

Reporting War in 140 Characters: How Journalists Used Twitter During the 2014 Gaza–Israel Conflict

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Because Twitter may facilitate interconnectedness among diverse actors—elite and nonelite, inside and outside of a given national community—it can potentially challenge traditional war journalism that has typically been elite-oriented and nationally oriented. The present study examined this potential during the 2014 Gaza–Israel conflict. Based on a content analysis of Twitter messages by Israeli and international journalists, the study suggests that in wartime journalists on Twitter may have agency that can manifest in retweeting critical messages—not necessarily in the language of their national community—and conversing with people outside official power circles. However, institutional, cultural, and national forces still seem dominant, as particularly reflected in messages by journalists who are members of one of the conflicting parties. “Mr. Gates” on Twitter may have more agency than he had decades ago, but seems constrained by virtual national boundaries. By showing the extent of journalists’ agency and constraints, the study advances our understanding of war journalism in the digital age.

Keywords: conflict, gatekeeping, Gaza, indexing, Israel, sources, Twitter, war

“Trying to sleep but attacks are intense at 5 am [*sic*] in #gaza. Israel really striking hard now that Hamas left it with its own death toll,” a *Wall Street Journal* reporter posted on Twitter in July 2014 (Casey, 2014 [tweet]). “Wow—running to the stairwell with a baby and a three-year old girl—not easy,” an Israeli reporter tweeted after sirens went off in Tel Aviv alerting a rocket launch from Gaza (Ravid, 2014 [tweet]). “What a mess in the world right now,” a CNN reporter wrote, complaining about “out of control bloodshed in #gaza as world stumbles toward possible confrontation with #Russia” (Chance, 2014, [tweet]). These are only three of many tweets journalists posted during the 2014 Gaza–Israel conflict.

Twitter has become a key means of disseminating news and information during major events (e.g., Lotan et al., 2011). One of them was the military conflict between Israel and Hamas from July 8 to August 26, 2014. During those 50 days, journalists were highly active on this social networking site (Beauchamp, 2014), reporting and offering their take on unfolding developments. Because Twitter’s sociotechnical infrastructure facilitates interconnectedness among diverse users, journalists could potentially give prominence to a broad range of voices, including those of elite and nonelite actors, inside

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Date submitted: 2016-11-07

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and outside of a given national community. Indeed, research has shown that during the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, journalists took advantage of Twitter affordances to disseminate messages by diverse actors (Hermida, Lewis, & Zamith, 2014; Lotan et al., 2011).

However, scholars have paid limited attention to journalistic behavior on Twitter in wartime, when journalists may be “caught between nation and profession” (Zandberg & Neiger, 2005, p. 131). Research focusing on traditional media has indicated that during wars and other military conflicts, journalists have a high tendency to defer to official actors and showcase their versions of events (e.g., Bennett, Lawrence, & Livingston, 2007; Robinson, 2004). In this article, I explore to what extent—if any—Twitter challenges traditional war journalism.

Through a content analysis of posts, I examine how journalists used Twitter during the 2014 Gaza–Israel conflict and compare Israeli journalists with colleagues working for international outlets. This analysis shows the extent to which journalists whose nation was at war, versus other journalists, were elite-oriented as well as nationally oriented.

Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of gatekeeping (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009) and indexing (Bennett et al., 2007), I suggest that in wartime individual journalists on Twitter may have agency that can manifest in retweeting critical messages and interacting with people outside official power circles. Nevertheless, institutional, cultural, and national forces still seem to be stronger, at least when journalists are members of one of the conflicting parties. It seems that White’s (1950) “Mr. Gates” would have more agency on Twitter than he had decades ago, but would nonetheless be constrained by virtual national borders.

War Journalism and Deference to Officials

A considerable body of research has shown that journalists in traditional mainstream media often fashion the news to the versions of reality defined by officials (e.g., Bennett et al., 2007; Brown, Bybee, Wearden, & Straughan, 1987; Gans, 1979; Sigal, 1973). Reliance on official sources is particularly dominant during wars and other military conflicts when high stakes are involved (Hallin, 1986; Lawrence, 2010; Robinson, 2004).

Focusing on the U.S. mainstream media, the indexing hypothesis (Bennett, 1990; Bennett et al., 2007) helps to understand the dynamic of journalistic coverage in different contexts, including conflicts. This hypothesis posits that journalists generally calibrate news about public affairs to the power balance they perceive among political elites. When political elites seem to agree on an issue, news coverage will tend to echo the consensual view; but when they disagree, the coverage will likely “fall more or less within the contours of their disagreement” (Lawrence, 2012, para. 1). For example, social issues subject to high-level political debate are more likely to receive wide-ranging news coverage. However, foreign policy conflicts “involve new conditions and high national security stakes that may give officials considerable room to define reality as they see fit, particularly when they go largely unopposed by other powerful actors inside government” (Bennett et al., 2007, p. 4). This indexing dynamic was demonstrated in various U.S. cases, such as foreign policy crises from 1945 to 1991 (Zaller & Chiu, 1996), military interventions in the post-Vietnam era (Mermin, 1999), and the lead-up to Iraq War in 2003 (Bennett et al., 2007).

