preemptive strikes	image or accompanying text makes reference to Israel engaging in preemptive strikes	1	1
Prevention	image or accompanying text makes reference to the prevention of attacks by the IDF	3	3
Surveillance and monitoring	image or accompanying text makes reference to surveillance and monitoring carried out by the IDF	7	7
Threats Neutralised	image or accompanying text makes reference to the IDF disarming a threat	2	2
Thwarted Attacks	image references attacks, terrorists that have been thwarted by the IDF	4	4
Pride	image of accompanying text makes reference to pride in serving in the IDF, pride in being Israeli/Jewish	26	26

Name	Description	Files	References
Beauty of Israel	image references the beauty of Israel and its landscape	8	8
Professionalism	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the professionalism within the IDF	2	2
Rewarding	image or accompanying text makes reference to the rewarding aspects of being in the IDF	2	2
Skills and qualities	image or accompanying text makes reference to the skills of IDF personnel	16	16
Teamwork	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the combined action or work of a group	15	15
Uplifting moments	Image or accompanying text makes reference to uplifting moments within the IDF and its history	1	1
Values of the IDF	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the values of the IDF or their individual soldiers	5	5
Personnel	Images reference and feature IDF personnel, both male and female	454	897
Canine soldiers	Image or accompanying text makes reference to dogs used within IDF military units	8	9
Canine Soldiers	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the training and use of dogs in IDF combat units	1	1
Dogs	image or accompanying text makes reference to dogs as companions of soldiers or as soldiers within the IDF	8	8
Military personnel	Image references IDF military personnel	454	888
Female personnel	Image or accompanying text makes reference to female military personnel	105	106
Male personnel	image or accompanying text makes references to male IDF personnel	271	271
Military Personnel	image references serving members within the IDF, soldiers, aircraft pilots, naval officers etc.	424	426
Mixed personnel	image or accompanying text makes reference to both female and male military personnel and or government officials	55	85
Credibility and Authenticity	Credibility defined as the quality of being trusted, believed in, the quality or power of inspiring belief. Integrity, honour, honesty. Authenticity as defined as the quality of bring true or in accordance with fact, accurate, genuine	384	729
Alliances	References to cooperation with other nations both military and humanitarian	54	71

Name	Description	Files	References
Advocates of Israel	image or accompanying text makes reference to people advocating on behalf of, or praising Israel	3	3
International Alliances	image references alliances and cooperation with other nations both military and humanitarian	47	48
Journalism	image or accompanying text makes reference to journalism, reporting of Israel	1	1
Pro-Israel US Lobby Groups	image references pro-Israel lobbying groups within the United States, for example AIPAC	2	2
US Israel relationship	image or accompanying text makes reference to the allied relationship between the US and Israel	17	17
Appeals to international audience	References to the comparison of Israel with other countries, directly addressing other countries events, tragedies, celebrations and customs	75	91
Appeals to International Audience	image or accompanying text makes reference to Israel's daily reality versus the rest of the world (contrast), draws parallels between Israel and the international community, or references other countries directly.	59	59
Europe	Makes reference to Europe or European cities	16	16
India	image or accompanying text makes reference to cooperation between Israel and India	1	1
International days and events	Image references international events and days recognised worldwide such as international women's day and earth day	12	12
Tourists	image or accompanying text makes reference to tourists within Israel	2	2
World Economic Forum	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the World Economic Forum.	1	1
IDF as the nations army	image or accompanying text makes reference to the IDF as an army for the nation, not just for Jews	1	1
Informality and 'Relatability'	Informality defined as a relaxed, friendly or unofficial style or nature, the absence of formality in language, tone or content and 'Relatability' to establish a connection, enabling others to feel that they can relate to someone or something	305	458
Colloquial Phrases	image or accompanying text references informal words/ language or slang. Reflect the way average people in society speak	30	30

