

# Battlefront New Media – Lessons For The SAF Based On A Study Of The Information Campaign During Operation Pillar Of Defence

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## Abstract:

In this essay, the author studies the various social media platforms used by the IDF during an information campaign against its adversary, to analyse the effectiveness, the challenges and limitations encountered and to explore the principles that would potentially benefit the SAF. According to the author, with the advancements in technology and the increased use of new media today, social media, a sub-set of new media, has undoubtedly become the go-to platform for the latest news updates around the world. However, the truthfulness of the messages that are delivered on such platforms still remains a key area of concern. He adds that in today's context, it is easy to find multiple sources on the internet, each with a different side to yet the same story and it is up to the public to discern the right from the wrong. The author concludes that a well-developed new media campaign will be able to strengthen the will and resolve of a nation, thus avoiding unnecessary internal conflict, preventing any erosion of the collective will to fight, as well as drawing international support. The key to this is ultimately about having the upper hand in the control of information, with new media's social platforms being one increasingly critical avenue to establish this.

*Keywords: Technology; New Media; Social Media; Platforms; Control of Information*

## INTRODUCTION

Operation Pillar of Defense was an eight-day Israel Defense Forces (IDF) operation in the Hamas-governed Gaza Strip in 2012 and marked a conceptual change in modern warfare. For the first time, the IDF employed social networks for 'war' purposes—psychological warfare and propaganda, in an attempt to control the way the war was depicted and justify it to the world.

## AIM

This essay aims to distil the salient IDF concepts in the information campaign against its adversary through the use of social media platforms, to analyse their effectiveness, the challenges and limitations encountered and to explore principles that would potentially benefit the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF).

## CONTROL OF INFORMATION

Operation Pillar of Defence was targeted not only at Hamas' military infrastructure, but also

at redefining the perceptions in Israel, Gaza and the international media. The military and media offensives complemented each other, while weapons and defence systems were utilised for Public Relations (PR) purposes. The battle was carried out in various levels, not just in the air and on the ground, but in cyberspace.

Public diplomacy, *hasbara*, is a term used by the Israeli government "*to present its case around the world, by working with and convincing the public.*"<sup>1</sup> In the modern era of war, the success of a campaign is significantly decided on the home front and the home front's steadfastness depends on its narrative of victory and the level of morale that complements it. Policy makers are presented with a tall challenge in the build-up towards emergency preparedness. Therefore, image-shaping, establishing morale, creating a narrative of victory and overcoming adversity on the home front are essential start points.

There are valuable lessons for the SAF in preparation for an information campaign that would rally international support and affirmation towards our cause during a conflict. Moreover, a conscript force obliges the garnering of public legitimacy in the call to arms during periods of tension, so as to ensure a seamless transition into step-up-training.

*New media makes it possible to create professional quality content on a limited budget while potentially reaching the same number of audience participants. Social media, on the other hand, is a subset of new media with an element of interactivity where the audience can contribute, connect or collaborate with the content.*

### NEW MEDIA AS A GAME CHANGER

New media is defined as any form of media that is not in 'old media' format, i.e. any format that existed before the dawn of the Internet. New media makes it possible to create professional quality content on a limited budget while potentially reaching the same number of audience participants. Social media, on the other hand, is a subset of new media with an element of interactivity where the audience can contribute, connect or collaborate with the content.

The world is now aware of the power of social media to organise and spread information virally; we see an increasing number of individuals communicating and sharing through social media platforms at an unprecedented rate. Being a frontrunner in technology, it came as no surprise when the IDF utilised social media to highlight the security threats and challenges that the nation faced even as global attention in the Middle East had shifted to Syria, Egypt, and Iran.

One of the missions in Operation Pillar of Defense was to increase the reach of Israel's narrative through real time updates on social media platforms and to render obsolete the mainstream 'old media' in the process. The motivation for this, according to the IDF, was because mainstream media undermined the severity and inaccurately reported on the counterterrorist operations against a massive attack of a barrage of hundreds of missiles fired on southern Israel.

### CONTINUOUS OPS LEARNING AND ADOPTING MODERN TECHNOLOGY

In contrast to Operation Cast Lead, the IDF generated and massively distributed visual information during Operation Pillar of Defense soon after events occurred.<sup>2</sup> This allowed the IDF to psychologically threaten Hamas with the precision and accuracy of their strike missions, as well as rally international support to their cause through the globally interconnected social media platforms.