In congruence with Bennett and his colleagues (2007), Wolfsfeld (1997, 2011) argued that when authorities dominate the political environment, the news media are less likely to play an independent role. Authorities will be successful in dominating the political environment if they maintain control over events and the flow of relevant information, as well as maintain a high level of elite consensus surrounding their policies. For example, Wolfsfeld showed that the news media were faithful servants of the U.S. administration during the 1991 Gulf War with Iraq, as the administration had almost complete control over events and the flow of information.

However, there may be diverse reasons for media deference to the state in times of war or conflict (Robinson, 2004). Dependence on government information sources is one of them. Another is patriotic loyalty. As Zandberg and Neiger (2005) pointed out, journalists whose nation is involved in a violent conflict confront a dual allegiance: As members of the journalistic community, they are supposed to adhere to professional norms and values, such as factuality, balance, and criticism, but as members of the national-cultural community, they are called on to show their loyalty. This may lead them to "rally round the flag" (Mueller, 1973). Journalistic behavior in times of war or conflict may also have an economic aspect. Given the profit orientation of many media organizations (Herman & Chomsky, 1988), their news coverage may adhere to patriotic-ethnocentric sentiments.

Journalists who are members of one of the conflicting parties can construct culturally acceptable stories not only by relying on official domestic sources, but also by using other mechanisms. Among them are dominant use of the domestic language and lowering the prominence of civilian casualties caused by one's own combatants (Wolfsfeld, Frosh, & Awabdy, 2008). For example, Ravi (2005) showed that during the Iraq War, newspapers from the United States and United Kingdom provided less information on Iraqi civilian casualties compared with newspapers in countries not involved in the war.

Nevertheless, journalistic behavior during violent conflicts may vary over time and circumstance (Wolfsfeld, 1997). Whereas the Israeli TV and leading newspapers did not give voice to Palestinians during the first Palestinian uprising (1987-91), the Israeli media coverage in later years included a broad range of Palestinian figures (Liebes & Kampf, 2009). Diverse explanations can be offered for this change (Balmas, Sheaffer, & Wolfsfeld, 2015; Liebes & Kampf, 2009), such as the transformation of media ecology whereby journalists are less restricted to national boundaries, stronger emphasis on drama in journalistic coverage due to business considerations, and political changes (for example, agreements and negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians).

Indeed, under certain conditions, journalists may be less dependent on domestic officials. Bennett et al. (2007) suggested that the core indexing dynamic can be modified and press independence enhanced by event-driven and technology-assisted news, leaks and investigative reporting, and outsider counterspin. Focusing on the first factor, event-driven news (Lawrence, 2000) is "coverage of activities that are, at least at their initial occurrence, spontaneous and not managed by officials within institutional settings" (Livingston & Bennett, 2003, pp. 364-365). As such, it may draw on a wider variety of voices and perspectives than "institutionally driven news" (Lawrence, 2000). For example, events in wartime are sometimes beyond the control of governments. Thus, they may limit—at least to some extent—the indexing dynamic. This dynamic can also be limited by technology-enabled reporting. According to

Wolfsfeld (2011), there is good reason to believe that new media have made it more difficult for leaders to maintain control over the flow of information: "It is especially intriguing to ask how news of wars has changed in the digital age" (p. 3).

In this study, I address this question by examining how journalists used Twitter during the 2014 Gaza-Israel conflict. Research has shown how journalists covered wars and other military conflicts in traditional media, but limited scholarly attention has been paid to how journalists use social media at such times. Addressing this gap is important because social media such as Twitter may challenge traditional journalistic behavior by potentially facilitating interconnectedness among diverse actors—both elite and nonelite—inside and outside the national community. Also, journalists on Twitter have latitude for self-expression, as they are typically not subject to the layers of editing in their home outlets (Molyneux, 2015).

By analyzing messages that journalists posted on Twitter during the 2014 Gaza-Israel conflict, the present study demonstrates the extent to which war journalism in this space was elite-oriented. This is consequential considering Workneh's (2011) assertion that "the more the coverage relies on elite and official sources, the more it displays a tendency towards war" (p. 46). The assertion relies on Galtung's (2006) normative distinction between two modes of conflict reporting: war journalism and peace journalism. One of the characteristics of war journalism is being elite-oriented, whereas peace journalism is people-oriented. In this study, I show how journalists use their agency as individual gatekeepers in a networked space that is potentially people-oriented.

Gatekeeping in a Networked Space

Gatekeeping has long been a key area of research in mass communication (Vos, 2015). According to Shoemaker and Vos (2009), "Gatekeeping is the process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited number of messages that reach people each day, and it is the center of the media's role in modern public life" (p. 1). However, some scholars have challenged the relevance of gatekeeping in the digital media environment, where people can be both receivers and senders of messages. For instance, Williams and Delli Carpini (2000) contend that the changing media landscape "undermines the idea that there are discrete gates through which political information passes: if there are no gates, there can be no gatekeepers" (p. 61).

Nevertheless, other scholars have insisted that gatekeeping is not ready for retirement (Heinderyckx, 2015; Vos, 2015), as new gatekeepers and dynamics of gatekeeping have emerged (e.g., Barzilai-Nahon, 2008; Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013). Shoemaker and Vos (2009) introduced a modified gatekeeping model suggesting that information can flow through three types of channels: source, media, and audience. These channels can interact, allowing messages to pass from one to another and through them.