Name	Description	Files	References
Food and recipes	references to food, recipes, preparation, tradition	18	18
Humour	image or accompanying text references humour, jokes, lightheartedness	7	7
Imagery style	defined as the nature of the image itself, a photo, graphic, aerial shot	65	65
Aerial photography	Aerial images	9	9
Beauty Shots	image emphasises beauty or attractive qualities of the subject of the shot	41	41
Graphic Illustration	image depicts a graphic illustration, a visual explanation of a text, concept or process	15	15
Individual Storytelling	The action of telling individuals' stories	128	143
Individual narrative and voice	references to a narrative of personal experience, a story told in the first person and direct quotes from individuals	128	143
Direct Quotes and Individual Stories	image or text accompanying image contains a quote from a service member, spokesperson, advocate or foe and/or describes their personal individual stories	122	126
Dreams and aspirations	image or accompanying text makes reference to the dreams, goals and aspirations of IDF soldiers	7	7
Portrait Photography	image depicts a photograph of a person that represents the personality of the subject.	10	10
Love	an intense feeling of deep affection, a great interest and pleasure in something or someone, love for a person or one's country or profession	28	36
Love and romance	image references romantic, familial and love of animals, (couples, engagements, marriages, children)	7	8
Love of Country	image or accompanying text makes reference to a love of Israel	7	7
Love of Service	image or accompanying text refers to a love of the job or service in the IDF	15	15
Marriage Proposals	image references wedding proposals/ engagements	5	5
Weddings	image or accompanying text makes references to weddings	1	1
Online vernaculars	defined as the style, grammars of communication, conventions, logics that are unique to social media platforms	91	98

Name	Description	Files	References
Emojis and text symbols	image or accompanying text references emojis or text symbols created on mobile phones	15	15
Hashtag Use	Image references popular hashtags of hashtags created by the IDF in the visuals or accompanying text	52	52
Links to other IDF Social Media	image or accompanying text makes reference to other official IDF social media channels	20	20
Links to other organisations or companies	image or accompanying text makes reference to direct links to organisations or companies outside of the IDF	2	2
Live Streams	image references live streams of IDF content on Facebook	4	4
Promotion	image or accompanying texts promotes the IDF's website, social media channels or apps	1	1
Selfie	image or accompanying text depicts a photo taken by oneself	4	4
Pets	A domestic animal for companionship or pleasure.	5	5
Playfulness	image or accompanying text makes reference to soldiers being lighthearted and having fun	10	10
Popular culture	References to celebrity and cultural products such as film, literature, music that are consumed by the majority of a society's population. It has mass accessibility and appeal	13	13
Celebrities and public figures	image or accompanying text makes reference to a well known celebrity or public figure	5	5
Popular Culture	image or accompanying text makes reference to cultural products such as film, literature, music that are consumed by the majority of ordinary people	3	3
Video Game imagery	image references imagery found in video game formats	5	5
Popular Holidays	reference to popular holidays such as Father's Day, Mother's Day, Christmas, New Years etc.	16	16
Sarcasm	image/ text is sarcastic in nature, for example placing the term peaceful protest in quotation marks	6	6
Soldier for a day	image or accompanying text makes reference to programs that allow civilians to be a soldier in the IDF for a day	1	1
Soldiers Relaxing	image or accompanying text makes reference to soldiers in a relaxed state, not on alert	4	4

Name	Description	Files	References
Surprises	image or accompanying text references IDF personnel being surprised	1	1
Trivia	Image of accompanying text refers to trivia about the IDF, non-essential, more anecdotal information	5	5
Information source	the IDF as a credible provider of information to the public	62	77
Content Warnings	image or accompanying text makes reference to a warning of graphic content to follow	1	1
Infographic	graphic that provides information	20	20
Mainstream Media techniques	image or accompanying text makes reference to mainstream media formats or techniques for example 'a holiday special'	12	12
Needs Met	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the IDF meeting a need or needs.	1	1
News	image title reads ' Breaking news' mirroring a mainstream media story	2	2
Other Sources	Images have been credited to sources outside of the IDF	11	12
Al Aqsa and Hamas TV Channel	image or accompanying text makes reference to Al Aqsa TV channel	2	2
Alternative Photo Sources and credits	Image or accompanying text make reference to the sourcing of the image from somewhere other than the IDF	3	3
Nasa Images	images or accompanying text makes reference to NASA as the source of the image.	1	1
Other Sources	image or accompanying text makes reference to being sourced from other organisations	6	6
Q&A	Image or accompanying image references Q&A sessions run by the IDF online	1	1
Institutional Voice	defined as representatives of the Israeli Defence Forces	13	13
Official Spokespersons	direct quotes from an IDF Spokesperson included in the image	13	13
International Law	image or accompanying text makes reference to actions in contravention of International law	1	1
Political voice	defined as references to the Israeli government or political system	16	17
Government Buildings	Image depicts a government/senate building	3	3

