Every Soldier a Messenger: Using Social Media in the Contemporary Operating Environment

A Monograph
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AY 2012-001

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 074-0188

1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED
	05-11-2012	July 2011-May 2012

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
Every Soldier a Messenger: Using Social Media in the Contemporary Operating Environment

5. FUNDING NUMBERS

6. AUTHOR(S)
LTC Dennis G. Wille, US Army

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

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250 Gibbon Ave
ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2134

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for Public Release: Distribution is Unlimited

12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE

13. ABSTRACT ***(Maximum 200 Words)***

Social media has become an additional element within the operational environment within which nearly anyone with an Internet connection can participate. The speed at which participants can add content, truthful or not, to that battle space has forced the Army to change the way it has traditionally approached social media. Information age military theorists have postulated that high speed computing and ubiquitous network connectivity, key components of social media capabilities, would initiate a revolution in military affairs. While social media capabilities do not provide information superiority, they have empowered individuals to more effectively share content and consequently influence the narrative of a conflict. Also, social media capabilities have provided a means for individuals and small groups to more effectively synchronize actions, even in the absence of an authoritative leader. Joint and Army doctrine related to Information Operations has sparingly addressed social media capabilities but has provided the appropriate philosophy for integrating these tools. During the events of the Arab Spring in 2011 and other uprisings, anti-government protesters in Egypt, Iran, and Tunisia have demonstrated how social media can enhance the spread of the narrative and allow for protesters to synchronize their efforts. Also, a pair of examples from the United States military's experience in Afghanistan has demonstrated opportunities for improvement. This monograph examines the evidence from recent conflicts and describes three big ideas related to social media capabilities that emerge from the evidence of recent conflicts. First, the military needs better tools to understand, visualize, and describe how social media capabilities impact the information environment. Second, the military must improve its tactics, techniques, and procedures in integrating social media capabilities into multiple lines of effort in order to seize the initiative with respect to the narrative of a conflict. Third, the military must find ways to decentralize the official use of social media in the operational environment by empowering individual soldiers and allowing small units to synchronize their actions. Decentralizing its approach to social media by making every soldier a messenger would allow the Army to seize the initiative in this increasingly important part of the operational environment.

14. SUBJECT TERMS
Social media, empowerment, arab spring, swarming, information operations

15. NUMBER OF PAGES
56

16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT
(U)	(U)	(U)	

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES

MONOGRAPH APPROVAL

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Title of Monograph: Every Soldier a Messenger: Using Social Media in the Contemporary Operating Environment

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Abstract

Every Soldier a Messenger: Using Social Media in the Contemporary Operating Environment by LTC Dennis G. Wille, US Army, 56 pages.

Social media has become an additional element within the operational environment within which nearly anyone with an Internet connection can participate. The speed at which participants can add content, truthful or not, to that battle space has forced the Army to change the way it has traditionally approached social media. Information age military theorists have postulated that high speed computing and ubiquitous network connectivity, key components of social media capabilities, would initiate a revolution in military affairs. While social media capabilities do not provide information superiority, they have empowered individuals to more effectively share content and consequently influence the narrative of a conflict. Also, social media capabilities have provided a means for individuals and small groups to more effectively synchronize actions, even in the absence of an authoritative leader. Joint and Army doctrine related to Information Operations has sparingly addressed social media capabilities but has provided the appropriate philosophy for integrating these tools. During the events of the Arab Spring in 2011 and other uprisings, anti-government protesters in Egypt, Iran, and Tunisia have demonstrated how social media can enhance the spread of the narrative and allow for protesters to synchronize their efforts. Also, a pair of examples from the United States military's experience in Afghanistan has demonstrated opportunities for improvement. This monograph examines the evidence from recent conflicts and describes three big ideas related to social media capabilities that emerge from the evidence of recent conflicts. First, the military needs better tools to understand, visualize, and describe how social media capabilities impact the information environment. Second, the military must improve its tactics, techniques, and procedures in integrating social media capabilities into multiple lines of effort in order to seize the initiative with respect to the narrative of a conflict. Third, the military must find ways to decentralize the official use of social media in the operational environment by empowering individual soldiers and allowing small units to synchronize their actions. Decentralizing its approach to social media by making every soldier a messenger would allow the Army to seize the initiative in this increasingly important part of the operational environment.

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Introduction

Determining the outcome of a war is not an easy task. Often, it is the perception of winning that really matters. Winning battles does not guarantee ultimate success. Warring parties must also articulate a narrative in order to win the battle of perceptions.[1] Recent conflicts have demonstrated that this dynamic has not changed, although the conflicts have incorporated new tools that have changed how belligerents spread their narratives. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, military theorists advocated that information age technologies would usher in a revolution in military affairs. During recent conflicts, digital social media capabilities resident in forums such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have enhanced traditional information delivery mechanisms. Potentially, these new tools could provide a glimpse of the types of capabilities that will dominate information age warfare. The question is: what can the US Army learn from the use of these tools by belligerents in recent conflicts?

The information age theorists sparked a considerable debate about information warfare. Whether or not information age technology truly constitutes a revolution in military affairs, the United States military recognizes the growing importance of the modern information environment and its influence on the outcome of future conflict. Since the mid-1990s, the Joint Force has developed the concept of Information Operations, and subsequently that of Strategic Communication, to provide solutions for achieving success at dominating the narrative of a conflict.[2] These solutions continue to evolve both in military concepts and doctrine. The U.S. Army developed its own service approach to Information Operations by recently reorganizing the Information Operations concept into two distinct mission areas: Inform and Influence Activities

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[1] U.S. Department of Defense, *Commander's Handbook for Strategic Communication and Communication Strategy, Version 3.0*, (Washington, D.C.: USJFC, JWC, 2010), xi.

[2] Martin C. Libicki, *What Is Information Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 1995), ix–xi.

and Cyber/Electromagnetic Activities.[3] The Army nests these two separate Information Operations mission sets within the Mission Command warfighting function. Both the Army and the entire Joint Force are learning from the experiences of recent conflicts to ensure that its approach to Information Operations is effective. Social media capabilities reside within both of these two distinct areas and provide new tools to soldiers as they seek to spread the strategic communication narrative in time, space, and purpose.

Recent conflicts have provided excellent examples that highlight the advantages and disadvantages of social media and their potential impacts on the outcome of the conflict. Anti-government protesters across the Arab world during the so-called Arab Spring also used Facebook and Twitter to organize and influence their efforts, sometimes with wildly successful results. Primarily, the political revolution in Egypt in 2011 that resulted in the downfall of the Egyptian government displayed the power that social media provided to the protesters. Facebook played a role in magnifying Tunisian protesters' efforts in 2011.[4] During the Green Movement in Iran in 2009, protesters unsuccessfully challenged the outcome of that nation's presidential election but demonstrated the power of social media by using Facebook and YouTube to organize protests and spread influential messages.[5] The U.S. military's own experiences in recent conflicts have provided examples of how social media capabilities impacted the fight for the narrative. By examining the use of social media capabilities in recent conflicts through the lens of the Army's new doctrinal emphasis on mission command, this monograph will discuss examples of successful use of social media and recommend initiatives that the Army should develop as it increasingly incorporates social media capabilities into the operational environment.

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[3] U.S. Department of the Army, *TRADOC Pam 525-3-3, The United States Army Functional Concept for Mission Command, 2016-2028* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), 10–2.

[4] Robin Wright, *Rock the Casbah: Rage and Rebellion Across the Islamic World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011), 15–6.

[5]Geneive Abdo, *The Iran Primer: Power, Politics, and U.S. Policy*, ed. Robin Wright (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2010), 53.

Additionally, the evidence will show that social media capabilities will not fulfill the information age theorists' predictions of a revolution in military affairs. However, social media capabilities increase the opportunities for belligerents to develop and spread their narratives as empowered individuals or self-synchronized networks. The Army and the Joint Force should rapidly develop social media capabilities as they attempt to understand future conflict, or risk ceding domination of the narrative to its future adversaries. Decentralizing its approach to social media by finding ways to empower individual soldiers would allow the Army to seize the initiative in this increasingly important part of the operational environment.

Information Age Theory

Periodically, a change in technology comes along that so alters the way people do something, it appears to have a revolutionary impact on nearly all walks of life. Stop and think about the impact that gunpowder and the airplane have had on society. In the past, significant changes in technology have ushered in changes in warfare that some theorists declare to be a revolution in military affairs. Theorists have provided a number of definitions for a revolution in military affairs. Instead of providing a precise definition, a broad description is more appropriate for this study. "The central tenet of an RMA is that advances in technology must lead to significant changes in how military forces are organized, trained, and equipped for war, thereby reshaping the way in which wars are fought."[6] Again, imagine what warfare was like before and after the invention of gunpowder or the airplane.

Many modern theorists believe that military forces around the world are in the midst of a revolution in military affairs. Whether or not these theorists are correct, the basic premise is that information technology, consisting of high speed computing and networks, will usher in

[6] Elinor C. Sloan, *The Revolution in Military Affairs* (Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 3.

significant changes in how wars are fought.[7] Theorists call this new type of warfare 'network centric warfare.' Information age theorists describe how network centric warfare will connect a vast array of sensors across land, sea, air, and space in order to provide decision makers with near-perfect, near-real time awareness of everything taking place within the operational environment.[8] These theorists also describe how network centric warfare will allow for significant decentralization of decision making by creating an environment where units, and potentially individuals, can self-synchronize their actions within the operational environment, replacing the military's traditional industrial age hierarchical organizations. Theorists call this second development swarming because a wartime manifestation of this concept resembles the swarming actions of various animals within the natural world.[9] In general, information theorists predict that this revolution in military affairs will create an environment where "long-range precision air and missile strikes will dominate warfare, ground forces will be reduced mostly to scouts, and the struggle for information supremacy will replace the breakthrough battle as the decisive issue for success."[10]

After more than ten years of conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, many military professionals have come to realize that certain flaws exist in the theory of a modern day, information technology driven revolution in military affairs. Proponents of the revolution in military affairs likely oversold their predictions that information age technology would provide near-perfect knowledge of the operational environment. "Some of this work focused on how U.S. forces might

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[7] Antoine Bousquet, *The Scientific Way of Warfare: Order and Chaos on the Battlefields of Modernity* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2009), 34–5.