The IDF did not envision these new media platforms as a dissemination tool that could be effective. Initially, new media did not feature prominently in Israel's public relations plan, and it was hastily conceived merely days before the start of Operation Cast Lead in 2008; a YouTube channel, a Twitter feed and the IDF Spokesperson's Blog were closely interlinked but not interactive. The official military foray into new media was not straightforward for large, hierarchical and bureaucratic organisations are used to the 'one to many' delivery of information. Militaries face technical difficulties and skill shortages as they attempted to mediate messages themselves rather than through traditional media channels and cultural challenges in adapting to a participative media culture.



Utilisation of Twitter by the Hamas and the Israeli military to provide real time updates.<sup>3</sup>

## THE MESSAGE – THE FIGHT FOR HEARTS AND MINDS

The swaying of public opinion is an uphill battle as new media is a *multifaceted and tireless organism that never stops*. Israel had to contend with Hamas social media outreaches to a great degree in a tit-for-tat manner, both sides reacting and counter-reacting to portray the other in an illegitimate position while rooting for the legitimacies of their own causes. On the other front, Israel also had to contend with international media and other mainstream media outlets.

### a. A Consistent Message

A consistent message is a major part of communications and especially social media. In Operation Pillar of Defense, multiple efforts were

poured into branding it effectively as this was IDF's first foray into a concerted social media campaign. In essence, the message remained constant across multiple fronts.

#### 1) Internal Message

The message delivered was that innocent Israelis were being pummelled by rockets being fired by terrorists and the IDF was trying to defend Israelis by rooting out the terrorists operating from civilian areas—but without harming Gaza civilians, if at all possible.

#### 2) External Message

That message was consistent among all the organisations and groups presenting Israel's case in social media, with the consistency evident even in the

terminology, pictures and fonts of the text the IDF used. The IDF believes this tight coordination was one of the reasons for success.

While persuasive to a certain degree, new media is not the 'silver bullet' in winning over the hearts and minds of people. However, in the case of Operation Pillar of Defense, the availability of new media for the general public generated an even larger following on social media sites. This presented a compelling problem for mainstream media to portray Israel in an unfairly negative tone. Thus, new media can be a persuasive, opinion-changing and offensive arm in the conflict.

If social media success means winning hearts and minds, then evaluating the success of the Israeli effort would be very difficult. But, if success is measured by the number of people exposed to Israel's messages, then the efforts of the various groups were indeed successful.

### THE MEANS – IDF NEW MEDIA STRATEGY

The IDF Spokesperson's Unit, in the IDF Operations Directorate, is responsible for information policy and media relations. Its sub-unit, the International

Media Branch, has a New Media Desk, which was set up in 2009 to deal with the growing interest from bloggers and various social media networks. Since its inception, there has been a significant increase in the IDF Spokesperson's Unit's online presence with the goal of being more accessible and open to popular international audiences. The recently established Interactive Media Branch operates the IDF Website and the IDF Blog, in addition to managing the IDF's presence on new media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram and Tumblr.

For Israel, taking the war online was a natural outgrowth of the Israeli government's public diplomacy initiatives, from helping organise seminars to training Israelis to advocate on the country's behalf over social media networks, to underwriting a campaign to improve the image of settlers among bloggers. The idea is similar in its concept of the military adapting to new war zones, with this being a new media war zone of interactive media.

### PLATFORM PROFILES OF THE SAF AND IDF

The following table lists the platform profiles of the SAF and IDF:



Figure 1 – The social media platforms utilised by IDF (From top left clockwise: Tumblr, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Google+, YouTube, Flickr, and Facebook).

Platform Profiles	SAF	IDF
Twitter	OurSgArmy	IDFSpokespersons
Facebook	The Singapore Army	Israel Defense Forces
Instagram	oursingaporearmy	israel_defense_forces
Pinterest	N/E	Israel Defense Forces
YouTube	CyberPioneerTV	idfnadesk
Flickr	N/E	Idfonline
Google+	N/E	www.idfblog.com
Tumblr	N/E	idfonline

Table 1 – Platform profiles of the SAF and IDF.

Note: N/E - Non-existent

## TACTICS EMPLOYED BY IDF

Some of the initiatives that spawned as a result of Operation Pillar of Defense are as follows:

### a. Social Media Tactics

#### (1) Viral Sharing

The IDF commissions content designed for sharing on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and its Blog; it generates an immense amount of information, producing 200 to 300 blog posts a month and has

more than 10,000 Tweets to reach as many followers as possible.