Name	Description	Files	References
Israeli government bodies	image or accompanying text makes reference to government bodies within Israel such as COGAT	1	1
Israeli government officials	image or accompanying text makes reference to Israeli government officials	9	9
Policy	image references Israeli policy and policy towards Israel from International community	3	3
Two States	Image or accompanying text makes reference to a two state solution for Israel and Palestine	1	1
Image Dissonance	the image or accompanying text placed together have a contrasting effect and are inconsistent with each other, for example descriptions of life saving against images of tanks and weapons	41	49
Contradictions	Image or accompanying text makes reference to statements that are opposed to each other, for example being responsible for border security and life saving	1	1
Juxtaposition	image or accompanying text makes reference to ideas or items such as peace or happiness beside images of weapons or the military with contrasting effect	39	43
Legitimacy	Outlines the ways in which the Israel Defence Forces, first, justify the contemporary societal need for their existence as a military institution and their activities through narratives of perceived threats to Israel such as terrorism, antisemitism and broader violence against the state and its citizens, and, second, present the institution as necessary and appropriate to ensure freedom, independence and peace for Israel.	376	1439
Anti-Semitism	image or accompanying text makes reference to hostility, prejudice or targeting of someone because they are Jewish	6	6
Arabs versus Jews and Israelis	image or accompanying text makes reference to the targeting of Jews by Arab countries	3	3
Blame and responsibility	image or accompanying text makes reference to the attachment of blame for violence, death and hostility	6	6
Counter narratives	image or accompanying text makes reference to a narrative or position that goes against another	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Criticism of the UN	image or accompanying image references criticism of UN policy/ position/ intervention towards Israel	1	1
Freedom	References to the freedom of the people of Israel from religious persecution, the power to think, act and live as one wants and the independence of the Israeli state facilitated by the IDF	9	10
Being True to oneself	image or accompanying text makes reference to being true to who you are and not apologising for it.	1	1
Choice	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the choices of IDF personnel	1	1
Freedom and Independence	image or accompanying text makes reference to freedom for Israeli Jews, from persecution and oppression and the independence of Israel facilitated by the IDF	7	7
Opportunity	image or accompanying text makes reference to opportunities for people within in Israel	1	1
Gazan Civilians as Pawns and Hostages	reference to civilians in Gaza becoming hostages of Hamas	7	7
History	references the history and progression of the Jewish people, the Israeli state and the IDF.	65	84
Past Operations and Conflicts	Image or accompanying text makes reference to past IDF operations	25	25
Reunification of Jerusalem	image or accompanying text makes reference to the reunification of Jerusalem	1	1
Humanitarianism	The promotion of human welfare. References to generosity, doing good, charity, compassion and self sacrifice	81	122
Care	image or accompanying text makes reference to IDF military personnel caring for soldiers and civilians	11	11
Community outreach	image or accompanying text make reference to charity work in the community, donations, assistance	14	14
Health and well being	image or accompanying text makes reference to the promotion of health and well being	1	1
Human dignity	image or accompanying text makes reference to the value of human dignity within the IDF	2	2
Humanitarian missions and aid	image or accompanying text makes reference to the provision of humanitarian aid from the IDF to Gaza, Palestinians, international community and within Israel	36	36

Name	Description	Files	References
IDF assistance to Syria	image or accompanying text makes reference to IDF assistance in Syria	4	4
Illness	image or accompanying text makes reference to those suffering with illness/disease such as cancer	14	14
Life Saving	image or accompanying text makes reference to the IDF as a life saving force	31	32
Medical Care	image or accompanying text makes reference to IDF providing medical care	5	5
Search and rescue	image or accompanying text makes reference to the search and rescue division of the IDF	1	1
The elderly	image or accompanying text makes reference to the elderly	1	1
Value of people	image or accompanying text makes reference to the value of individuals	1	1
Illegality	image or accompanying text makes reference to illegality	1	1
Innocence and Guilt	image or accompanying text makes reference to those that are innocent and/those that are guilty	3	3
International Law	image or accompanying text makes reference to actions in contravention of International law	1	1
Israel's existence	image references Israel's existence, the 70yr anniversary of the state for example, or threats to its existence.	7	7
Israeli sovereignty	image or accompanying text makes reference to Israeli sovereignty, the authority of the state to govern itself	2	2
Justice	Image or accompanying text makes reference to Justice for Israel	1	1
Justification for IDF existence and actions	An acceptable reason or circumstance for doing something, a justification for the existence of something, for an act, instance or way of behaving, in this case the existence of the IDF and its actions.	44	44
Legitimacy	Defined as conformity to laws/rules. The ability to be defended with logic or justification, the quality of being reasonable or acceptable	21	24
Israel as a Jewish democratic state	References to Israel as both a Jewish and democratic state	7	10
Aliyah Israel's law of return	image or accompanying txt makes reference to Israel's law of return policy	3	3