Actors inside and outside of journalism operate within a complex ecosystem that may be regarded as what Benkler (2006) terms a "networked public sphere." In this sphere, facilitated by advanced digital technologies, there are interconnections among diverse actors who can exchange information and viewpoints, democratizing the public discourse. Social networking sites, such as Twitter, are key components of the networked public sphere. Twitter's pluralizing practices, for example,

retweeting and mentioning (@username), "permit non-elite and elite actors to co-create and co-curate flows of information" (Papacharissi, 2014, p. 48). In a process defined by Meraz and Papacharissi (2013) as "networked gatekeeping," actors are crowd-sourced to prominence through the use of such practices. It can also be argued that Twitter users are engaged in "gatematching" (Bruns, 2005), the process by which audiences highlight, share, and evaluate "relevant material released by other sources, in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding" (Bruns & Burgess, 2012, p. 802).

The extent to which one type of actor cites or passes along messages from other types may vary according to circumstances. Focusing on the 2012 presidential campaign in the United States, Lawrence, Molyneux, Coddington, and Holton (2014) found that political reporters and commentators "were fairly consistent in not allowing Twitter to disrupt traditional one-way gatekeeping flows" (p. 12), as more than 80% of their retweeted messages during the Democratic and Republican conventions originated from fellow journalists. However, during the civil uprisings in the Arab world (the Arab Spring), journalists were more likely to open the gates to other actors by retweeting them. Lotan et al. (2011) suggested that at the height of the uprising in Tunisia, journalists heavily retweeted messages both by activists and by colleagues. Furthermore, Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira (2012) indicated that during the uprising in Egypt, journalists frequently retweeted expressions of solidarity posted by Egyptian citizens as a way of reporting public sentiment.

Based on an analysis of sources cited by National Public Radio's Andy Carvin on Twitter during the Arab Spring, Hermida et al. (2014) even raised the possibility that a new paradigm of sourcing was at play: broadening the range of voices in the news by giving prominence to nonelite sources. Carvin, a central node in the information network on the uprisings, relied not only on institutional elites and mainstream media, but also on alternative actors (e.g., activists and bloggers) who received nearly half of all tweet mentions in the sample.

Hermida et al. (2014) suggested that future studies would do well to further assess individual gatekeepers' sourcing routines in a digital media context. The present study aims at doing that by examining journalists' behaviors on Twitter in wartime, which poses unique concerns and dilemmas to journalists.

Between Individuals and Social Systems

An emphasis on the agency of individual journalists is not new in gatekeeping scholarship. Applying to a journalistic setting the concept of gatekeeper coined by the social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1943), White (1950) examined how a newspaper's wire editor—Mr. Gates—selected news stories. White suggested that the selection was influenced by the gatekeeper's "own set of experiences, attitudes and expectations" (p. 386). This view later fell out of favor as sociological scholarship (e.g., Gans, 1979) placed the gatekeeping control at the level of the news organization (Shoemaker, Vos, & Reese, 2009). However, on social media, individual journalists seem to have greater agency, which is manifest in posting and disseminating messages without being subject to the layers of editing operating in their home outlets (Molyneux, 2015).

That said, other influences may be at work. Drawing on Shoemaker and Reese's (2014) hierarchy of influences, the present study addresses three levels of analysis: individuals, social institutions, and social systems. At the level of social institutions, sources of content are among the major forces of influence. Traditional war coverage in mainstream media has tended to rely heavily on official sources (e.g., Bennett et al., 2007), but it is unclear whether war coverage on social media does the same. Another level of analysis focuses on the larger society as a system and on how the national or cultural context affects media performance. National and cultural influences on journalists covering violent conflicts have been identified in studies focusing on traditional media (e.g., Zandberg & Neiger, 2005). However, Twitter is a global space, potentially allowing an exchange of messages among diverse actors inside and outside a given national community. Thus, it is worthwhile to examine journalists' performance on Twitter during conflicts that are not restricted to a national community.

The present study investigates how journalists used Twitter during the 2014 Gaza–Israel conflict, comparing reporters who worked for Israeli news outlets with colleagues working for international outlets. Whereas the former were members of both the journalistic community and a national community involved in the war, the latter were less constrained by dual allegiances. However, both the Israeli and the international journalists were highly active on the same platform—Twitter—which offers the same affordances to all its users. This study examines whether and how these journalists differed in their Twitter messages during the war by analyzing the choice of topics, types of cited sources, types of mentioned actors, the use of Twitter affordances (retweeting, replying, and linking), and expressing opinions and criticism.

The extent to which Israeli and international journalists differed in their use of Twitter and the content they produced can help assess the extent to which Twitter allows journalists whose nation is at war to transcend national boundaries. In addition, the extent to which the two groups of journalists opened the gates on Twitter to diverse sources can help evaluate whether a new paradigm of sourcing may be at work, as Hermida et al. (2014) suggested, or whether traditional elite-oriented war journalism is dominant on Twitter as well.