[8] William A. Owens with Ed Offley, *Lifting the Fog of War* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 14.

[9] John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *In Athena's Camp: Preparing for Conflict in the Information Age* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1997), 465.

[10] Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, NJ: Princetown University Press, 2004), 4.

prefer to fight and then assumed that preference was relevant to the future problem of war."[11] While sensor and network technologies continue to improve, their impact on warfare has not been revolutionary. In fact, the Army formally acknowledged the flaws in Information Age theories and declared, "The network … cannot in and of itself deliver information superiority."[12] Apparently, the Army still believes that Carl von Clausewitz had it right when he wrote about how friction in warfare "makes the apparently easy so difficult."[13] Even in the twenty-first century, the fog of war still reigns true. Also, Stephen Biddle, one of many contemporary military theorists, has written, "The events that RMA advocates see as radical changes in fact display as much continuity as change—and these underlying continuities suggest a very different set of prescriptions for future U.S. military policies."[14] This monograph will not attempt to debate the merits or demerits of the current debate surrounding an information age revolution in military affairs, but instead, will use the arguments of that debate in helping understand how social media capabilities fit into future military operations.

Information age theorists still promote their predictions that describe self-synchronized units or individuals executing their military functions through swarming tactics. "Swarming is achieved when the dispersed nodes of a network of small (and also perhaps some large) forces can converge on an enemy from multiple directions, through either fire or maneuver."[15] A doctrine of swarming takes advantage of small, networked organizations that share information and makes decision without the need for a traditional hierarchical organization structure.

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[11] Department of the Army, *TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-0, The Army Capstone Concept, Operational Adaptability: Operating under Conditions of Uncertainty and Complexity in an Era of Persistent Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2009), 6.

[12] *The Army Capstone Concept*, (2009), 6.

[13] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 121.

[14] Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 197.

[15] John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *In Athena's Camp: Preparing for Conflict in the Information Age* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1997), 465.

"Swarming implies radical new changes in current military organization—including the elimination of many formations above the company level."[16] This particular idea is quite radical. Imagine a future battlefield that relegates colonels and generals to the sidelines while captains and lieutenants organized themselves for combat. No, the Army is not likely to eliminate any of the seven echelons from Joint Task Force to platoon in the foreseeable future. However, self-synchronization and swarming is on the rise and Arquilla and Ronfeldt were right to alert the military to these tendencies.

Self-synchronization in society has become more and more prevalent since the Internet became widely available. Self-synchronization theorists point to examples of leaderless organizations that wield widespread power and influence. In their book *The Starfish and the Spider*, Ori Brafman and Rod Beckstrom declare:

> Decentralization has been lying dormant for thousands of years. But the advent of the Internet has unleashed this force, knocking down traditional businesses, altering entire industries, affecting how we relate to each other, and influencing world politics. The absence of structure, leadership, and formal organization, once considered a weakness, has become a major asset. Seemingly chaotic groups have challenged and defeated established institutions. The rules of the game have changed.[17]

The protesters in Egypt would probably agree with that paragraph.

Brafman and Beckstrom describe a critical component of self-synchronization required for its success. Self-synchronizing organizations "are *required* to begin with the assumption that people are basically good and trustworthy."[18] Not surprisingly, the Army acknowledges this requirement in its concept of mission command. "Mission command is the exercise of authority and direction by commanders, supported by their staffs, that fosters mutual trust, encourages initiative, and empowers subordinate leaders to develop the situation, adapt, and act decisively

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[16] John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *Swarming & The Future of Conflict* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000), viii.

[17] Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations* (New York, NY: The Penguin Group, 2006), 6–7.

[18] Brafman and Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider*, 163 (emphasis in original).

within the commander's intent."[19] This description of mission command falls in line with Brafman and Beckstrom's requirements for self-synchronization due to the emphasis on trust. Army mission command doctrine describes the ability to "build cohesive teams through mutual trust" as a principle of mission command.[20] Military leaders rarely question the need for trust, but regardless of the obvious need, Army doctrine regularly emphasizes the need to foster trust throughout its organization.

Along with the rise of self-synchronization, the rise of the power of individuals provides perspective for understanding how social media relates to modern conflict. The concept of empowerment gained traction in the 1980s as businesses sought to become more competitive by leveraging more of the human capital of individual employees.[21] One particular theory highlights that a key to empowerment is to begin "gradually replacing the old hierarchy's purpose and functions with self-directed teams."[22] This assertion shows that both business and military theorists were eyeing empowered individuals and self-synchronized organizations as a better model than industrial age hierarchies.

Kleinfeld discusses how during the latter half of the twentieth century, government's power over the economy and foreign policy began to decline as the role of multinational businesses and other transnational organizations in those arenas increased.[23] In the twenty-first century, that trend continues to the point that an individual citizen's power can be a force to be reckoned with. "Skype, satellite television, cell phones, and other technologies have made

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[19] *The United States Army Functional Concept for Mission Command*, 16.

[20] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 6-0, Mission Command* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2011), 1-2.

[21] Ken Blanchard, John P. Carlos, and Alan Randolph, *The 3 Keys to Empowerment: Release the Power within People for Astonishing Results* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 1999), 2.

[22] Blanchard, Carlos, and Randolph, *The 3 Keys to Empowerment*, 12.

[23] Rachel Kleinfeld, "Global Outreach: Speaking to the Awakening World," *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*, Issue #23, (Winter 2012) http://www.democracyjournal.org/23/global-outreach-speaking-to-the-awakening-world.php (accessed February 14, 2012), 25.

citizens of even remote, impoverished parts of the world aware of their relative wealth, power, and freedom. And they have also given these people the means to make their thoughts known."[24] Osama bin Laden is probably the most well known individual of recent years that has been able to make his thoughts known without the need to be affiliated with a government or other multinational organization.

Recent political upheavals in the Arab world provide examples of what future conflict might look like as empowered individuals gain power. "The Arab Spring took self-organization to an entirely new level, as revolutionaries operating on a shoestring with a diffuse leadership took on some of the most sclerotic, heavy-handed governments on earth."[25] The rise of the power of individuals has significant implications for how governments begin to approach the use of force. Kleinfeld argues, "conventional military superiority will look ham-fisted when activists with cell-phone cameras can stop an army in its tracks via the threat of instantaneous global exposure."[26] While this is a bold assertion about the power of the individual in future conflict, remember the image of the student that stood down a column of tanks in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

Kleinfeld also broadly describes the typical government hierarchy's failings. "In too many parts of government, ideas must travel all the way up the chain of command and back down before they can be implemented, squelching initiative, killing solutions that are closest to the problems, and deterring entrepreneurial individuals from remaining in government."[27] This statement could describe many veterans' military service experiences, but the Army, through its renewed emphasis on mission command, continuously seeks ways to overcome the rigid nature of its hierarchical bureaucracy. Kleinfeld believes that the Department of Defense is relatively

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[24] Kleinfeld, "Global Outreach: Speaking to the Awakening World," 25–6.

[25] Ibid., 26.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., 30.

progressive in its attempts to change its hierarchical culture since "failing to adapt to a world of empowered individuals means failing to win wars."[28]

Despite the declaration of the widespread success of self-synchronization, its use in future military operations is still uncertain. While this monograph will use evidence from the political upheaval of the Arab Spring, it must acknowledge that the primary use of social media during these events was for political purposes, not military. Self-synchronized Arab Spring protesters were not using social media to close with and destroy the enemy through fire and maneuver. Also, the U.S. military's experience against its recent enemies has not provided convincing evidence that the decentralization of Al Qaeda, the Taliban, or any of the many insurgent networks resulted in regular tactical success. However, even without direct evidence of military success, an examination of how social media has influenced the outcome of recent conflict will provide insights into how modern militaries can incorporate these capabilities into its operations.

Social Media in Doctrine

In order to better understand how social media could possibly change warfare, it is useful to have an appreciation for how social media capabilities fit into the military's existing operating concept and doctrine. In general, social media has very recently begun to appear in military concepts and doctrine. The explosion of the worldwide use of social media likely has prompted the Army and the Joint force to add the specific use of these capabilities in their documents. The Joint Force leads the Army in the development of relevant social media related doctrine. This section will provide a broad overview of how the military addresses social media in its concepts and doctrine.

[28] Kleinfeld, "Global Outreach: Speaking to the Awakening World," 32.

Social media capabilities are part of the military's broad concept of Information Operations. At the Joint level, the Department of Defense describes how "future joint forces must combine maneuver, fires, and information in and across domains to focus overwhelming but discriminate combat power against critical objectives."[29] The Joint Force's concept for combat traditionally focused on just fire and maneuver. Since the 1990s, Information Operations has evolved as a concept and gained in prominence. This increased prominence stems from the notion that "due to pervasive electronic media and the growing ubiquity of personal communications devices, future combat will take place in a transparent information environment in which more people than ever before witness vividly the conduct and aftermath of combat."[30] The implication of this concept is that Information Operations capabilities start to become co-equal with the traditional fire and maneuver capabilities. In 2010, the Joint Force declared in its capstone concept document that information becomes the seventh joint function and that "it is through maneuver, fires, and information that a joint force actually applies combat power against an enemy."[31] Finally, the updated Joint concept broadly describes how Joint forces would apply information capabilities. "Joint forces will need to adapt messages and presentations rapidly to the situation, striving to develop universal, self-propagating messages to reach wide audiences and more tailored messages to reach specific ones, exploiting electronic and other media relevant to that situation."[32] While military concept documents are different from doctrine, they provide glimpses into how social media capabilities start to fit into future military operations.