Name	Description	Files	References
Israel as a Democracy	image or accompanying text references Israel as a democracy	2	2
Israel as the Jewish State and homeland	image or accompanying text makes reference to Israel as a Jewish state	5	5
Restraint	image or accompanying text makes reference to the IDF showing restraint in their response to threats or attacks	2	2
Support for and belief in the IDF	Image or accompanying text makes reference to support for and belief in the IDF.	2	2
Triumph over evil	image or accompanying txt make reference to Israel triumphing over evil	1	1
Trust	image or accompanying text makes reference to the importance of trust or asks for trust	2	2
United Nations	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the United Nations	7	7
Moral values	as defined as a system of values and principals concerning people's behaviour which is generally accepted by a society or by a particular group. Knowledge concerned with right or wrong conduct, duty, responsibility etc. A judgement on what is important in life	163	254
Children	Image depicts children in image or graphic form from within Israel or IDF humanitarian outreach	26	33
Children playing soldier	image or accompanying text makes reference to children in mock soldiers' uniforms or with mock weapons, or taking on soldier actions	6	6
Children's art	image or accompanying text makes reference to the art, drawing, painting of a child	1	1
Innocent Children	image or accompanying text references children either in photographic or illustrated form	26	26
Empathy and emotion	defined as the expression of wishes, solidarity or the expression of emotions such as gratitude and hope	97	153
Commemoration and remembrance	References to the action or fact of commemorating a dead person or significant event	63	101
Condolences	image depicts expressions of sympathy on the occasion of death	10	10
In Memorium	image references soldiers who have died in the line of duty and civilians killed in terrorist attacks	36	36

Name	Description	Files	References
Israeli Mourning and grief	image or accompanying text makes reference to Israelis mourning the death of their own civilians, soldiers or allies	12	12
Offering prayers & thoughts	image or accompanying text makes reference to the IDF offering prayers to victims of terror	3	3
Excitement	image or accompanying text makes reference to the excitement of being part of the IDF	2	2
Expressing wishes and hopes	image or accompanying text references the expression of wishes for example 'we wish you a meaningful and easy fast' or hopes, for example for a peaceful shabbat	26	26
Expressions of Solidarity	image or accompanying text makes reference to solidarity with other nations particularly after they experience a terror attack	18	18
Hope	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the hopes of the IDF or its soldiers	2	3
Luck	image or txt accompanying the image references wishing soldiers luck	3	3
Gratitude	Being thankful, readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness/assistance/experience	18	18
Expressing Thanks	image or accompanying text makes reference to expressions of thanks by the IDF to others or from others to the IDF	15	15
Gratitude and appreciation	images or accompanying text makes reference to feeling blessed, grateful or appreciative for their experiences within the IDF and for the country of Israel	3	3
Values	Defined as the moral principles, beliefs or standards of behaviour of a social group and a judgement of what's important in life	43	50
Community participation	image or accompanying text makes reference to community activities or celebrations within Israel	2	2
Decision to Draft	image or accompanying text makes reference to soldiers' decisions to draft	1	1
Encouragement	image or accompanying text makes reference to words or sentiments of encouragement	6	6
Generosity	image or accompanying text makes reference to the generosity of spirit of the IDF and/or its soldiers	2	2
Importance of Education	image or accompanying text makes reference to the importance of education and/or its role in breaking down stereotypes	2	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Inspiration and admiration	image or accompanying text makes reference to the IDF and individual soldiers' inspirations	14	14
Israel as a force for good in the world	Image or accompanying text makes reference to contributions by Israel that benefit the world	3	3
Israel as a good neighbour	image or accompanying text makes reference to Israel being a good regional partner/neighbour	4	4
Kindness	Image of accompanying text makes reference to showing kindness to others	1	1
Meaning	image or accompanying text make reference to service as being meaningful.	3	3
Morality	Image or accompanying text make reference to the moral nature of the IDF	1	1
Qualities of the Israeli people	image or accompanying text makes reference to the qualities and nature of the Israeli people	1	1
Respect	images depict gestures of respect for example a salute, or text explicitly refers to respect for others	4	4
Voluntary service	image or accompanying text makes reference to those from outside of Israel voluntarily serving in the IDF	2	2
Volunteers	image or accompanying text makes reference to volunteers	2	2
Welcoming	image or accompanying text makes references to welcoming people to the IDF or Israel	2	2
Palestinians	references to Palestinian people and leadership	9	14
Palestinian Leadership	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the Palestinian leadership	2	2
Palestinians	references to the Palestinian people	6	6
Palestinians equated with Hamas	image references Palestinians in the same instance/sentence as Hamas operatives, providing no clear distinction between the two.	5	5
Yasser Arafat	image or accompanying text makes reference to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat	1	1
Patterns of behaviour	image or accompanying text makes reference to repeated behaviours, such as Hamas hiding amongst civilians, attacks in Israel	4	4
Peace	A state or period without war, free from disturbance	5	5