Bloodshed and Rockets: 50 Days of Conflict

The 2014 conflict between Israel and Hamas was sparked by a series of violent acts. Several weeks prior to the military confrontation in the Gaza Strip, three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped and murdered by radical Palestinians in the West Bank, followed by the kidnapping and murder of an Arab Israeli teenager by Jewish extremists in East Jerusalem. Israel blamed Hamas for kidnapping the three teenagers and cracked down on the organization in the West Bank, closing offices and arresting activists and political leaders. According to human rights activists, at least four Palestinians were killed in several incidents during this operation (B'Tselem, 2014). Meanwhile, an increased number of rockets and mortars were fired from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip toward Israel, leading to air strikes by the Israeli army.

On July 8, Israel launched a military operation in Gaza with the stated objectives of "[restoring] stability to the residents of southern Israel, eliminating Hamas's capabilities and destroying terror

infrastructure" (Israel Defense Forces, 2014a). After nine days of air raids, the Israeli army began a ground invasion of Gaza. On their part, Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups continued firing rockets.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2,192 Palestinians were killed during the conflict, "of whom at least 1,523 are believed to be civilians" (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2014, p. 4). Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas accused Israel of conducting a "war of genocide" (Khoury, 2014, para. 1), and Israel and Palestinian groups later faced international criticism (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2015). Israel, for its part, maintained that "at least 44% of the total Palestinian fatalities have been positively identified as Hamas militants or militants of other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip" (State of Israel, 2015, p. xi). During this conflict, six civilians in Israel and 67 Israeli soldiers were killed.

According to the Israeli army, it targeted "more than 5,085 terror sites" in the Gaza Strip and destroyed 32 tunnels, including 14 that exited in Israeli territory. It also reported that more than 4,500 rockets were fired at Israel, of which 735 were intercepted before hitting heavily populated areas (Israel Defense Forces, 2014b). After weeks of fighting and attempting short-term cease-fires, Israel, Hamas, and other Palestinian factions agreed to an open-ended cease-fire, which went into effect August 26.

Research Question

Based on the review of war journalism and gatekeeping in a networked space, the study's overarching question is as follows:

RQ: How did Israeli journalists use Twitter in comparison with international journalists during the 2014 Gaza–Israel conflict?

This question was examined with respect to seven dimensions: (1) the topics the journalists addressed, (2) the types of sources they cited, (3) the types of actors they mentioned, (4) the types of users to whom they replied, (5) the types of links incorporated into their posts, (6) the extent to which they expressed opinions, and (7) the extent to which their posts expressed criticism (their own or others' criticism).

Method

The study is based on a content analysis of messages pertaining to the 2014 Gaza–Israel conflict that were posted by journalists on Twitter from July 8 to August 26, 2014.

Sample

To draw a sample of messages, two lists were compiled: (1) *Israelis*, journalists who worked for 10 national news outlets in Israel, and (2) *internationals*, journalists who worked for 10 international English-language news outlets. Each list consisted of 20 journalists—two journalists from each outlet. Thus, the study focused on 40 journalists in total.

The selected news outlets were diverse. Each set of 10 outlets comprised five newspapers or news websites and five television or radio channels. In addition, each set consisted of both commercial and public-service outlets with divergent political leanings. The Israeli set comprised Hebrew-language outlets with a national reach (Mena, 2016) that covered the conflict under study: the newspapers/news websites *Haaretz*, *ynet*/*Yedioth Ahronoth*, *Israel Hayom*, *Maariv*, and *Walla*, as well as the television or radio stations Channel 1, Channel 2, Channel 10, Kol Israel, and Galei Zahal. Three of the 10 outlets are public-service broadcasters (the Channel 1 television station and the Kol Israel and Galei Zahal radio stations), and the other outlets are commercial. *Haaretz* newspaper is considered liberal, whereas *Israel Hayom* is conservative. The other commercial outlets may be regarded as more centrist.

The international set comprised major English-language outlets that are based in different countries and cover international affairs, including Middle Eastern affairs: the newspapers/news websites *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, and *The Daily Telegraph*, as well as the television or radio channels BBC, Al-Jazeera English, CNN, Fox News, and NPR. Six of the 10 outlets are American, three are British (*The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and BBC), and one is Middle Eastern (Al-Jazeera English). Two of the 10 outlets are public-service broadcasters (BBC and NPR), whereas the other outlets are commercial. *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Guardian* may be regarded as liberal, whereas Fox News, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Daily Telegraph* are more conservative.

Two journalists from each outlet were selected based on several criteria. First, I identified journalists who were both involved in the coverage of the conflict and active on Twitter. If more than two journalists per outlet met these criteria, two other criteria were applied to ensure a systematic selection: online influence and diverse perspectives. Online influence was determined by using the Klout score, a measure incorporating reach, amplification, and network impact (see Bode & Epstein, 2015), with priority given to the more influential journalist. For diverse perspectives per outlet, if the two most influential journalists working for an international outlet covered the conflict from Gaza, for example, and this outlet also had a reporter in Israel, one Gaza reporter (the more influential one) and the journalist in Israel were selected.