#### (2) Increasing Interaction with Followers

The IDF has more than 500,000 likes on Facebook and 250,000 followers on Twitter. In Operation Pillar of Defense, the IDF revolutionised Twitter feeds by sending out eleven Tweets an hour—keeping followers abreast of events in real time.

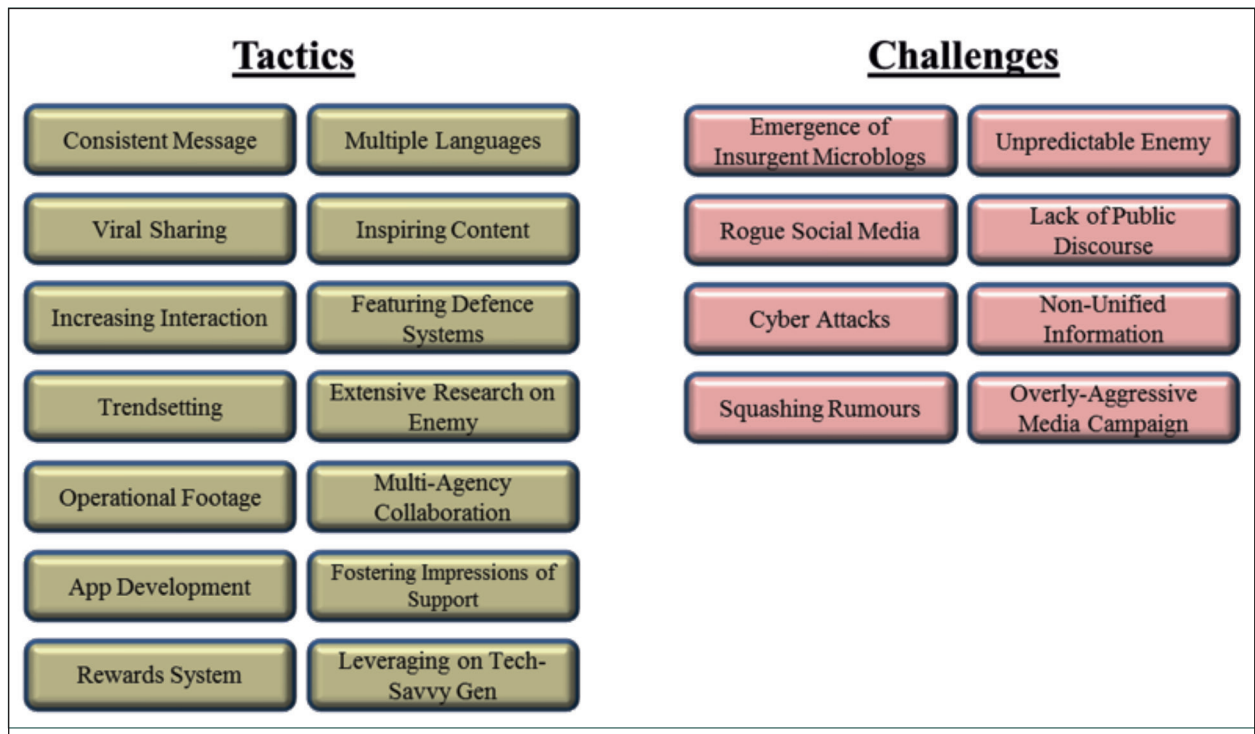


Figure 2 – A Summary of Tactics and Challenges during Operation Pillar of Defense.



### (3) Trendsetting

The 'war room' at the Herzliya Interdisciplinary Centre worked tirelessly to brand Israel during Operation Pillar of Defense. Its significant contribution was the 'israelunderfire' Twitter hashtag, which was adopted by almost all advocating Israel on Twitter.<sup>4</sup>

### 4) Operational Footage

The IDF also posted videos of its drone strikes on YouTube, starting with the Jabari assassination, as well as of Israelis taking cover during air raids and of Iron Dome units successfully thwarting rockets launched from Gaza. In the last four years it has uploaded roughly 500 videos to YouTube.