Name	Description	Files	References
Ceasefires	image or accompanying text makes reference to ceasefires brokered between Israel and Gaza	1	1
Peace and Progress	image or accompanying text makes reference to peace and progress for Israel	2	2
Peace for Israel	image or accompanying text makes reference to peace for Israel	2	2
Protection of Israel and its people	image references the IDF's protection of Israel	63	63
Protection of Israeli Resources	Image references the protection of Israeli resources such as water	1	1
Retaliation	image or accompanying text makes reference to military service as a result of a terror attack or loss or to IDF operations in response to terror attacks	11	11
Riots not Protests	image references large scale gathering of Palestinians at the Gaza/Israeli border as riots	6	6
Security	image or accompanying text makes reference to Israel's security	2	2
Threats to Israel	references to Israel as a target of attacks, violence, aggression and hatred	106	176
Borders, Security Fence	references to border crossings in and out of Israel	26	26
Bulls Eye Targets	image depicts Southern Israeli cities marked with red bulls eye targets	1	1
Children as potential terrorists	image or accompanying text makes reference to children being trained or influenced into becoming terrorists	6	6
Drug Smuggling	image or accompanying text makes reference to drug smuggling into Israel	1	1
Egypt	image or accompanying text makes reference to Israel's relationship with Egypt past and or present	4	4
Gaza	image references shots fired at the IDF from the southern Gaza strip	29	29
Hostility	image or accompanying text makes reference to hostility towards Israel	1	1
Infiltration	image references attempts, successful or not, to infiltrate Israel	17	18
Iran	References to Iran	6	6
Iran in Syria	image of accompanying text makes reference to Iran's role / involvement in Syria	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Iraq	Image or accompanying text makes reference to Iraq	1	1
Israel as a Target	The image or accompanying text depicts Israeli as a target of violence and attacks	17	17
Israeli Mourning and grief	image or accompanying text makes reference to Israelis mourning the death of their own civilians, soldiers or allies	12	12
Jordan	image or accompanying text makes reference to Jordan	3	3
Lebanon	image or accompanying text makes reference to the Lebanon	7	7
Lebanon as home to Hezbollah	image or accompanying text makes reference to Lebanon as the home of Hezbollah and its troops	4	4
Syria	image or accompanying text makes reference to Syria	7	7
The Sinai	image or accompanying text makes reference to The Sinai region	7	7
Tunnels	reference to tunnels constructed by Hamas for entry into Israel	17	17
West Bank	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the West Bank	8	8
Unpredictable World	Image or accompanying text makes reference to an uncertain unpredictable world where anything can happen	2	2
Us and Them	image or accompanying text makes reference to differences between Israel and its adversaries	5	5
Victimhood	image of accompanying text makes reference to a person harmed, injured or killed	13	13
Violence against Israel	reference to the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm,	170	552
Attacks on civilians	References to attacks upon civilians and danger to civilians (those people not within the military or police forces)	72	93
Attacks on civilian communities	reference to communities being targeted	37	37
Attacks within Israel	image makes reference to attacks within Israel	28	29
Civilians in danger	image or accompanying text makes reference to civilians as the target of violent attacks	24	24