The messages posted by the journalists under study, as well as the Klout scores, were obtained from Crimson Hexagon, software that has access to all publicly available posts on Twitter and can be used for research (Hitlin, 2013). Messages that did not pertain to the conflict were excluded from the data, based on keywords such as *Gaza*, *Israel*, *Hamas*, *IDF* (Israel Defense Forces), *Palestinian*, *Abbas* (the Palestinian president), *Mhashal* (the leader of Hamas), and *Netanyahu* (the Israeli prime minister). Messages that did not contain a relevant keyword were examined to determine whether they pertained to the conflict, and irrelevant messages were excluded. Systematic random sampling was used to draw 1,000 messages (500 from each group of journalists) from the 20,803 remaining ones (10,558 messages by Israeli journalists and 10,245 by international journalists).

Coding

The unit of analysis was a Twitter message, and the analysis was based on a detailed codebook. The messages were coded by two individuals literate in Hebrew and English. The intercoder reliability was examined using Krippendorff's alpha, and the coefficient alpha for the variables under study ranged from 0.7 to 1.0. The coefficient was lower than 0.7 for one variable (personalizing), which, as a result, was disqualified.

To examine the topics the journalists addressed, the mention of the following topics was coded (yes/no): attack in Gaza, rocket fire into Israel, combat between Israeli and Palestinian forces, death, injury, other humanitarian consequences (e.g., displaced people and lack of water), diplomatic attempts (at reaching a cease-fire or a political settlement), cease-fire, and information/comment on journalists doing their daily work (professional discourse [yes/no]).

To examine sourcing and prominence of actors, the coders identified types of cited sources and other actors mentioned in the messages. The citation of a source on Twitter can be identified by one or more of the following elements: quotation marks ("x"), a colon (:), the symbol @, the combination "RT @" (retweet), or words such as *say* and *claim*. Building on Tenenboim-Weinblatt, Hanitzsch, and Nagar (2016) and Hermida et al. (2014), the study focused on the following types of sources or actors: political establishment—top political actors such as presidents and mid-level or low-level political actors (e.g., mayors and members of political bureaus); armed forces—top military actors such as senior commanders and mid-level or low-level military actors (e.g., soldiers/gunmen); citizens—civilian victims, residents, and eyewitnesses; civil society—nongovernmental organizations, advocacy groups, members of such organizations or groups, protesters, and self-identified activists; established media organizations—for example, *The Guardian*; established media employees; and bloggers or media contributors. The sources/actors were also examined by nationality: Israeli, Palestinian, Egyptian, American, or other. Actors within the political or military establishment were regarded in this study as officials. High-level officials and other high-level actors (e.g., in the media) were considered elite actors.

To examine the types of Twitter users to whom journalists replied, the coders identified tweets that began with @username and classified the mentioned users based on the above typology.

To examine linking, the coders identified the types of links that journalists incorporated into their tweets: links to the journalist's own work, the work of colleagues from the journalist's home outlet, the work of journalists at other news outlets, an outside blog, or other option.

To examine the extent to which opinions and criticism were expressed, each message was coded for its prime purpose: conveying information, seeking information, conveying opinion, or other. This approach was adopted from Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton (2012) and Lawrence et al. (2014). A message contained an opinion if it used "evaluative language or offer[ed] unattributed commentary beyond the fact of an occurrence or issue" (Lawrence et al., 2014, p. 10). In addition, messages with the primary purpose of conveying information were coded as "minor opining" if they contained a secondary element of opinion. The expression of criticism was also examined: containing evaluative language that expressed disapproval

of someone or something (yes/no). Furthermore, the object of criticism (who or what was criticized) was coded: Israeli actor, Palestinian actor, Israeli and Palestinian actors, or criticism not directed toward any actor.

Results

The Seven Dimensions

Topics

The first dimension of interest addressed by Israeli versus international journalists on Twitter revealed significant differences between the two groups. As shown in Table 1, the proportion of posts referring to the following topics was higher among international journalists: Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip, death (at least one person killed), injury (at least one person injured), and other humanitarian consequences. However, the proportion of posts mentioning rocket fire into Israel or sirens indicating rocket fire was 3.5 times higher among Israeli journalists. In addition, Israeli journalists mentioned combats between Israeli and Palestinian forces twice as much as international journalists.

Table 1. Percentages of Topics Among Twitter Posts by Israeli and International Journalists.

Topic	Israeli journalists (<i>n</i> = 500)	International journalists (<i>n</i> = 500)	χ^2
Attacks in Gaza	17.4	31.4	26.563***
Rocket fire into Israel	14.8	4.2	32.672***
Combat	5.6	2.8	4.871*
Death	9.8	17.4	12.289***
Injury	5.0	8.0	3.670*
Other humanitarian consequences	1.4	11.6	42.797***
Diplomatic attempts	12.0	9.8	1.246
Cease-fire	6.8	5.8	0.424
Professional discourse	6.6	8.6	1.424

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; $df = 1$ for all Chi-square tests

A follow-up analysis presented in Table 2 showed that Israeli and international journalists differed in the location of the occurrences mentioned in their posts. A sizeable majority (63.5%) of the posts by international journalists mentioning a location focused on the Gaza Strip only, more than double the percentage of posts by Israeli journalists. However, the proportion of posts mentioning only Israel was 2.5 times higher among Israeli journalists.