The Army has its own set of concept documents that nest within the Joint concept framework. In 2009, *The Army Capstone Concept* broadly described the role of information in

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[29] Department of Defense, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations, Version 3.0* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), JCC-10.

[30] *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations*, JCC-8.

[31] Ibid., JCC-12–3.

[32] Ibid., JCC-17.

future military operations. One of the concept's six supporting ideas discussed how "future armed conflict will require Army forces to exert a psychological and technical influence" across the operational environment. [33] Two additional concept documents, *The Army Operating Concept* and *The Army Functional Concept for Mission Command* further elaborate on psychological and technical influence by describing how the Army would conduct Inform and Influence Activities and Cyber/Electromagnetic Activities.[34] These two mission areas form the core of the Army's current doctrinal approach to Information Operations.

Social media capabilities fall within the realm of the military's Information Operations doctrine. Three Joint Publications and one pre-doctrinal document form the doctrinal core that provides the Joint community with guiding principles related to social media capabilities. The Army has published four field manuals and one social media handbook that provides the necessary doctrinal guidelines related to social media capabilities. In 2007, to help clarify the evolving nature of the military's use of Internet capabilities, the Department of Defense published a policy memorandum that provides authority, guidance, and definitions for the entire military. This document defined "interactive internet activities as: the use of a system accessible via the internet which allows for two-way communications, e.g., email, blogs, chat rooms, and internet bulletin boards, in a timely, if not real time basis."[35] Social media capabilities such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube easily fit within this military definition. To help deconflict how the Joint Force approaches all uses of social media, the memorandum describes three types of attribution for interactive Internet activities: U.S. attribution, concurring partner nation attribution, and non-attribution. The policy states, "All OSD and Military Department interactive internet activities

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[33] *The Army Capstone Concept*, (2009), 23.

[34] Department of the Army, *The United States Army Operating Concept* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office 2010), 19 & 26; *The Army Functional Concept for Mission Command* (2010), 14.

[35] Department of Defense, "Directive-Type Memorandum DTM-08-037," Gordon England, Deputy Secretary of Defense, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, June 8, 2007): 1.

will be U.S. attribution only. For military operations, Combatant Commanders will determine the appropriate attribution method."[36] This is important because it allows Combatant Commanders the opportunity to authorize use of social media websites as a means to conduct influential actions that other actors cannot directly attribute to the United States. Finally, the policy directs, "Neither the Commanders of the Combatant Commands nor the ASD(PA) [Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs] may delegate authorities provided in this policy."[37] This last directive demonstrates that the Department of Defense seeks to maintain a centralized approach to using social media. Overall, this policy is key to understanding how military forces will integrate all social media capabilities into future conflicts.

The Joint community discusses Information Operations doctrine in Joint Publication 3-13 and defines Information Operations as "the integrated employment of electronic warfare, computer network operations, psychological operations, military deception, and operations security, in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to influence, disrupt, corrupt or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own."[38] These five Joint Information Operations tasks provide part of the framework for how the Joint community approaches Information Operations. Social media capabilities can impact each of these five tasks. Joint Publication 3-13 also describes the information environment as consisting of "three interrelated dimensions: physical, informational, and cognitive."[39] The three dimensions of the information environment define the framework for how the Joint community approaches Information Operations. The key role of Information Operations doctrine is to serve as the overall integrator of the various Information Operations capabilities into military operations.

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[36] "Directive-Type Memorandum DTM-08-037," June 8, 2007: 2.

[37] Ibid., 1.

[38] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-13, Information Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006), I-1.

[39] *Joint Publication 3-13*, (2006), I-1.

The Joint community uses Public Affairs to execute many informational tasks through social media. Revised in 2010, *Joint Publication 3-61* "provides fundamental principles and guidance for public affairs support to joint operations. It also addresses public affairs operations and the role of public affairs in strategic communication."[40] The Public Affairs community leads the Joint Force's use of social media capabilities to engage the public. This manual describes how the increased use of the Internet as an information source has created a variety of challenges for military forces. "Internet sites have become our [the Joint Force's] adversaries' preferred means to engage global audiences."[41]

Joint Publication 3-61 specifically addresses social media, referred to as 'new media' through most of the document. Public Affairs personnel in Joint organizations organize within a Media Operations Center. The New Media section within the Media Operations Center "is responsible for the management and content maintenance" of the organization's public websites.[42] Also within the Media Operations Center is a Monitoring Section that "is responsible for monitoring electronic and print media."[43] The role of the Monitoring Section is to provide feedback and summaries of journalistic media outlets, but the language within the document does not indicate that the Monitoring Section should seek to monitor social media in general. A section on Assessments acknowledges the requirement for "monitoring, measuring, and analyzing relevant information" from Internet content in order to "evaluate the success of Public Affairs activities."[44] Evidence from the Egyptian Arab Spring experience will show how accomplishing this type of assessment is no simple task.

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[40] Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-61, Public Affairs* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), i.

[41] *Joint Publication 3-61*, II-1.

[42] Ibid., III-27.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., III-29.

The Joint Force also uses *Joint Publication 3-61* to address one of the biggest risks of the military's use of social media. Under the tenets of Public Affairs, *Joint Publication 3-61* what it means to "Practice Security at the Source."[45] Because every member of the Department of Defense is a source of information, *Joint Publication 3-61* reminds the Joint community to "be aware of OPSEC [Operational Security] issues, whether being interviewed by the media or sharing information and imagery with family or friends including through social media."[46] Because the Department of Defense takes a centralized approach to its use of social media, *Joint Publication 3-61* declares, "It is important that official information and imagery be approved for release prior to dissemination to the public."[47] Again, evidence from the Egyptian Arab Spring experience provides a counterargument to the centralized approach to social media.

The third joint publication that informs the Joint Force's approach to social media is *Joint Publication 3-13.2, Military Information Support Operations*. The military uses Military Information Support Operations "to establish and reinforce foreign perceptions of US military, political, and economic power and resolve. In conflict, MISO as a force multiplier can degrade the enemy's relative combat power, reduce civilian interference, minimize collateral damage, and maximize the local populace's support for operations."[48] Overall, Military Information Support Operations seek to influence, not just inform, the actions of the various friendly, neutral, and enemy actors in order to set the conditions for achieving the commander's objectives.

With respect to social media capabilities, *Joint Publication 3-13.2* partners Military Information Support Operations with Computer Network Operations in order to disseminate

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[45] *Joint Publication 3-61*, I-8.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-13.2, Military Information Support Operations, Incorporating Change 1* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2011), viii.

appropriate messages.[49] In other words, Military Information Support Operations views social media capabilities as just another mechanism to spread influential messages, similar to print, radio, or television. Also, this manual differentiates between Military Information Support Operations and Public Affairs. "PA and MISO activities are separate and distinct, but they must support and reinforce each other."[50] Even though the Joint Force revised *Joint Publication 3-13.2* in 2011, the manual does not use the term 'social media'. This manual prefers to use the term 'interactive Internet activities' when referring to the types of actions that use social media capabilities.

In addition to Information Operations doctrine, the Joint Force has identified the need to develop a concept known as Strategic Communication. To convey the guidelines for Strategic Communications, the Joint Force has published a pre-doctrinal 'Handbook' that informs the Joint community of this evolving concept. Strategic Communication is a whole of government effort "to understand and engage key audiences in order to create, strengthen or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of USG [U.S. Government] interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power."[51] The whole of government approach to Strategic Communication addresses the cognitive dimension of Information Operations. The challenge for Strategic Communication is to effectively synchronize the intended message from the highest levels of government all the way down to the lowest ranked soldier or government employee. The Department of State leads the United States Government efforts to develop Strategic Communication. The Department of Defense provides three doctrinal enablers to Strategic Communication. "The predominant military activities that support Strategic

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[49] *Joint Publication 3-13.2*, x.

[50] Ibid., xi.

[51] *Commander's Handbook for Strategic Communication*, (2010), xi-xii.

Communication, themes, messages, images, and actions are Information Operations, Public Affairs, and Defense Support to Public Diplomacy."[52] As referenced in *Joint Publication 3-13.2*, the Joint Force must integrate all the capabilities found within these mission sets in order to succeed at conducting Strategic Communication.

A few terms require clarification for practitioners to understand Strategic Communication. Three such terms--narrative, theme, and message--help frame Strategic Communication from the strategic level to the tactical. First, a narrative is "an enduring strategic communication with context, reason/motive, and goal/end state."[53] The narrative helps to articulate the overall U.S. Government policy for a given event, which could include a war or conflict. Second, a theme is "an overarching concept or intention, designed for broad application to achieve specific objectives."[54] Themes help to articulate subordinate agency policies that nest underneath the U.S.'s narrative. Within the Department of Defense, strategic organizations, such as Geographic Combatant Commands or theater-level Joint Task Forces, establish themes that support the U.S. narrative. Third, a message is "a narrowly focused communication directed at a specific audience to create a specific effect while supporting a theme."[55] Messages represent the specific actions that cause the realization of a theme. For example, public affairs officers issue press releases including photos and videos that highlight a command's mission accomplishments in order to support the long term themes and narrative. Relating themes and messages to operational art, planners pursue themes, and ultimately the U.S.'s narrative, through the arrangement of messages in time, space, and purpose. Social media represent specific capabilities and tactical actions that spread the messages that support the themes and narrative.