Name	Description	Files	References
Israeli Civilians Injured	contains references to the number of Israeli civilians injured by rocket and mortar shell fire	3	3
Brutality	image or accompanying text makes reference to brutality - savage physical violence; great cruelty.	7	7
Graphic imagery	image or accompanying text contains graphic imagery of blood, violence or death	6	6
Hate	Image or accompanying text makes reference to hatred	3	3
Kidnapping and hostage taking	image or accompanying text makes reference to kidnappings or attempted kidnappings of Israeli soldiers and civilians	5	5
Loss	Image or accompanying text makes reference to feelings of loss after the death of someone	10	10
Loss of innocence	image or accompanying text references the loss of innocence of children	6	6
Massacre	image or accompanying text makes reference to a massacre of Israelis - the killing of several people	3	4
Mosques as hiding place for weapons	reference to the storing or hiding of weapons within mosques	1	1
Murder of IDF soldiers	image or accompanying text makes reference to IDF soldiers being murdered	5	5
Stabbing	image or accompanying text makes reference to stabbing attacks	13	13
Terrorism	The unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims	132	243
Civilians as cover for terrorists	image or accompanying text makes reference to the use of civilians as coverage for terrorist organisations	2	2
Extremism	image or accompanying text makes reference to political and/or religious extremism	1	1
Financing of terror	image or accompanying text makes reference to the financial funding of terrorism	5	5
Gazans celebrating terror	image or accompanying text makes reference to Gazans celebrating terror attacks, death of Israelis	1	1
Incitement and celebration of terror and violence	image or accompanying text makes reference to the incitement of terror against Israel	11	11

Name	Description	Files	References
Incitement of terror institutionalised in Palestinian society	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the insititutionalised hatred of Jews within Palestinian society fostered from birth and engrained in school, video games, religion, social media and friends	2	2
Living under the threat of Terror	Image or accompanying text makes reference to living under the constant threat of terror in Israel	6	6
Martyrdom	image or accompanying text makes reference to martyrdom - the suffering of death on account of adherence to a cause and especially to one's religious faith	3	3
Munich Olympics Attack	image or accompanying text makes reference to the Munich Olympics of 1972 that resulted in the deaths of 11 Israeli athletes by Palestinian operatives.	5	5
Palestinian Terror	image or accompanying text references Palestinian terror	17	17
Radicalism	Image or accompanying text makes reference to radical belief systems	1	1
Red Alert Sirens	contains references to the number of red alert sirens within Israel from incoming rocket and mortar shell fire	4	4
Terror	image references Hamas as a terror organisation in the Gaza strip	89	89
Terror as an international problem	image or accompanying text make reference to terror internationally, in the west and in Europe	4	5
Terror Cells	image references terror cells, networks	1	1
Terror Training Camps	image or accompanying text makes reference to terror training camps	5	5
Terrorist Groups	References to political organisations who use terror and violence to achieve their goals	60	85
Alliance between Hamas and ISIS	Image or accompanying text makes reference to a strategic military alliance between Hamas and ISIS	1	1
Hamas	References to Hamas, the Palestinian political organisation, its military arm, its tactics, behaviours and official spokespersons	46	57
Al-Aqsa Brigade	image or accompanying text makes reference to the military wing of Hamas in Gaza.	1	1
Children placed at risk by Hamas	references to children being placed at risk by Hamas tactics, for example, terror tunnels running beneath schools	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Hamas	image references Hamas fired rockets into Israel	44	45
Hamas hiding among civilians	image references Hamas hiding amongst civilians or using them as shields	3	3
Hamas Spokespersons, officials	Image references Hamas members/leaders through image and/or quotation	7	7
Hezbollah	image references Hezbollah	10	10
Hezbollah hiding amongst civilians	image or accompanying text makes reference to Hezbollah hiding amongst civilians	1	1
Hezbollah leadership	image or accompanying text makes reference to members of Hezbollah's leadership or the leadership as a whole	4	4
IDF members as hostages of Hamas	image of accompanying text makes reference to IDF personnel held by Hamas either alive or dead	1	1
ISIS	reference to the ISIS terrorist organisation	6	6
Parallel between Iran and Hamas	reference to links between Iran and Hamas	3	3
Parallels between Hezbollah and Hamas	image or accompanying text makes reference to similarities between Hezbollah and Hamas	1	1
Parallels between Hezbollah and Iran	image or accompanying text makes reference to parallels and collaboration between Hezbollah and Iran	1	1
Tragedy	image or accompanying text makes reference to tragedy, an event causing great suffering	2	2
Violence	image or accompanying text makes reference to the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm,	81	82
Lockhead Martin	Image or accompanying text makes reference to arms company Lockheed Martin	1	1
Warfare	engagement in the activities of conflict or war	13	15