The findings suggest that Israeli journalists were more likely than their international colleagues to address the suffering on the Israeli side of the border, whereas international journalists were more inclined to portray Israel as the aggressor and to focus on the human cost of the conflict in Gaza.

Table 2. Percentages of Place of Occurrence of Twitter Posts by Israeli and International Journalists.

Place	Israeli journalists (<i>n</i> = 345)	International journalists (<i>n</i> = 411)
Israel only	31.3	12.4
The Gaza Strip only	30.4	63.5
Israel and the Gaza Strip	18.3	10.2
Egypt	5.8	2.9
United States	1.4	2.7
Other	12.8	8.2
Total	100.0	100.0

$\chi^2(6) = 92.893, p < .001$

Note. Posts that did not mention a place of occurrence were excluded from the analysis.

Sourcing

Both the Israeli and the international journalists cited sources in less than half of their posts (49.4% and 47.6%, respectively). Retweeting a message posted by another user was also considered as a source citation here. The percentage of retweets was higher among international journalists than among their Israeli counterparts—25.0% and 13.0%, respectively, $\chi^2(1) = 23.392, p < .001$.

Significant differences were found with regard to the types of sources cited. Of the first sources¹ cited by Israeli journalists, 50.2% were political or military actors (individuals or entities), compared with 20.5% among their international colleagues, $\chi^2(1) = 46.325, p < .001$. In addition, 63.1% of the secondary sources cited by Israeli journalists were such actors, compared with 41.8% among their international colleagues, $\chi^2(1) = 4.428, p < .05$.

Table 3 presents the types of first sources used by the journalists. Political or military entities, such as the Israeli government or military (including spokespersons), were the most prominent source type cited by Israeli journalists, and established media employees were the second prevalent. In comparison, established media employees were the most prominent source type cited by international journalists, followed by established media organizations. Furthermore, the proportion of top political individuals was almost 3 times higher among Israeli journalists than among their international counterparts, and the percentage of top military individuals was 8 times higher among Israeli journalists.

Political or military entities were also the most prominent type of secondary source cited by Israeli journalists (34.2%), followed by top political individuals (18.4%). In comparison, established media organizations were the most common secondary source type cited by international journalists (31.3%), followed by political or military entities (23.9%).

¹ The first sources were the first ones mentioned in the posts, including the original sources of retweeted posts (indicated by RT @username).

Table 3. Percentages of Types of First Sources Among Twitter Posts by Israeli and International Journalists.

Source	Israeli journalists (<i>n</i> = 247)	International journalists (<i>n</i> = 238)	χ^2
Top political individual	16.2	5.5	14.343***
Mid-level or low-level political individual	5.3	0.8	7.911**
Top military individual	3.2	0.4	5.288*
Mid-level or low-level military individual	0.8	0.4	0.299
Political or military entity	24.7	13.4	9.900**
Medical personnel or relief organization	0.8	4.2	5.779*
Citizen	0.4	4.2	1.194
Civil society actor	2.4	4.2	32.672***
Established media organization	10.9	21.8	10.595**
Established media employee	21.5	31.1	5.821*
Blogger or media contributor	3.6	9.7	7.128**
Other	10.1	4.2	6.344**
Total	100.0	100.0	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; $df = 1$ for all Chi-square tests

Nevertheless, similarities were found between Israeli and international journalists regarding the types of retweets. Most of the retweeted posts originated from established media employees—56.9% among the Israeli journalists and 51.2% among their international colleagues. Bloggers and media contributors constituted the second prevalent category—12.3% of the retweeted posts by Israeli journalists and 16.0% by their international colleagues. The remaining retweets were messages posted by political actors (in the case of the Israeli journalists), civil society actors, and others.

The sources cited by the two groups of journalists differed in their nationality. As Table 4 shows, Israeli sources were the majority of the first sources cited by Israeli journalists. However, American and international sources were the most prevalent first sources cited by international journalists. Israeli sources accounted for more than 30% of the first sources used by international journalists. Another notable finding is that Israeli journalists were more likely to rely on Palestinians as first sources.

Israeli sources accounted for 62.5% of the secondary sources cited by Israeli journalists. However, they were one-third of the secondary sources cited by international journalists, and American and international sources accounted for 48.1%.

Table 4. Percentages of Nationality of First Sources Among Twitter Posts by Israeli and International Journalists.

Nationality	Israeli journalists (<i>n</i> = 247)	International journalists (<i>n</i> = 238)
Israeli	53.8	31.9
Palestinian	31.2	11.3
American	5.7	22.3
International	5.7	30.7
Other	3.6	3.8
Total	100.0	100.0

$\chi^2(5) = 102.234, p < .001$

Types of Actors Mentioned

Regarding the types of actors mentioned by journalists, actors and sources were occasionally the same individuals/entities. Israeli journalists mentioned actors in 85.8% of their posts, compared with 87.0% of the posts by international journalists.

Political or military individuals/entities were a notable majority of the actors on whom the Israeli journalists focused—69.3% of the first-mentioned actors, compared with 46.4% among the international journalists, $\chi^2(1) = 46.353, p < .001$. In addition, these types of actors accounted for 74.8% of the second actors mentioned by the Israeli journalists, compared with 58.0% among the international journalists, $\chi^2(1) = 16.984, p < .001$.