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[52] *Commander's Handbook for Strategic Communication*, (2010), II-6.

[53] Ibid., II-12.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

The Army trails the Joint community with respect to updating its social media related doctrine. As mentioned above, the Army has published four manuals that indirectly address social media related capabilities. However, the Army has not revised three of the four manuals since 2003. *Field Manual 6-0, Mission Command*, revised in September 2011, describes the Army's current approach to Information Operations. The Army executes Inform and Influence Activities and Cyber/electromagnetic Activities and broadly describes how commanders and staffs incorporate these tasks into mission command.[56] Specifically, *Field Manual 6-0* states, "The information-related capabilities of inform and influence activities are: public affairs, military information support operations, and soldier and leader engagement."[57] This categorization reinforces the separation between Public Affairs and Military Information Support Operations seen in Joint doctrine. Also, the Army divides Cyber/electromagnetic activities "into two lines of effort: the cyberspace operations line of effort and the electronic warfare line of effort."[58] A review of this doctrinal manual results in one reference to social media. "Commanders choose appropriate times, places, and means to communicate. They use face-to-face talks, written and verbal orders, estimates and plans, published memos, electronic mail, Web sites, social media, and newsletters."[59] This reference provides evidence of how the Army uses social media as a means of operational art. Another way to phrase this reference to social media would be to say that commanders arrange information dissemination capabilities in time, space, and purpose to accomplish the military communication strategy.

The Army uses *Field Manual 3-13* to describe its doctrinal approach to Information Operations in more detail. However, the Army has not revised this manual since 2003.

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[56] *Field Manual 6-0*, 1-7.

[57] Ibid., 2-7.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid., 3-7.

Information Operations doctrine in *Field Manual 3-13* does not currently match *Field Manual 6-0*. In 2003, the Army listed five core competencies of Information Operations consisting of electronic warfare, computer network operations, psychological operations, military deception, and operations security. A more detailed study of the history of Information Operations doctrine will show exactly how the Army has evolved its approach to this mission. The overall goal of Information Operations is "to gain and maintain information superiority, a condition that allows commanders to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative."[60] The Army has since lowered its expectations of using information age technology to achieve information superiority, which has led to the changes in its approach to Information Operations. The Army will eventually revise *Field Manual 3-13*, thereby aligning this manual with the doctrinal approach currently found in *Field Manual 6-0*. Overall, this manual does not provide modern references to social media.

However, *Field Manual 3-13* would have been a good reference manual for those that used social media during the Arab Spring events. For instance, while describing the information environment, *Field Manual 3-13* lists "individuals able to communicate with a worldwide audience" as one of many significant actors that "can affect the strategic, operational, and tactical direction of military operations."[61] Also, *Field Manual 3-13* sought to conduct both offensive and defensive Information Operations. "Offensive Information Operations destroy, degrade, disrupt, deny, deceive, exploit, and influence adversary decision makers and others who can affect the success of friendly operations. … Defensive Information Operations protect and defend friendly information, C2 [command and control] systems, and INFOSYS [information systems]."[62] Evidence below will describe how those that have used social media capabilities benefit from Information Operations doctrine.

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[60] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-13, Information Operations: Doctrine, Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2003), v.

[61] *Field Manual 3-13,* 1-2–1-3.

[62] Ibid., v.

The Army uses *Field Manual 46-1* to provide doctrine for Public Affairs activities. The Army last revised this document in 1997, although it did publish a subordinate document, *Field Manual 3-61.1, Public Affairs Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures* in 2000. While dated, these documents consistently support the Army's current model that Public Affairs focuses on informing the public while Military Information Support Operations focuses on influencing foreign audiences. However, despite the doctrine being nearly 15 years old, the Public Affairs community recognized that the Information Age would bring changes. These documents do not explicitly reference social media but they do discuss how

> The proliferation of personal computers, the World Wide Web, the Internet, on-line services, fax machines, e-mail, cable television, direct broadcast satellites, copying machines, cellular communication, wireless communication and many other information technologies have created an endless stream of data and information that flows into a world filled with images, symbols, words, and sounds.[63]

This provides a fairly accurate description of life in 2012. To prepare for this future, Public Affairs doctrine described the requirement to synchronize information strategies that used "all available and appropriate methods of communication to achieve specific goals of informing audiences."[64] Even without updated doctrine, Public Affairs officers can look to this document for concepts that support their efforts at using social media in military operations.

Even though the Public Affairs community has not updated its primary doctrine manual in more than ten years, it has produced useful documents that inform the Army about social media. In August of 2011, the Army's Office of the Chief of Public Affairs published its second version of *The United States Army Social Media Handbook*. This handbook provides an overview of how the Army approaches social media to include references to regulatory guidance and case studies of how the Army has used social media both at home and abroad. Naturally, this

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[63] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 46-1, Public Affairs Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997), 22–23.

[64] *Field Manual 46-1*, 23.

document highlights social media from a Public Affairs perspective by focusing on how the Army can use social media as a tool to conduct fully attributable dissemination of themes and messages.[65] Besides publishing the *Army Social Media Handbook*, the Public Affairs community has updated the manuals that describe the required skills for enlisted Public Affairs soldiers. Specifically, the updates to these comprehensive documents add two tasks that explain how to establish and maintain "a unit emerging media site."[66] These recently updated Public Affairs documents provide excellent resources for understanding the current state of knowledge concerning the Army's approach to social media.

One additional Army line of doctrine documents provides information concerning the Army's approach to social media. The Army revised and published *Field Manual 3-05.30, Psychological Operations* in April 2005 and *Change 1 to Field Manual 3-15.302* in August 2009. These documents do not specifically call out social media but do recognize that the Internet is a new medium through which to transmit and assess influential themes and messages.[67] Building on the above discussion about attributable or non-attributable Interactive Internet Activities, Appendix A of *Field Manual 3-05.30* discusses the categories of Military Information Support Operations products by differentiating between overt and covert products.[68] One can infer that Military Information Support Operations personnel seek to use social media capabilities to transmit non-attributable influential themes and messages.

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[65] Department of the Army, *The United States Army Social Media Handbook, Version 2* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, 2011), 1.

[66] Department of the Army, *STP 46-46RZ14-SM-TG, Public Affairs Broadcast Specialist / Chief Public Affairs NCO* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), 3-110 & 3-131; Department of the Army, *STP 46-46QZ14-SM-TG, Public Affairs Specialist / Chief Public Affairs NCO* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), 3-111 & 3-116.

[67] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.302, Change 1, Tactical Psychological Operations Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2009), 5-6 & 6-35.

[68] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.30, Psychological Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2005), A-1–A-3.

The Army is in the midst of a transition with respect to doctrine. In 2011, the Army Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas initiated "a Doctrine 2015 Strategy to categorize our [the Army's] manuals differently, reduce their length and number, and leverage emerging technology to make them more collaborative and accessible."[69] This initiative seeks to streamline Army doctrinal publications by reducing the number of field manuals to fifty and limiting the number of pages to 100.[70] The Army will keep social media related manuals as discussed above but will change the name or nomenclature of some. The Army will rename *Field Manual 3-13* from *Information Operations* to *Inform and Influence Activities*. The Army will transfer those portions of *Field Manual 3-13* related to the technical dimension of Information Operations to a new manual, *Field Manual 6-01, Cyber/Electromagnetic Operations*. *Field Manual 3-05.30* will become *Field Manual 3-58, Military Information Support Operations*. *Field Manual 46-1* becomes *Field Manual 3-61* for the doctrine manual for Army Public Affairs. Field Manuals will focus on tactics and procedures. The Army will create complementary publications to the Field Manuals that focus on techniques and will provide soldiers the opportunity to submit input to these manuals through a wiki format.[71]

In order to execute inform and influence activities doctrine, the Army identifies three career specialties that deliberately work within the Information Operations mission area. Public affairs, military information support operations, and information operations officers all conduct information operations tasks as part of their primary functions. These three specialties work together to create themes and messages that support the commander's intent and complement multiple lines of effort. Each specialty has its own unique characteristics, which allows them to

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[69] Martin E. Dempsey, "37th CSA's Thoughts on the Future of the Army" (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Staff of the Army, 2011), 8.

[70] Department of the Army, "Doctrine 2015 Information Briefing," (Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Combined Arms Center http://cgsc.cdmhost.com/cdm/ref/collection/p16040coll2/id/0 (accessed March 4, 2012): 5.

[71] "Doctrine 2015 Information Briefing," 5-7.

focus on a particular portion of the Army's contribution to the Strategic Communication effort. The professionals that make up these three specialties all use social media capabilities to execute their mission. Public Affairs Officers perform the inform activities tasks that define half of the Army's Information Operations doctrinal framework of Inform and Influence Activities. Military Information Support Operations officers perform the influence activities tasks that define the other half of the Army's Inform and Influence Activities framework. Information Operations Functional Area officers serve on unit staffs and seek to integrate the actions of both Public Affairs and Military Information Support Operations personnel as well as the other capabilities that exist within the Information Operations mission area such as electronic warfare, computer network operations, operations security, and military deception. Army Information Operations officers provide the manpower for this overall integration and often form the bridge between the inform activities of the Public Affairs staff and the influence activities of the Military Information Support Operations staff. Of the three Information Operations related career fields, the Public Affairs Functional Area represents a significant portion of the Army's knowledge and execution of social media capabilities.[72]

While the Army places the power and authority to execute official social media related tasks in the hands of these three specialties, it does allow the rest of the Army to engage in social media related activities in an unofficial capacity.[73] The entire military establishment debated whether or not to allow service members to access social media websites from official

[72] Department of the Army, *DA Pamphlet 600-3, Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), 177, 192, and 198; *Field Manual 3-13*, 2-1.