### (5) App Development

IDF developed an app based on an idea provided by a teenager. Its intent was to provide up-to-date reports of imminent missile attacks and send information of the location and timing to the public with 'Colour Red' alerts. The app allowed users to move towards safe areas such as bomb shelters upon threat reports.<sup>5</sup>

### (6) Rewards System

The IDF Blog rewards frequent visitors to the site with badges in a game, in an effort to create an interactive community, so as to encourage social interaction generated by the IDF social networks online.

### (7) Multiple Languages

IDF's YouTube channel operates in Hebrew, Arabic, English, French, Spanish and Russian. This increases viewership as the target audience has now been expanded.

### (8) Inspirational, Visually-Engaging and Concise Material

The message must be delivered with such precision that it appeals to both logic and emotion. The IDF consistently combines its messages into easily understood one-liners, with inspirational pictures of its troops in combat gear.

## b. Converting Defence Systems into Consumable New Media Tools

### (1) Unmanned Drones

The evolution of threats facing the IDF and



Students working in a computer room on the 'war room' at the Herzliya Interdisciplinary Centre.<sup>6</sup>

the incredible advances in drone capabilities have expanded their mission profiles. The increased payloads have allowed for the broadcast of real-time footage due to modern wireless and camera technologies. The drone may stay aloft for 24-hour cycles over ranges of hundreds of kilometres. The drones' capability to loiter over a hostile zone and send back clear footage have also made them a central weapon in Israel's PR arsenal.

Four hours after a terrorist insurgent leader was killed, the IDF posted on YouTube the surveillance video of the insurgent's car passing through the streets of Gaza before it was destroyed by a drone. The publication issued a stern message to warn the leaders of the Palestinian organisations that they were constantly tracked. The startling footage piped back from the frontlines was part of a 'shock and awe' campaign aimed at demoralising the enemy and boosting the home front's morale.

#### (2) Iron Dome Air Defence System

The revolutionary capability of the Iron Dome active defence system is to detect missiles launched from the enemy, track their trajectory in orbit, compute their point of impact and if needed, launch an interceptor rocket to destroy them before they hit their targets.

IDF claimed success over the Iron Dome's shielding capabilities, significantly reducing damage to Israel's home front. On the other hand, it was also a useful propaganda tool. Internally, it reassured the Israeli civilians while outwardly, it created the impression for the Palestinians that most of their missile launches were futile. The Iron Dome Count Facebook page and Twitter feeds helped Israelis keep abreast of the rate of Iron Dome successes.

#### c. Extensive Research on the Enemy

The IDF also embarked on the creation of various interaction media websites in a pre-emptive strike to expose the intentions of the rapidly expanding Hezbollah Empire. The websites comprised vast amounts of information such as photographs, history, interactive maps, videos, and documented research. They exposed Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation hiding behind the veneer of a political front. Another website covered its illicit drugs and money laundering operations that financed terrorist activities. These websites were aimed at undermining the credibility of the enemy.

#### d. Multi-Agency Collaboration

##### (1) Inter-Ministry Support

The IDF's work was augmented by the social-media efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), where the Digital Diplomacy Department had already been working to expand the MFA's reach in social media. The MFA's role on social media was also to conduct hasbara and 'brand' Israel in areas other than war and defence. The MFA used their channels to communicate in multiple languages about what Israel was like—the country, the policies, culture, and innovation.

##### (2) Public and Private Group Support

A multitude of private and public groups and individuals helped out in Operation Pillar of Defense. One of which, *Stand With Us*, a student advocacy group active on college campuses around the world, reacted to the war almost immediately using the skills of its many volunteers to reach out to the world with Israel's messages.

#### e. Fostering Nationalism

Israel's Prime Minister hired university students to post pro-government messages and comments on various social networking sites. The students however, were allowed to decide for themselves whether to



Figure 3 – A picture uploaded on IDF's Tumblr showcasing the effectiveness of the Iron Dome; easily shareable material such as this were made branded and packaged readily.<sup>7</sup>

disclose if they were working for the government. This was a familiar narrative involving Israelis and Palestinians, as both sides were always fostering impressions of support from the general public and to develop a sense of nationalism in the process.

#### f. Leveraging on the Tech-Savvy Generation

While the higher echelons planned the strategic narrative, Israel relied on the ingenuity and technologically-competent youth to execute its new media operations.

## CHALLENGES

#### a. Emergence of Insurgent Microblogging Campaigns

Hamas also began its own media operation in a show of military prowess and to highlight civilian deaths. It posted dozens of graphic photos of dead and injured children caused by the IDF on Twitter, along with tweets such as "Israeli #IDF is still bombing Gaza with hundreds of tons of explosives, killing civilians, women and kids", and "Al Qassam Brigades bombed

multiple #Israeli targets with 527 projectiles including 'Tel Aviv' since the start of operation."