Table 5 presents the types of first actors mentioned by the two groups of journalists. Whereas the two most prevalent types of first actors mentioned by Israeli journalists were political or military entities, and top political individuals such as a prime minister, the two most common types of first actors mentioned by international journalists were political or military entities, and citizens.

The findings on sourcing and types of actors demonstrate that even on Twitter, war journalism was more likely to be elite-oriented than people-oriented, particularly when journalists were members of one of the conflicting parties.

Table 5. Percentages of Types of First Actors Among Twitter Posts by Israeli and International Sources.

Actor	Israeli journalists (<i>n</i> = 430)	International journalists (<i>n</i> = 435)	χ^2
Top political individual	17.9	9.9	11.646***
Mid-level or low-level political individual	7.4	3.0	8.696**
Top military individual	3.0	1.1	3.726*
Mid-level or low-level military individual	6.3	5.5	0.226
Political or military entity	34.7	26.9	6.106**
Medical personnel or relief organization	1.2	3.2	4.253*
Citizen	7.0	21.6	37.702***
Civil society actor	1.2	0.7	0.528
Established media organization	0.7	1.4	0.976
Established media employee	11.2	14.9	2.720
Blogger or media contributor	0.7	0.9	0.133
Other	8.8	10.8	0.945
Total	100.0	100.0	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; $df = 1$ for all Chi-square tests

Replies to Other Twitter Users

Whereas replies accounted for 19.2% of the posts by Israeli journalists, they were 13.0% of the posts by international journalists, $\chi^2(1) = 7.114$, $p < .01$. Nevertheless, the types of replied-to users were similar. The most frequent category was established media employees—42.9% among the Israeli journalists and 34.8% among the international ones. In other words, journalists replied to other journalists. Bloggers and media contributors were the second most prevalent replied-to users—14.3% among the Israeli journalists and 21.2% among their international colleagues. Journalists also replied to civil society actors, such as members of nongovernmental organizations—12.1% among the international journalists' replies compared with 7.1% among the Israelis. Additional replies were either to unidentified users or to other actors (e.g., an economic analyst).

Links to Web Pages

Significant differences were found between the two groups of journalists, with international journalists incorporating links into 23.0% of their posts—more than 2.5 times higher than the percentage of posts by their Israeli colleagues (9.0%), $\chi^2(1) = 37.300$, $p < .001$. Most of the links (50.4%) incorporated by international journalists were to the work of journalists at other news outlets, 30.4% were

to their own work, 13.9% to colleagues from the journalist's home outlet, and 5.2% to other types of materials. In comparison, 37.0% of the links incorporated by Israeli journalists were to their own work, 34.8% were to journalists at other news outlets, 8.7% to colleagues from the journalist's home outlet, and 19.6% to other materials, $\chi^2(4) = 13.438, p < .01$.

Expression of Opinions

A sizeable majority of the posts focused on conveying information—74.5% by Israeli journalists and 81.0% by their international colleagues. The primary purpose of 22.8% of the posts by Israeli journalists was conveying opinion, compared with 15.3% among their international counterparts. The remaining posts sought information or served other purposes, such as thanking someone, $\chi^2(3) = 11.384, p < .05$. In addition, some of the posts that primarily conveyed information contained a second element of opinion—18.6% among the Israeli journalists and 25.1% among the international ones, $\chi^2(1) = 5.085, p < .05$.

A follow-up analysis showed significant differences within the international group: Al-Jazeera English journalists were more likely to primarily express opinions (21.5% of the posts) compared with colleagues working for British (12.8%) and American (10.9%) outlets, $\chi^2(6) = 18.214, p < .01$.

Expression of Criticism

Of the posts, 21.4% by Israeli journalists and 25.3% by their international colleagues contained evaluative language that expressed disapproval of someone or something. This criticism was not necessarily their own, but was sometimes attributed to others. Of the critical posts by Israeli journalists, 46.7% were directed toward Israeli actors, 22.4% toward Palestinian actors, 19.6% toward other actors, and 11.2% were not directed toward any actor. In comparison, 53.6% of the critical posts by international journalists were directed toward Israeli actors, 8.0% toward Palestinian actors, 16.8% toward other actors, and 21.6% were not directed toward any actor, $\chi^2(4) = 15.934, p < .01$.

Differences were also found within the international group: 34.2% of the posts by Al-Jazeera English journalists contained criticism, compared with 27.4% among their British colleagues and 16.4% among their American ones, $\chi^2(2) = 17.279, p < .001$. Also, 62.5% of the critical posts by Al-Jazeera English journalists were directed toward Israeli actors, compared with 50.0% among British journalists and 40.0% among their American colleagues, $\chi^2(8) = 21.771, p < .01$.