[73] Department of Defense, "Directive-Type Memorandum DTM-09-026," Change 2, William J. Lynn III, Deputy Secretary of Defense, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, February 22, 2011): 1–2.

government computers.[74] The military weighed the risk and opportunity that social media created when individuals created content. Sometimes, individual service members inadvertently revealed sensitive information that violated basic principles of operations security. Some in the military wanted to ban all access to social media to individuals using military networks in an attempt to limit the operations security violations. Others believed that access to social media improved morale and helped inform domestic audiences of the military's story. Eventually, the military recognized that the opportunities provided by social media far outweighed the costs and decided to allow members of the military to access social media from official military networks. Of course, in granting permission to access social media, the military created guidelines and regulations that individuals must adhere in order to maintain that access.[75]

Overall, the Army has doctrinally chosen to centralize the tasks for conducting official social media actions within the Inform and Influence Activities framework. The Army uses specially trained soldiers in the three Information Operations related career fields to perform those tasks. Individual soldiers may have access to social media capabilities but only in an unofficial capacity. The Army has shown a cautious willingness to embrace the concept of empowering individuals through social media. From a doctrinal perspective, the Army emphasizes decentralized mission command backed up by trust for most types of operations. However, with respect to Information Operations, the Army still practices a centralized approach to executing inform and influence activities through social media capabilities.

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[74] James Dao, "Military Announces New Social Media Policy" At War blog, *New York Times,* 26 FEB 2010, http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/02/26/military-announces-new-social-media-policy/ (accessed March 4, 2012).

[75] Todd Moe, "Social Media and the U.S. Army: Maintaining a Balance" (Monograph, School for Advanced Military Studies, 2011), ii.

The Arab Spring and Other Events

Regardless of the available technology, violent conflicts continue to take place. The belligerents in those conflicts find new and innovative ways to leverage the existing technology and experiment with emerging technologies. As social media becomes more widespread in everyday use, contemporary belligerents have looked to incorporate these new capabilities into their toolkit. Military units in recent conflicts have demonstrated that same innovation to varying degrees of success. By studying these examples, military professionals will identify advantages and disadvantages of using social media capabilities in the contemporary operating environment.

Egypt 2010–2011

On June 6, 2010, a middle-class Egyptian named Khaled Mohamed Said died in Alexandria from being beaten severely by a pair of Egyptian secret police officers.[76] Less than a year later, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak resigned from his position as the leader of the Egyptian government after having been in that position for 30 years. The relation between these two events is a story of the power of social media. In the case of the Egyptian Arab Spring revolution, social media provided activists the capabilities they needed to organize, establish trust, share information, and convince thousands of Egyptian protesters to move their participation from the virtual to the real world.

A young Egyptian named Wael Ghonim learned of the death of Khaled Mohamed Said when he viewed graphic images on a friend's Facebook page of the brutalized body. The images created such an emotional response in Ghonim that he decided to create a new Facebook page dedicated to Khaled in order to "lay bare the corrupt practices of the Ministry of Interior."[77] Ghonim had studied business and the Internet and had extensive experience in using the Internet

[76] Wael Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People Is Greater than the People in Power* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 2012), 58.

[77] Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0*, 59.

for marketing. He realized that existing Facebook pages created by other activists to expose Egyptian State Security abuses were confrontational and not likely to influence mainstream Egyptians. Using his marketing experience, Ghonim used a tone on his Facebook page that he believed would be more attractive to a larger audience. "On its first day, 36,000 people joined the page."[78]

With this initial effort, Ghonim began to demonstrate what the U.S. Army would call mission command supported by inform and influence activities. Ghonim established a narrative and in a day's time was able to share his themes and messages with many thousands of Egyptians. Ghonim also demonstrated what the U.S. Army would identify as the beginning of operational art. His initial purpose of exposing the corruption and abuses of the Egyptian police served as his endstate. He used Facebook as a means to arrange his themes and messages in time, space, and purpose. 36,000 Facebook followers in his first day is clear evidence that he was quite capable in using this social media capability.

While online participation provided a great way for Egyptian citizens to vent their frustration with the police, Ghonim knew that virtual protests would not amount to real change. Ghonim articulated a problem statement when he realized that "the more difficult task … was to transfer the struggle from the virtual world to the real one."[79] Ghonim did not consider himself an activist, so to help him understand how to solve his problem, he built online relationships with activists that could help provide ideas. Through his discussions with activists, Ghonim developed an incremental approach that strengthened the confidence and resolve of the Facebook page followers. Ghonim knew that "the strategy of the Facebook page ultimately was to mobilize public support for the cause."[80] Ghonim used his marketing training and visualized "using the

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[78] Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0*, 62.

[79] Ibid., 67.

[80] Ibid.

'sales tunnel' approach" to achieve his endstate.[81] "The first phase was to convince people to join the page and read its posts. The second was to convince them to start interacting with the content by 'liking' and 'commenting' on it. The third was to get them to participate in the page's online campaigns and to contribute to its content themselves. The fourth and final phase would occur when people decided to take the activism onto the street."[82] Being a young Egyptian himself, Ghonim knew from experience that his target audience would be reluctant to actively participate in real world protests due to the potential risks of a determined police crackdown. Instead, Ghonim and his online activist partners "chose instead to identify online activities that we could promote, to instill a sense of optimism and confidence that we could make a difference, even if only in the virtual world for the time being."[83] This entire effort was quite ambitious given the fact that only 7.66 percent of the Egyptian population used Facebook in early 2011.[84]

Without even knowing it, Ghonim used more than one of the U.S. Army's elements of operational art when he developed his approach. Ghonim started with an endstate, which was to expose the abuses of the police and put an end to torture. He was able to understand and visualize the environment, which helped him identify the risks involved with his efforts. With a problem statement in hand, Ghonim developed a line of effort and framed his approach by using four phases to organize his efforts. In addition to using the Army's elements of operational art to evaluate Ghonim's actions, students of Clausewitz would describe Ghonim as a leader that demonstrated "boldness governed by superior intellect."[85] Ghonim sought changes to Egyptian society that most would consider impossible, but in his mind the risk was worth the reward.

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[81] Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0*, 67.

[82] Ibid., 67–68.

[83] Ibid., 67.

[84] Dubai School of Government, *Arab Social Media Report – Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter, Vol. 1 No. 2*, by Racha Mourtada and Fadi Salem, DSG Governance and Innovation Program (Dubai: United Arab Emirates, 2011), 11.

[85] von Clausewitz, *On War*, 192.

Ghonim's Facebook page continued its rapid growth and experienced considerable interaction with its followers. One member provided a suggestion that would allow Ghonim to tackle the problem of converting online actions to real world actions. The suggestion was for supporters dressed in black to gather along the Egyptian coast in Alexandria as well as along the Nile in Cairo and stand in silent protest while facing the water. Ghonim called it the Silent Stand and "wanted to send out a clear message that although we were both sad and angry, we were nevertheless nonviolent."[86] He created an 'event' on Facebook and "more than 100,000 members were reached through the page in a few short days."[87] This particular example provides evidence of how both theory and doctrine come together. While Ghonim was the official administrator of his Facebook page, he practiced a bottom-up approach to accomplishing his goals. He empowered the individual followers to contribute to the content of the protests by building trust and confidence throughout the membership. Also, the Silent Stand served as an example of how the protesters performed self-synchronization and swarming as they descended on the protest sites with only a small amount of formal coordination.

The Silent Stand served as a great example of how to integrate social media capabilities into traditional operations. The Silent Stand itself would not have happened if not for the ability to discuss and share ideas and information through social media. Ghonim used Facebook to work out the details of the event. By creating a Facebook 'event' that members could share, even Egyptians that had never visited Ghonim's specific page could participate. The effort began to incorporate other forums of media. The online protest community "wrote a press release to distribute to the media … to mobilize press coverage before the event in order to enable common Egyptians to participate."[88] This action demonstrated that using social media to spread themes

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[86] Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0*, 70.

[87] Ibid., 73.

[88] Ibid.

and messages was not the only option available to Ghonim and his Facebook followers. Also, "a call was put out to all professional graphic designers who were willing to help design logos and banners for the Silent Stand."[89] Clearly, Ghonim was starting to achieve some of his initial goals in motivating participants to move from the virtual world to the real world.

As the movement gained momentum, Ghonim increased his repertoire of actions. After the first Silent Stand he "felt the need to create a video that would compile the spectacular images captured by the participants."[90] Ghonim had never edited a video before but within a few hours, he completed the video and posted it to his Facebook page, "delivering the clear message that 'we, the Egyptian youth, will not give up our rights.'"[91] Within a few days, more than 50,000 page members viewed the video.[92]

Ghonim was able to accomplish this largely because he operated without any formal approval process by a higher authority. He created, posted, and distributed the video outside of the bounds of any rigid staffing process. This freedom empowered him as an individual to rapidly and decisively act within the information environment to influence his target audience and stay ahead of his adversaries in the Electronic Committee and the Egyptian State Security. Consequently, due to the success of the video, Ghonim and his online partners "decided to schedule another Silent Stand for the following Friday."[93] Ghonim's strategy to motivate the online community to translate their virtual activism to real world protests was picking up momentum.

Ghonim and his Facebook followers faced many risks in using social media. More than any other concern, Ghonim and the other activists knew that they must maintain their anonymity.

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[89] Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0*, 74.

[90] Ibid., 86.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid., 87.