The emergence of insurgent microblogging campaigns was a unique challenge for the IDF as its new media setup was initially designed to inform and influence domestic and international allied audiences, and not to engage in an online 'war of words'. Regardless, the insurgency facilitated the establishment of a permanent online media presence by the IDF, allowing free public access to information (which would have been reserved for journalists).

#### b. When Social Media Goes Rogue

To a certain degree, social networking requires a form of brand management. Managing and marketing it during wartime is more complex than with commercial products. Social media provides a boundless space for which users are free to write, comment and share, within a site's or service's terms of use. This can create problems for companies, institutions and even the government—and the IDF is no exception to that rule.

#### c. Cyber Attacks

Pro-Palestinian hackers launched an online offensive to cripple Israeli websites. Israeli websites were the target of over 60 million hacking attempts. Other Palestinian sympathisers, such as Anonymous, attacked many Israeli websites in response to the IDF offensive in Gaza in 2013. The attack was branded as #OpIsrael and crippled 700 sites, many of them replaced with messages condemning the Israeli campaign and expressing support for the citizens of Gaza. The IDF, on the other hand, claimed to have deflected 44 million cyber-attacks. Hackers from Kuwait also disrupted the website of Likud MK Danny Danon, who was lobbying for an online petition urging the government of Israel to cease the provision of Gaza Strip with electricity.



A pro-Palestinian group called *ZCompanyHackingCrew* claimed to have hacked into the Facebook and Twitter accounts of Israeli Deputy Prime Minister and Likud MK Silvan Shalom.

#### d. Squashing Rumours

One of the biggest challenges in Operation Pillar of Defense was debunking rumours and falsehoods.

IDF was constantly monitoring websites and its different platform accounts so that rumours would be immediately squashed before it spread virally.

*Hamas fabricated their stories, using pictures of children injured or killed in Syria but presenting them in the social media as Palestinian dead during Operation Pillar of Defense.*

##### (1) Fake Pictures and Videos

Debunking false photos on social media through the power of leveraging on crowdsourcing information from followers and new tools like 'Google Image Search' and 'TinEye', which can quickly fact-check where a picture came from and determine if modified versions exist.

Hamas fabricated their stories, using pictures of children injured or killed in Syria but presenting them in the social media as Palestinian dead during Operation Pillar of Defense. One of its tweets about Israeli air strikes consisted of a picture of a dead girl, previously posted on the 'Syrians & Friends' Facebook page in October 2012. Another one of their tactics was to use digitally altered images to exaggerate the extent of damage and calamities.

Hamas staged several fake deaths and scenes of injury in front of international media crews filming on site, in order to attain public sympathy. Some YouTube videos, though claiming to show an IDF jeep struck by a missile, was in fact a vehicle of the Reuters news agency that had been hit on the border.

##### (2) Fake Emails and Text Messages

Hamas attempted to establish primarily fake emails and Facebook postings where many Israelis were duped into receiving false announcements from an 'IDF Spokesman' warning that terrorists could track their mobile phones and send rocket attacks to their location. Another form of psychological warfare was an attempt to raise suspicions among Israelis regarding

the true extent of their war dead. Thousands received emails in broken Hebrew stating that "the military censorship of military intelligence," was concealing information

about attacks on soldiers and urged them to view the "picture of the field of death in which our soldiers are falling in Gaza."

Hamas' manipulation effectively undermined its own cause and aided Israel's when the truth was revealed.

#### e. An Unpredictable Enemy

Hamas conducted asymmetric warfare by appearing unfazed that their own tactics of manipulation and rumour-mongering were causing their legitimacy to be questioned. From their perspective, their main goal was to achieve influence and have an emotional response from the audience, regardless of the authenticity. As these are part of the nature of propaganda, people may use whatever tools at their disposal in order to persuade the public to support their side. Thus, the use of out of context material by Hamas suggests yet another tool of war.

### SHORTFALLS OF THE IDF INFORMATION CAMPAIGN

#### a. Lack of Public Discourse – Social Media not as 'Social' as Claimed

Social networking is based on interaction with

the audience, unlike the conventional media, which are one-directional and act only to disseminate information. In the post war study, it was revealed that the IDF refrained almost entirely from engaging in Twitter discussions and in doing so failed to dominate the online discourse and the messages being transmitted.