Follow-up Analysis of Retweets and Replies

A follow-up analysis addressed the characteristics of the retweets and replies. Of retweets, 98.4% primarily conveyed information compared with 73.1% of the other messages, $\chi^2(3) = 56.783, p < .001$. However, retweets by Israeli journalists were more likely to contain criticism compared with other messages by these journalists—36.9% and 19.1%, respectively, $\chi^2(1) = 10.632, p < .01$. Similar differences were not found regarding the international group. In addition, 50.8% of the messages retweeted by Israeli journalists were in English, compared with 6.0% of their other messages, $\chi^2(3) = 109.786, p < .001$. In their replies, journalists were more likely to focus on opinion expression compared

with other messages. This was the primary purpose of 57.3% of the replies by Israeli journalists, compared with 14.7% of their other messages, $\chi^2(3) = 132.211, p < .001$. Opinion expression was also the primary purpose of 38.5% of the replies by international journalists, compared with 11.8% of their other messages, $\chi^2(3) = 108.998, p < .001$.

The findings pertaining to Twitter affordances suggest that while Israeli journalists were less likely than their international colleagues to retweet messages, they used the retweeting channel to convey critical messages and to transcend national boundaries. Furthermore, Israeli journalists were more likely to engage with Twitter users by replying to them, although both Israeli and international journalists expressed their opinions within replies.

Discussion

In this study, I investigated how journalists working for Israeli and international news outlets used Twitter during the 2014 Gaza–Israel conflict. This investigation was based on the assumption that Twitter may challenge traditional journalistic conduct by potentially facilitating interconnectedness among diverse actors—elite and nonelite—inside and outside the national community.

While journalistic behavior on Twitter during the Arab Spring led Hermida et al. (2014) to offer that a new paradigm of sourcing was possibly at play—broadening the range of voices in the news by giving prominence to nonelite sources—the present study suggests that in wartime the old paradigm of sourcing may still be highly dominant, even on Twitter. During the 2014 Gaza–Israel conflict, this paradigm was particularly dominant in the practices of Israeli journalists, who heavily relied on elite actors and other officials. Their international colleagues were less likely to rely directly on officials, but they were more likely to rely on established media employees and organizations that can be seen as elite actors.

Israeli and international journalists also differed in their choice of topics and use of Twitter affordances. They essentially told their followers different stories on the conflict. Whereas the Israeli story gave more weight than the international to rocket fire into Israel, other occurrences in Israel, and combat between Israeli and Palestinian forces, the international story gave more prominence to the Israeli attacks and other occurrences in the Gaza Strip, casualties, and further humanitarian consequences.

Put differently, Israeli journalists were more likely than their international counterparts to address the suffering on the Israeli side of the border and less likely to portray Israel as the aggressor in this conflict and to report the humanitarian consequences of its acts. This is in line with Zandberg and Neiger's assertion (2005) that journalists who cover a violent conflict are "caught between nation and profession" (p. 131) when they are members of one of the conflicting parties. Another explanation for the differences may be that journalists working for Israeli news outlets were allowed limited or no access to the Gaza Strip.

The findings on retweeting and linking indicate that the examined international journalists were more likely than their Israeli colleagues to open the gates on Twitter to materials produced by others and that Israeli journalists used the retweeting channel in several important ways. First, the latter retweeted

messages in English, which accounted for about half (50.8%) of the retweeted messages. Wolfsfeld et al. (2008) suggested that a dominant use of the domestic language is one of the mechanisms used to construct culturally acceptable stories during a conflict. As English is not the domestic language in Israel, retweeting messages in English can be seen as a way to transcend national boundaries. Second, Israeli journalists retweeted messages that contained criticism more than they tweeted such messages. Thus, retweeting was used as a channel for disseminating critical messages. Third, although both Israeli and international journalists retweeted messages mainly by other journalists, they also retweeted messages by bloggers. Therefore, retweeting was used as a channel to expand the range of voices to which the journalists' followers were exposed.

In addition to retweeting, journalists used the reply feature and were more likely to express their opinions within replies than within their other posts. Replies accounted for almost one-fifth of the posts by Israeli journalists, suggesting that replying was a common channel of communication for them. Both Israeli and international journalists mainly replied to other journalists but also to bloggers and other users. This allowed an exchange of views and perspectives with people outside the official power circles.

Taken together, the findings suggest that in wartime individual journalists on Twitter may have agency that can manifest in retweeting critical messages—not necessarily in the language of their national community—and interacting with people outside the official power circles. Nevertheless, institutional, cultural, and national forces at the levels of social institutions and social systems still seem to be stronger, at least in wartime and when journalists are members of one of the conflicting parties. Mr. Gates on Twitter may have more agency than the journalistic gatekeeper who was studied decades ago, but seems to be constrained by virtual national borders.

From an indexing perspective, it can be argued that in wartime the core indexing dynamic takes place on Twitter as well. However, it may be modified through the channels of retweeting and replying. This corresponds with Bennett and colleagues' (2007) assertion that press independence can be enhanced by technology-assisted news.

There are limitations to this study, as it focused on a particular war and emphasized one of the conflicting parties. These limitations should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results. However, the study provides a comprehensive picture of how journalists whose nation was at war versus other journalists used Twitter, thus advancing our understanding of journalistic behavior on social media in wartime. Future studies would do well to compare journalistic messages on social media with materials that the same journalists produced for their home outlets. Interviews with these journalists may also be valuable in understanding their practices and dilemmas. Another possible direction is examining how journalists use the reply feature on Twitter in different contexts, such as a war. Investigating war journalism in the digital age is both important and intriguing, but let us hope that the opportunities to do so will be scarce.

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