The Egyptian security police actively sought to identify the leaders of protests. "State Security occasionally arrested and harassed bloggers for discussing sensitive issues and for sharing news that the regime didn't like."[94] The authorities in Egypt knew how to use social media as well. In order to identify activist bloggers, the Egyptian National Democratic Party created an "Electronic Committee … whose mission was to influence online opinion in favor of the party through contributions to websites, blogs, news sites, and social networks."[95] Ghonim and his online partners overcame the Electronic Committee's efforts by implementing some basic information assurance and operations security measures.[96] Additionally, because the discussions took place in a public forum, Ghonim had to overcome negative and disparaging comments that could reduce participation and enthusiasm.[97] Any number of successful actions by the Egyptian authorities could have had far-reaching impacts for Ghonim's ability to achieve his end state.

The Egyptian government realized the potential impact of the protesters' efforts and began to take serious action to block protesters use of social media and the Internet. On January 25, 2011, the Egyptian government blocked access to Twitter. On January 26, the regime successfully blocked access to Facebook, although protesters discovered that the imposed ban was not universal. On January 28, the Egyptian government pulled out all the stops. Shortly after midnight, five Egyptian Internet service providers representing 93 percent of the available supply simply stopped providing Internet access to their users.[98] The Egyptian government shut down the Internet within its borders in an effort to prevent the protesters from using Facebook, Twitter, and other social media capabilities to organize and report on the conflict. The Internet blackout

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[94] Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0*, 38.

[95] Ibid., 36.

[96] Ibid., 82.

[97] Ibid., 69 & 139.

[98] Larry Greenemeier, "How Was Egypt's Interent Access Shut Off?" *Scientific American* (January 28, 2011). http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=egypt-internet-mubarak (accessed March 5, 2012).

lasted until February 2nd and probably had the opposite effect. By shutting down the Internet, the Egyptian government isolated itself, to include its economy, from the outside world. The Egyptian government faced what some refer to as the Dictator's Dilemma. Essentially, by allowing citizens to use the Internet, a dictator faces the risk that citizens will use the Internet to threaten the regime.[99] However, by limiting citizens' access to the Internet, a dictator faces the risk of increasing the economic, diplomatic, and social isolation of the regime. Nine days after restoring the Internet, Hosni Mubarak resigned as President of Egypt after occupying that position for 30 years.[100]

Comparing Ghonim and his followers' actions to the actions of Army Information Operations practitioners demonstrates many similarities. Ghonim, while not in command of his followers, led the movement's inform and influence activities by establishing themes that supported the overall narrative. Also, Ghonim set the tone of the themes and messages that the entire community created. By drafting a press release, the movement mirrored the types of actions that an Army public affairs officer would execute in seeking to solicit media coverage of the event. The call to solicit help from professional graphic designers is similar to tasking military information support operations officers to create products such as flyers, posters, and handbills that attempt to influence friendly, enemy, and neutral audiences. Army Information Operations officers (FA30s) would view all of these actions and assist in arranging them in time, space, and purpose. Collectively, Ghonim and his followers performed these tasks very similarly to how the U.S. Army performs inform and influence activities. The most obvious difference that comes from the comparison is that the vast majority of interaction between all the Egyptian participants

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[99] Andy Greenberg, "Mubarak's Digital Dilemma: Why Egypt's Internet Controls Failed," *Forbes* (February 2, 2011), http://www.forbes.com/sites/andygreenberg/2011/02/02/mubaraks-digital-dilemma-why-egypts-internet-controls-failed/ (accessed March 5, 2012).

[100] CNN Wire Staff, "Egypt's Mubarak Resigns after 30-year Rule," CNN.com (February 11, 2011), http://articles.cnn.com/2011-02-11/world/egypt.revolution_1_egypt-s-mubarak-egyptian-president-hosni-mubarak-announcement-on-state-television?_s=PM:WORLD (accessed March 5, 2012).

took place on Facebook. Essentially, these various actions caused Ghonim to deal directly with all three dimensions of the U.S. military's concept of Information Operations. He had to account for the informational and cognitive dimensions that influenced friendly, neutral, and adversary audiences.

Additionally, Ghonim accounted for the physical dimension by leveraging the widely accessible social media infrastructure of the Internet and Facebook. This was not an easy task for one man and Ghonim wrote frequently about how much time he dedicated to achieving his goal, often to the detriment of his work and family.[101] In military terms, Ghonim would have benefited from a social media operations center, which could have provided him with the necessary manpower to manage all aspects of his efforts twenty-four hours a day.

Additional evidence that social media played an important role in the Egyptian Arab Spring is the fact between January 5th and April 5th of 2011, more than 1.9 million Egyptians became new Facebook users, which represented approximately 2.27 percent of the population. This brought the total number of Egyptian Facebook users up to more than 6.5 million people, representing less than 10 percent of Egypt's 80 million citizens. Approximately 75 percent of Egyptian Facebook users are below the age of 30. [102] These statistics shed light on the demographic that used Facebook and likely other social media capabilities during the Egyptian Arab Spring.

To summarize the case of the Egyptian Arab Spring revolution, social media provided the protesters with the ability to organize their efforts through self-synchronization, inform and influence numerous target audiences, and perform a non-violent version of operational art by arranging themes and messages in time, space, and purpose.

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[101] Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0*, 110.

[102] *Arab Social Media Report*, 9–12.

Iran 2009

The people of Iran are not strangers to social media. "More than one-third of the Iranian population, or 28 million people, used the Internet in 2009—compared with less than 1 million in the year 2000."[103] This is a significant growth in the numbers of experienced Internet users within Iran. "Of all the countries in the Middle East and Persian Gulf, Iran is the nation with the greatest number of bloggers and an accelerating number of Internet users."[104] This trend provides Iranians with a non-traditional outlet for the sharing of ideas. Given a potential conflict within the borders of Iran, social media will likely become a primary source of themes and messages as the belligerent parties attempt to influence the narrative.

The Iranian regime is not known for its support of a free press and the open sharing of modern ideas. In 2001, the Iranian regime began a series of actions that limited the independent media within Iran, virtually eliminating the Iranian free press by 2003. As the free press disappeared and Internet usage grew, Iranians discovered that "freedom of expression through the Internet is less vulnerable to state controls."[105] Iranians have come to expect Internet access from providers other than the central government. In Iran, "telecommunication technologies have ended the regime's monopoly on the media and created more democracy in communication."[106] Despite the control of the press by the Iranian regime, Iranians have learned how to gain access to unsanctioned sources of information.

Iran held a presidential election on June 12, 2009, and incumbent presidential candidate Mahmoud Ahmadinejad won his reelection bid. However the opposition candidates claimed massive voter fraud. Millions of Iranians turned out to protest the official election results, but one

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[103] Abdo, *The Iran Primer*, 53.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid., 54.

[106] Ibid.

event in particular helped focus the entire world's attention on Iran. An unknown sniper shot a 26-year-old protester named Neda Agha Soltan who was participating in the protests. A fellow protester captured her death with a cell phone video camera. Through social media websites, primarily YouTube and Facebook, the raw footage of those images was broadcast around the world.

The video had a significant effect on the opposition's narrative. "Facebook was one of the main tools for the opposition during the presidential campaign in the spring and summer of 2009 and shortly after the disputed June 2009 election, as were video exchange websites such as YouTube.com."[107] The Green Movement opposition immediately attached these images to their themes and messages. Through these enhanced themes and messages, the opposition mobilized an estimated 3 million protesters in the weeks immediately following this event. The opposition was able to muster tens of thousands of protesters for many months more, keeping the movement alive well into 2010.

However, the Iranian regime used these events to learn how to counter the protesters online efforts. The regime came to realize the power that social media provided protesters as they organized their protests and spread their themes and messages. Iran initiated a series of controls intended to limit the protesters' use of the Internet and social media websites. "In 2009, Iran required all private ISPs that offer Internet connections to the public to connect through the state-owned Telecommunications Company of Iran."[108] With all Internet traffic moving through this single gateway, the Iranian regime can more easily monitor the online activities of the opposition. "Iran has produced technology for identifying and blocking web sites considered politically harmful. Blocking Facebook is now a permanent strategy employed before demonstrations."[109]

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[107] Abdo, *The Iran Primer*, 54.

[108] Ibid., 55.

[109] Ibid.

These and other controlling actions are useful in limiting the spread of the opposition's themes and messages. Additionally, Iran instituted an organizational solution for combating the opposition's use of social media. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), Iran's elite military arm, "formed a 'Cyber Defense Command' in 2009, which is responsible for monitoring potentially subversive Internet activity."[110] The Iranian government implemented these solutions in an effort to limit the opposition's use of social media to organize and support the opposition's narrative.

Tunisia 2010–2011

The political movement in Tunisia began in 2010 and the protesters enhanced their movement by using social media to spread their themes and messages. On December 17, 2010, a young Tunisian named Mohamed Bouazizi, after failing to overcome local government corruption in order to sell fruit as a street vendor, lit himself on fire in front of the local governor's office in a desperate protest against the corrupt system. Later that day, his family gathered in front of the governor's office to continue the protest. Someone recorded this extended protest on their cell phone camera and posted the video to YouTube. The images and the corresponding story began to spread and gained significant traction when Al Jazeera, an international Arabic news channel, aired the video to the Arab world across its satellite broadcast.[111] This event sparked a swell of protests across Tunisia that ultimately led to the fall of the Tunisian government.

Like Egyptians and Iranians, Tunisians are no strangers to the Internet. "Over one-third of Tunisians are Internet users. Some 20 percent use Facebook."[112] Since the beginning of

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[110] Abdo, *The Iran Primer*, 55.

[111] Wright, *Rock the Casbah*, 15-16.