Name	Description	Files	References
Enemy	image or accompanying text references an enemy	5	5
Intifada	image or accompanying text makes reference to an Intifada against Israel	2	2
Jihad	image or accompanying text makes reference to Jihad.	2	2
Warfare	image of accompanying text makes reference to war	6	6
Weapons used against Israel	references to the use of weapons such as rockets, mortars, firebombs, guns, knives and also social media used to incite or carry out attacks against Israel to inflict harm upon its soldiers and civilians	42	63
Fire and pipebombs	image depicts or makes reference to firebombs and/or pipebombs	2	2
Homemade weapons	image or accompanying text makes reference to homemade guns, bombs, weapons	1	1
Nuclear Programs	Image or accompanying text makes reference to nuclear programs	1	1
Rockets and Mortars and missiles	Contains references to the number of rockets and mortar shells fired upon Israel	19	19
Social media for recruitment and incitement	image or accompanying text makes reference to the use of social media as a tool of recruitment by terrorist groups	3	3
Toys concealing weapons	Image or accompanying text makes reference to the concealment of weapons within children's toys and belongings	1	1
UAV, Drones	image or accompanying text makes reference to UAV's or drones	1	1
Use of social media platforms by terrorists or terrorist organisations	references to the use of social media platforms by those that have carried out terrorist attacks against Israel or terrorist organisations that express support for these individuals online	8	8
Weapons manufacturing sites	references to weapons manufacturing as danger/threat to Israel	1	1
Western Values	image references values of the west shared by Israel	7	7
Zionism	image or accompanying text makes reference to Zionism - the development and protection of the Jewish state	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Progression	References to the process of moving or developing gradually towards a more advanced state. favouring change or innovation, social reform. Inclusion of different races and cultures, equality of the sexes	149	219
Diversity	References to diverse individuals from different cultures, religions, races, sexual orientation, gender, age and ethnicity and placing a positive value on these differences	53	55
Immigration	Image or accompanying text makes reference to Jews emigrating to Israel	2	2
Minorities	The image or accompanying text makes reference to minorities within Israel and /or within the IDF	1	1
Environmentally conscious	image or accompanying text makes reference to protecting, caring for, enriching the environment	2	2
Equality	References the right of different groups of people to be equal in status, rights or opportunities, such as equality between the sexes, racial equality, and equality for those with disabilities or those of different sexual orientations	84	94
Civil and Women's Rights	image or accompanying text makes reference to civil rights, the civil rights movement in the US and/or its leaders, women's rights	5	5
Disability	image or accompanying text makes reference to mental or physical disability	9	9
Equality	image or accompanying text makes reference to being equal to others, regardless of illness or disability, sexual preference, religious belief, in status, rights and opportunities	12	14
Gender Equality	image depicts equal opportunities for both male and female soldiers for example, (the first female flight squadron commander appointed by the Israeli Air Force). Units with both men and women serving. Men and women standing side by side, wearing the same uniform. Access to rights and opportunities unaffected by gender	65	65
Transgender in the IDF	Image or accompanying text makes reference to transgender members of the IDF	1	1
Innovation	References to the action or process of innovating, a new method, idea, technology	16	22
Global leader in Science and Tech	Image or accompanying text makes reference to Israel as a global leader in scientific research and development	1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
IDF Apps	Image or accompanying text makes reference to mobile phone applications developed by the IDF	1	1
Innovation	image references the innovation of the IDF	5	5
Style	image or accompanying text makes reference to style, trends of the IDF social media channels and personnel	1	1
Technology	Image references advances in military technology such as stealth aircraft, tanks that can be rapidly repaired etc.	14	14
Progressiveness	Favouring social reform, change, improvement or innovation, liberal ideas. for example, equality for women, LGBT, health programs	38	46
Having it all	Image or accompanying text makes reference to women doing it all, working and being a parent etc.	3	3
Progressiveness	Image references progress, change, improvement within the IDF such as the appointment of women, acceptance of LGBT, health programs etc.	17	17
Reasonable and fair employer	image or accompanying text makes reference to the IDF as a reasonable, considerate or flexible employer	15	15
Tolerance	image or accompanying text makes reference to a willingness to accept different opinions, nationalities, religions, behaviours and socioeconomic status by the IDF	11	11