#### b. Non-Unified Information

The utilisation of hashtags, the basic building block for managing topics and discussions on Twitter, was not done in a uniform and consistent manner and as such, a large part of the information the IDF published did not capture its target audience. On the contrary, the hashtag #GazaUnderAttack (by Hamas) had a more successful online discourse; it peaked at 170,000 mentions as compared to only 25,000 mentions of #IsraelUnderFire. Thus, the perception dominating the online discourse was that the IDF had embarked on an unjustified attack – working in favour of the Palestinians.

#### c. Overly-Aggressive Media Campaign

Some have argued that Israel's social media campaign around Operation Pillar of Defense has been overly-aggressive and somewhat inappropriate. This was because the material was being published at such an unprecedented rate that its quality, intended message and impact had diminished over the prolonged campaign.

### NEW MEDIA EMPOWERING ORDINARY CITIZENS

The playing field has been levelled as every potential player in the conflict, from individuals in the grassroots, to Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), all the way up to governments and para-government organisations now have stakes in the game in which they can potentially influence the public. During Operation Pillar of Defense, these groups were out there filming, documenting and disseminating footage.

*People now have the means to influence and determine the flow of information. We are in the midst of this revolution and an evolution where the presentation of the country's image is in the hands of the public.*

An example of how a social media platform provided an equalising and democratic medium in empowering ordinary citizens would be Palestinian blogger Rana Baker, who simply uploaded an audio file to Twitter containing the sound of IDF drones circling overhead and said, "Gaza at this moment: Loudest drone buzzing since Wednesday now recorded."<sup>10</sup> It was a real-world example of mainstreaming social media; whether it was an ordinary citizen or the Prime Minister, one had to work within the confines of a 140-character limit Tweet to broadcast his/her cause. Thus, propaganda had confronted the democratising power of social media head on.

While the IDF wanted to justify to the world that its armed operation in Gaza was legitimate and despite its reported intention to minimise casualties, the fact was that innocent civilians suffered in the crossfire. According to the United Nations, an estimated 101 Palestinian civilians, including 33 children, were killed and between 900 and 1,500 were wounded during Operation Pillar of Defense. On the Israeli side, four civilians died and 219 were injured by Hamas rocket strikes.

### LESSONS FOR THE SAF

Drawing from the successes and failures of the IDF new media campaign, the following tables analyse the proposed tactics and challenges in which the SAF could possibly adopt during times of conflict.

	Tactic	Application of Principles within the SAF
1	Good Communications	<p>The Message – The message would have to portray the cause as justifiable, the enemy the perpetrators who have impinged beyond reconcilable terms and an openness that the SAF is willing to communicate with the public regarding the conflict.</p> <p>The Means – The communications strategy will need to be consistent within the SAF and the multiple agencies (government and private) that are working with the SAF. Consistency in the fonts, terminology, pictures will portray teamwork and a clear message aimed at toppling the enemy.</p>
2	Viral Sharing	To extend its reach, the SAF would have to utilise more than its current number of social media platforms.
3	Increasing Interaction	The SAF would have to expand on the size force of its current new media team in order to deal with the increased rate of information that will need to be uploaded online in real time.
4	Trendsetting	The SAF would have to be able to commission, design and package bite-sized nuggets of information that are catchy.
5	Operational Footage	The piping back of operational footage to be uploaded will be able to deliver ‘shock and awe’ against the enemy as well as shorten the operational learning cycles. Footage of humanitarian assistance and support operations would also win the respect of the local and international communities.
6	Application Development	The SAF could explore developing an app to warn citizens of impending air strikes, explosions or areas of unrest. This would be updated in real time and at the convenience of the users, who would then have sufficient time to run for cover or proceed to emergency shelters for help.
7	Rewards Systems	To encourage more site visits, views, and followers, the SAF could explore developing a rewards system for frequent visitors.
8	Multiple Languages	To extend the viewership ranges both locally and abroad, there will be a need for translation into foreign languages.
9	Inspirational, Visually-Engaging and Concise Material	The SAF would have to be creative in the selling of its message. A good combination of text and visuals is needed for a more impactful response, emotionally and logically.
10	Converting Defence Systems into Consumable New Media Material	The SAF may identify some of its projects to showcase to the world. This would boost confidence among the public, and break the enemy’s will to fight.
11	Extensive Research on the Enemy	Extensive research must be conducted on the enemy to expose and magnify their criminal or inhumane intents towards their cause.