[112] Ibid., 16.

protests in Tunisia and other Arab countries in early 2011, Facebook users in the region have significantly increased. "The total number of Facebook users in the Arab world stands at 27,711,503 (as of April 5, 2011), up from 21,377,282 (January 5, 2011), having almost doubled since the same time last year (14,791,972 in April 2010)."[113] From January 5 through April 5, 2011, Tunisia added 535,640 new Facebook users.[114]

As Tunisians added social media users, they learned how to use Facebook to make their protests and messages more effective. A survey conducted in March 2011 indicated 33 percent of the respondents reported that the primary use of Facebook in Tunisia during the Jasmine Revolution in early 2011 was to "spread information to the world about the movement and related events." Another 31 percent reported that the main use of Facebook was to "raise awareness inside the country on the causes of the movements." Twenty-two percent reported that they primarily used Facebook to "organize actions and manage activists." Finally, approximately 10 percent reported that they used Facebook for "entertainment and social uses" such as connecting with friends or playing games.[115] These responses provide a glimpse into the types of activities that most protesters conduct through social media.

Afghanistan 2009–2011

A few examples exist that demonstrate the United States' successful efforts at using social media to directly engage the adversary and the local population in the information environment. On June 24, 2009, Combined Joint Task Force-82 stationed in Afghanistan posted a video to YouTube to counter Taliban claims that the "Americans had killed innocent civilians."[116] The video consists of AH-64 attack helicopter gun camera footage along with cockpit audio that

[113] *Arab Social Media Report,* 9.

[114] Ibid., 11.

[115] Ibid., 6.

[116]Ibid., 15.

demonstrates the helicopter crew's effort to ensure that their engagement would not result in collateral damage. The actual event took place on May 27, 2009, twenty-eight days prior to CJTF-82 posting the video. By posting this video to YouTube, CJTF-82 attempted to counter the Taliban's claims. This incident highlights a challenge in the United States Government's Information Operations process. The Taliban were able to post claims of American atrocities to web-hosted social media sites within hours to days of an incident. The American social media response took nearly a month.

In October of 2011, another incident took place in Afghanistan between U.S. forces and the Taliban that played out in the social media realm. A group of Taliban attacked the U.S. Embassy and NATO headquarters in Kabul. While the battle was taking place, a supposed Taliban supporter began using Twitter to 'tweet' messages discussing "false claims about U.S. fatalities."[117] Public affairs soldiers, who knew that the Taliban routinely posted wildly false claims about the NATO mission in Afghanistan, decided that it was time to counter these false claims head on. The ISAF public affairs team dedicated two soldiers to full-time monitoring of social media in order to rapidly provide responses to the Taliban messages. This may be the first instance of a full-time, operational social media 'war room.' Public Affairs doctrine would expect that these actions take place in the Media Operations Center. As the military continues to use social media in the operational environment, it will continue to learn more lessons that it can apply across the entire force.

Social Media Lessons Learned

Social media has become a regular part of modern conflict. While Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube may not be impacting conflicts in the most remote parts of the world, the U.S. military can expect that adversaries and target audiences in nearly all of its future conflicts will be using

[117] Charley Keyes, "Twitter War with the Taliban," CNN Security Clearance Blog, entry posted October 26, 2011, http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2011/10/26/4835/ (accessed December 1, 2011).

these capabilities. Examples from Egypt, Iran, Tunisia, and Afghanistan provide evidence that belligerents are leveraging social media capabilities as they face off against their adversaries. These examples provide numerous lessons to the U.S. military as it prepares for future conflict.

Given the evidence from recent conflicts, the Army can begin to recognize lessons it can learn from the application of social media within those conflicts. Three big ideas emerge from the evidence. First, social media is an aspect of the operational environment that commanders and staffs must learn to understand, visualize, and describe. Second, social media capabilities are tools that allow commanders and staffs to seize the initiative within a conflict, especially with respect to dominating the narrative within the information environment. Third, social media provides opportunities to empower individual soldiers as their influential actions add to or take away from dominating the narrative.

Before exploring these three big ideas, it is important to address a handful of ways that the military is trying to learn how to use social media. Two military research organizations have posted Broad Agency Announcements in order to solicit social media related research and development proposals. Also, members of the military already involved in using social media gather at conferences that emphasize the use of social media in military operations.

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, commonly known as DARPA, published a Broad Agency Announcement "soliciting innovative research proposals in the area of social media in strategic communication."[118] This request seeks solutions to four specific program goals:

> 1. Detect, classify, measure and track the (a) formation, development and spread of ideas and concepts (memes), and (b) purposeful or deceptive messaging and misinformation.
> 2. Recognize persuasion campaign structures and influence operations across social media sites and communities.
> 3. Identify participants and intent, and measure effects of persuasion campaigns.

[118] Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), "Broad Agency Announcement: Social Media in Strategic Communication (SMISC), DARPA-BAA-11-64," (Virginia: DARPA, 2011): 4.

4. Counter messaging of detected adversary influence operations.[119]

DARPA's solicitation for social media solutions serves as a starting point for the types of actions the Army can develop as it increasingly works to dominate the information environment.

Another agency soliciting social media solutions is the United States Special Operations Command. US Special Operations Command published its own Broad Agency Announcement in order to collect proposals that seek improvement in its ability to use social media capabilities.[120] The Broad Agency Announcement discusses a wide array of research topics for Military Information Support Operations. The request most relevant to social media is under the category of Information Management. The request describes research relevant to "Network metrics, trail metrics, procedures for grouping nodes, identifying local patterns, comparing and contrasting networks, groups, and individuals. Examine how networks change through space and time with change detection techniques. Identify key players, groups and vulnerabilities, model network changes over time, and perform COA [course of action] analysis."[121] This Broad Agency Announcement is not as specific to social media capabilities as the DARPA request but it does provide insight into the types of capabilities that the Military Information Support Operations community needs to use social media.

The defense industry recognizes that social media is a capability that must be incorporated into military operations in future conflicts. The Institute for Defense and Government Advancement hosts an annual Social Media for Defense and Government Summit conference.[122] The SMi Group hosted a social media conference in London in 2011 that aimed "to

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[119] DARPA Broad Agency Announcement: 4.

[120] United States Special Operations Command, Special Operations Research, Development, and Acquisition Center (SORDAC), "Consolidated Broad Agency Announcement for Special Reconnaissance, Surveillance, and Exploitation and Military Information Support Operations, Solicitation H92222-12-BAA-SORDAC-IN," (MacDill AFB, FL: 2012): 5.

[121] US Special Operations Command Broad Agency Announcement: 13.

[122] Institute for Defense and Government Advancement, "Social Media for Defense," http://www.idgasocialmedia.com/Event.aspx?id=659400 (accessed March 5, 2012).

provide an in-depth knowledge of how the military from the US and Europe use social media tools."[123] In February 2011, the Army's Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama hosted the Army Materiel Command Social Media Conference in order to discuss "guidance and best practices for soldiers, civilians, and families."[124] At these and other conferences discussing social media, military information operations practitioners come together to discuss recent social media related developments and the future direction of social media in military operations.

As the Army executes future military operations, it will look to its doctrine as a framework for how to incorporate social media capabilities. In order to successfully use social media, the Army must understand how it fits into the operational environment. Commanders and military planners need to be able to understand, visualize, and describe how social media activities fit into the information environment. The Army Design Methodology and the Military Decision Making Process, both found in *Field Manual 5-0*, provide broad frameworks for describing the environment.[125] Information Operations related doctrine expands on these frameworks by discussing how to describe the information environment. However, given the current state of military doctrine, the Army should revise the manuals related to Information Operations in order to more deliberately address social media capabilities. As the Army executes the Doctrine 2015 initiative, soldiers can expect that the Army will determine the best way to describe how social media applies to the information environment and will appropriately revise the relevant manuals. Ideally, the Army will heed the lessons provided by Ghonim in Egypt and by DARPA and US Special Operations Command's research and development efforts.

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[123] SMi Group, "Social Media within the Military and Defence Sector (2011)," http://www.smi-online.co.uk/event_media/overview.asp?is=1&ref=3793 (accessed March 18, 2012).

[124] United States Army, "AMC Social Media Conference Provides Guidance, Best Practices for Soldiers, Civilians & Families," http://www.army.mil/article/51643/amc-social-media-conference-provides-guidance-best-practices-for-soldiers-civilians--families (accessed March 18, 2012).

[125] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 5-0, The Operations Process* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), viii–ix.

As the military begins to increase the ability of individual soldiers to impact the narrative, it also incurs the need to more deliberately monitor the actions taking place within social media environments. Military hierarchies will need to establish mechanisms to monitor multiple social media activities in real time, twenty-four hours a day. The evidence from the Arab Spring indicates that actors using social media have the potential to alter the information environment more rapidly than actors using traditional media. Monitoring social media trends helps commanders better understand the information environment. Traditionally, public affairs personnel establish media operations centers that monitor the traditional media outlets such as television, radio, and print information services. Evidence in Joint doctrine describes how media operations centers also include a section that monitors the Internet. The increase in the use of social media means that media operations centers will need to increase their capacity to monitor these forums. However, recognizing this obvious development creates additional questions that this monograph will not attempt to answer. For instance, will adding social media to a media operations center checklist require additional personnel? Will a media operations center be able to respond to social media information trends without securing approval from multiple authorities through an intensive staffing process? How will public affairs officers, Military Information Support Operations officers and Functional Area 30 Information Operations officers each use the media operations center to coordinate attributable and non-attributable social media actions? These and other questions represent the types of details that operational planners need to understand as they begin to deliberately incorporate social media into the operational environment.

Social media has become a preferred form of communication for the world's younger demographics, which means that future conflicts that involve regions experiencing a 'youth bulge' will almost definitely require a deliberate effort to use social media to communicate to the younger audiences. If U.S. military forces deploy to a future conflict without implementing a deliberate social media plan, then they risk alienating a crucial audience that can help support the

military's efforts. Put another way, the Army must learn to use social media in future conflict in order to seize the initiative with respect to the narrative.