12	Multi-Agency Collaboration	The SAF would have to work with multiple agencies (government and private), tapping on their resources, manpower and skills to deliver the message out to the world.
13	Deliberate Fostering Impressions of Support	The SAF would have to rely on the support of the government to tap on educated individuals to explain and justify the actions of the SAF during the conflict online.
14	Leveraging Tech-Savvy Generation	The execution of new media on social media platforms should be carried out by tech-savvy individuals who are well acquainted with trends and have access to large social networks.

Table 3 – Applying principles learnt from Operation Pillar of Defence within the SAF.

	Challenge	Proposed Solutions for the SAF Against Challenges and Shortfalls
1	Emergence of Insurgent Microblogging Campaigns	The SAF should monitor and where appropriate, capitalise on the material surfaced by insurgent microblogs.
2	When Social Media Goes Rogue	In order to prevent instances whereby servicemen portray the SAF in a negative fashion, the SAF should adopt stricter rules and regulations for its personnel regarding the sharing of information through social media platforms. These pose a security threat to the country as a careless post may jeopardise an entire operation.
3	Cyber Attacks	A surge in cyber-attacks aimed at derailing the SAF's media campaign would be expected by sympathisers of the enemy. As such, collaboration with the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) and its Government IT Security Incident Team is required to evaluate the security and protection of the online media platforms.
4	Squashing Rumours	Fabrications and smear campaigns on the SAF's operations would be developed by the enemy to obtain sympathy from the international community. As such, the SAF should anticipate forming a credible task force within the new media desk to debunk all rumours and reverse the implications onto the enemy, portraying him as devious and non-credible. The rumours have to be countered as quickly as possible.
5	Dealing with an Unpredictable Enemy	An unpredictable enemy could use an undesirable tactic at the expense of his own credibility, in order to obtain an emotional response from the public. As such, the SAF should counter the enemy's pandering to emotions with logical, detailed and objective reporting.



6	Lack of Public Discourse	In order to prevent a one-sided conversation where the SAF merely publishes information without engaging the public, participation from the new media desk is required to reason and address queries in the comments sections available in most social media platforms.
7	Non-Unified Information	The SAF new media desk should serve as the single point of contact when operations begin. This would be the single entity and node connected to other government and private institutions. An educational drive should also be generated in the build up towards conflict, so that groups will be aware of these requirements.
8	Overly-Aggressive Media Campaign	While the media campaign has to be robust and credible, the SAF should look into adopting a measured and sensitive approach towards it. For example, as Singapore is a multiracial and religious society, it is imperative that information is crafted objectively, with clear intentions and does not impinge of the rights of selected groups.

Table 4 – Surmounting similar challenges and avoiding shortfalls during Operation Pillar of Defense.

### SAF IS READY

The need for an integrated SAF new media campaign in times of conflict is of paramount importance. Modern wars are transnational conflicts involving more than just the warring states alone, as the international community has stakes such as investments and its citizens within those countries. Wars are also now fought in the confines of an unpredictable online, virtual arena. As such, the legitimacy of a conflict hinges on a clear, decisive and coordinated narrative of victory. This is achieved through consistent branding and messaging of information to globally connected social media platforms, where this essay has highlighted the advantages of its utility in capturing a wider audience with their interactivity. While the effectiveness of a message may vary, the success of social media should be evaluated based on its reach.

People now have the means to influence and determine the flow of information. We are in the midst of this revolution and an evolution where the presentation of the country's image is in the hands

of the public. This would therefore involve a greater educational awareness of not only 'netiquette', but also a cultivation of a more mature society, which nuances the differences between constructive public discourse and irresponsible behaviour as we push towards a more open society. This was apparent in the IDF where new regulations and restrictions on social media platform have been implemented, as the SAF cannot afford to jeopardise its mission due to the unfortunate misrepresentation by its own soldiers especially in dire situations.

### CONCLUSION

A well-developed new media campaign, as discussed above, is able to strengthen the will and resolve of the nation, thus avoiding unnecessary internal conflict, preventing an exodus of servicemen and their will to fight, as well as drawing international support for Singapore. The key to this is ultimately having the upper hand in the control of information, with new media's social platforms being one viable avenue to establish this. 🌐

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