In Egypt, Ghonim and his fellow activists seized the initiative by formulating a strategy for using Facebook to dominate the narrative and expose the Egyptian Security Service's violent nature. In both Iran and Tunisia, a significant event, such as the recorded death of a protester, provided a spark to the narrative by incorporating new content that enhanced the protesters' themes and messages. This significant event marked the beginning of the protesters attempt to seize the initiative within the information environment. Protesters used the established social media networks to rapidly spread the new messages. In Iran, the regime demonstrated its ability to retake the initiative by significantly reducing the protesters ability to use social media. In Afghanistan, the U.S. conducted an airstrike against Taliban combatants. The Taliban was able to gain the initiative of the narrative by creating Internet postings that claimed that the U.S. airstrikes caused civilian casualties. Almost a month transpired before the Americans posted YouTube videos that attempted to counter the Taliban claims. As the Army plans for future conflict, it must seek to use social media capabilities to seize the initiative.

An important aspect of using social media to seize the initiative is the synchronization of these capabilities into the overall military plan. Military planners use operational art to develop multiple lines of effort that work together to achieve the commander's intent. Often, a military plan will use an information line of effort that derives its goals from the narrative developed through Strategic Communication efforts. In the same way that planners ultimately synchronize the battlefield tactical actions of traditional military capabilities such as armor, aviation, or logistics, planners must also take into account the synchronization of social media actions. Planners could equate social media capabilities to field artillery fire missions. Fire missions might require very specific munitions or timing such as a precision-guided munition intended to strike at a specific time-on-target. Social media capabilities should follow the same model.

To accomplish this level of detailed synchronization, military commanders and staff require a more thorough understanding of the types of capabilities that are available. The Joint community has published the *Commander's Handbook for Strategic Communication* and the Army has published the *Army Social Media Handbook*, both of which address the use of social media capabilities but only with slightly more detail than current Information Operations doctrine. As with understanding how social media fits into the operational environment, the Army should revise its doctrine to address tactics, techniques, and procedures for streamlining the use of social media capabilities. The Army should be proactive at using social media instead of reactive. Otherwise, responding to the Taliban or other future adversaries inaccurate claims will continue to take weeks or months instead of hours to days.

The U.S. military needs to examine its processes and authorities for providing timely themes and messages that reinforce its narrative and counters its adversary's narrative. Proper decision authorities at lower echelons can provide opportunities to act in a timely manner and seize the initiative with respect to the narrative. Social media war rooms with decentralized authorities can provide dedicated social media expertise that can develop appropriate themes and messages in response to a crisis. Military planners must identify how social media capabilities not only enhance the narrative but also how they complement other lines of effort.

While limited examples exist that demonstrate how the military uses social media to influence adversaries and foreign audiences, military units have embraced using social media in order to keep domestic audiences informed. Deploying units use numerous social media sites to maintain contact with family and other supporters. Because it is so easy to set up, most units create official online presences on Facebook. The Army's *Social Media Handbook* lists the many do's and do not's for establishing these types of capabilities on the Internet. In addition to unit Facebook pages, many senior leaders have begun to create individual social media pages. Senior leaders use these pages to spread themes and messages and to interact with the public in order to continuously conduct official inform activities. Some senior leaders have also adopted Twitter as

a social media capability that complements their presence on Facebook. Individual leaders and units often used social media to "keep the public informed . . . keep families connected and . . . help address negative news stories and inaccurate reports."[126] As social media capabilities continue to grow in popularity, the military will continue to add these capabilities to their arsenal of inform activities.[127]

A host of challenges face the Army as it uses social media to enhance its conventional operations to seize the initiative. Modern use of social media has shown that arranging the use of these capabilities in time, space, and purpose can require a significant effort in manpower and timeliness. Social media can have immediate impacts on a military line of effort because of the ability of users to receive, view, and share in a short span of time. This requires the military to provide appropriate authorities for the approval to release social media content in a timely manner. Military organizations have always needed to synchronize themes and messages with other lines of operation. Social media is an additional capability that commanders and staffs must consider as they synchronize all actions. Like all operations, social media requires operational security measures that ensure that adversaries are not able to acquire sensitive information about friendly forces. Finally, military organizations that wish to anonymously use social media capabilities must face the challenge of attribution. All of these challenges require solutions that allow the military to more effectively use social media in future operations.

Empower Individual Soldiers

The third lesson is that social media provides a mechanism to empower individual soldiers and small units as they synchronize their actions without requiring cumbersome bureaucratic hierarchical processes. This big idea is likely to face the most resistance because it comes closest to describing solutions proposed by the supporters of the Information Age

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[126] *The United States Army Social Media Handbook,* 15.

[127] Ibid., 6–22.

revolution in military affairs. In general, this big idea requires two changes to how the Army approaches social media.

First, the Army should encourage individual soldiers and small units to use social media to create and disseminate content that is relevant to influencing actors within the operational environment. The Army's Mission Command doctrine indirectly supports this recommendation when it lists "creat[ing] shared understanding, exercise[ing] disciplined initiative, and accept[ing] prudent risk" as three of its fundamental principles.[128] The immediate challenge to this notion is that these actions are inappropriate for individual soldiers who have not received the same level of training that Public Affairs, Military Information Support Operations, and Information Operations specialists have received. Obviously, individual soldiers have been known to act in a way that is detrimental to the Army's efforts, but appropriate regulations, checks, and balances can limit the negative effects. However, similarly to the Arab world, the Army will consist of a growing cadre of young people that are very adept at creating and sharing content through social media. By centralizing the role of who controls social media content in the operational environment, the Army risks creating an environment that Kleinfeld would describe as a "workforce mired in old ways, reinforcing a hierarchical bureaucracy that sees value only in high-level relations."[129] Besides ensuring that the use of social media does not become too centralized, the Army should empower individual soldiers in order to achieve the timeliness necessary to thwart the efforts of its adversaries. The Army will require social media capabilities that can rapidly react to adversaries' attempts to seize the initiative for themselves. Commanders want decisive action from their soldiers. The Army should find ways to empower individual soldiers to use social media to influence the operational environment.

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[128] *Field Manual 6-0*, 1-2.

[129] Kleinfeld, "Global Outreach: Speaking to the Awakening World," 31.

Second, empowering individuals and small units to use social media can have an impact on the existing organizational structure of the military. This monograph does not agree with Arquilla and Ronfeldt that echelons above the company level will become irrelevant. However, additional research into the relief efforts in Haiti or Japan could shed light on how social media impacted military operations and the organizations that conducted them. The number of influential actors in the operational environment continues to increase. The events of the Arab Spring provide evidence that significant political upheaval can take place through self-synchronized, relatively leaderless organizations. As the military deploys to support humanitarian assistance operations, it will be operating in support of many non-military partners. The need to share information rapidly within a non-hierarchical environment will be critical to success in these types of operations. The Army should commit the resources to evaluate the effectiveness of organizations that use social media to synchronize its efforts.

As social media allows for improved synchronization, it also improves the ability for members at the lowest levels of the organization to provide input to the process. Soldiers equipped with devices such as smart phones that seamlessly integrate photo and video capturing capabilities with social media capabilities will allow anyone to have an immediate impact on transmitting messages that support the established themes and narratives. While empowering individual soldiers excites information age theorists, traditional military practitioners recognize the inherent risks of allowing individuals to create their own message content.

Describing how social media fits into the operational environment, using social media to seize the initiative, and empowering individuals and small units through social capabilities are three big ideas that the Army should explore. Each of these big ideas identifies risks and opportunities that military planners will face as they integrate social media capabilities into future operations in time, space, and purpose.

Conclusion

The evidence shows that social media has become an additional element within the operational environment within which nearly anyone with an Internet connection can participate. The speed at which participants can add content, truthful or not, to that battle space forces military forces to change the way it has traditionally approached social media. Instead of only using social media to interact with friends and allies, military forces must now find ways to actively interact with all audiences, friendly, enemy, and neutral, across all social media interfaces. Three big ideas emerge that should focus the Army's efforts as it learns from recent conflicts about how to use social media. First, military forces must develop mechanisms to better understand, visualize, and describe how various actors are using social media within the information environment. The research and development efforts that DARPA and US Special Operations Command provide a good start at helping the military describe how social media fits within the information environment. Second, commanders and staffs must identify tactics, techniques, and procedures that integrate across multiple lines of effort that seek to seize the initiative. Military forces must become more responsive in their ability to influence the narrative through social media. To do this, the Joint force must seek ways to shorten the links between individual soldiers at the tactical level to the social media war rooms that exist within Media Operations Centers at the strategic level. By creating social media war rooms, the Information Operations community can more effectively integrate their social media based themes and messages into other lines of effort and lines of operation in time, space, and purpose. Finally, the Army should use social media to empower individual soldiers during military operations by loosening the authority to create and transmit social media content that supports the overall strategic narrative. The bureaucratic military force structure that governs social media interaction is not responsive enough to rapidly counter adversary themes and messages released in social media forums. Despite the inherent risks that military forces may face in decentralizing its approach to social media, failing to engage the enemy within social media means that military

forces effectively cede the initiative within this battle space. While the purpose of military doctrine is to serve as a guide and not a binding checklist, ceding the initiative to the enemy in any part of the operational environment significantly deviates from the intent of the Army's updated doctrine found in *Army Doctrine Publication 3-0.*[130] It is in the interest of the Army and the Joint force to recognize where it needs to take necessary risks and adopt an approach to social media that eventually makes every soldier a messenger.

[130] Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, Unified Land Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2011), 1.

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