

**T.C.  
SAKARYA UNIVERSITY  
MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE**

**HOW ISRAEL USES DIGITAL DIPLOMACY TO  
IMPROVE ITS IMAGE IN ARABIC**

**PHD DISSERTATION**

**Linda S. I. SHALASH**

**Department: Middle Eastern Studies**

**Supervisor: Doç. Dr. İsmail Numan TELCİ**

**AUGUST - 2023**

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## THESIS APPROVAL

This work headed “How Israel uses digital diplomacy to improve its image” which has been prepared by Linda S. I. Shalash, is approved as a Ph.D. thesis by our jury in majority vote.

**Date of Acceptance: 02/08/2023**

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis is my own original work in which I have fully followed ethical and scientific standards, and that the work of others has been referenced and cited within academic limits and standards. Therefore, I affirm that the limits of the use of other studies were within known scientific norms, as all cited data is free from falsification and no part of the thesis has been submitted as another thesis at this or any other university.

**Linda. S. I. Shalash**

2 August 2023

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Linda S. I. Shalash  
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Aug 2023

<b>Title of the Thesis:</b> “How Israel Uses Digital Diplomacy to Improve Its Image in Arabic”.	
<b>Author:</b> Linda S. I. Shalash	<b>Supervisor:</b> Doç.Dr. İsmail Numan TELCİ
<b>Acceptance Date:</b> 2 Aug 2023	<b>Nu. of pages:</b> 14 (pre text) + 187(thesis) + 7(appendix)
<b>Department:</b> Middle Eastern Studies	
<p>Thanks to the internet and communications revolution, many countries and their foreign ministries have migrated to social media platforms to rebrand their image and build channels of communication with a wider audience. Indeed, social media has opened new avenues for governments and organizations to engage with foreign audiences. However, governments in developing countries have yet to realize the potential of social media. Israel is one of the countries investing most in digital diplomacy to improve its image internationally and in the Middle East. It's efforts in digital media have combined with the Arab revolutions that broke out in 2010 to communicate with Arab publics for the first time in its history. As a result, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has set up a special digital diplomacy unit that manages dozens of digital pages in several languages, including Arabic, English, Persian, Kurdish, Hindi, Chinese and others.</p> <p>This thesis examines Israel's digital efforts to communicate with Arabs during conflict and non-conflict periods by analyzing (764) posts published on the "Israel speaks Arabic" Facebook page. Considering Nye's theory of soft power, as well as framing and agenda setting theories, the findings of the paper indicate that Israel uses soft power tools and political propaganda strategies to improve its image and to present itself as a democratic and peace-loving country to its Arab neighbors. Moreover, the results show that the page uses many interaction elements to simulate Arab emotions to change their beliefs and attitudes towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and to accept the idea of Israel's existence and normalize relations with it.</p>	
<b>Keywords:</b> Digital Diplomacy, Social Networking Sites, Framing Theory, Agenda Setting Theory, Soft Power.	

<b>Tezin Başlığı:</b> "İsrail, İmajını Geliştirmek İçin Arap Dijital Diplomasisini Nasıl Kullanıyor".	
<b>Tez Yazarı:</b> Linda S. I. Shalash TELCİ	<b>Danışman:</b> Doç.Dr. İsmail Numan
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<b>Anabilim Dalı:</b> Ortadoğu Çalışmaları	
<p>İnternet ve iletişim devrimi sayesinde birçok ülke ve dışişleri bakanlıkları, imajlarını yeniden markalaştırmak ve daha geniş bir kitleyle iletişim kanalları oluşturmak için sosyal medya platformlarına geçiş yaptı. Gerçekten de sosyal medya, hükümetlere ve kuruluşlara yabancı kitlelerle etkileşim kurmaları için yeni yollar açtı. Ancak gelişmekte olan ülkelerdeki hükümetler henüz sosyal medyanın potansiyelinin farkına varabilmiş değil. İsrail, uluslararası ve Orta Doğu'daki imajını iyileştirmek için dijital diplomasiye en çok yatırım yapan ülkelerden biri. İsrail'in dijital medya alanındaki çabaları 2010 yılında patlak veren Arap devrimleriyle birleşerek tarihinde ilk kez Arap halklarıyla iletişim kurmasını sağladı. Sonuç olarak İsrail Dışişleri Bakanlığı, Arapça, İngilizce, Farsça, Kürtçe, Hintçe, Çince ve diğerleri dahil olmak üzere çeşitli dillerde düzinelerce dijital sayfayı yöneten özel bir dijital diplomasi birimi kurdu.</p> <p>Bu tez, "İsrail Arapça Konuşuyor" Facebook sayfasında yayınlanan (764) gönderiyi analiz ederek İsrail'in çatışma ve çatışma dışı dönemlerde Araplarla iletişim kurmak için dijital çabalarını incelemektedir. Nye'in yumuşak güç teorisinin yanı sıra çerçeveleme ve gündem belirleme teorilerini de göz önünde bulunduran çalışmanın bulguları, İsrail'in imajını iyileştirmek ve kendisini Arap komşularına demokratik ve barışsever bir ülke olarak sunmak için yumuşak güç araçlarını ve siyasi propaganda stratejilerini kullandığını göstermektedir. Ayrıca sonuçlar, sayfanın Arapların Filistin-İsrail çatışmasına yönelik inanç ve tutumlarını değiştirmek, İsrail'in varlığı fikrini kabul etmek ve onunla ilişkileri normalleştirmek için duygularını simüle etmek üzere birçok etkileşim unsuru kullandığını göstermektedir</p>	
<b>Anahtar Kelimeler:</b> Dijital Diplomasi, Sosyal paylaşım siteleri, çerçeveleme teorisi, Gündem Belirleme teorisi, Yumuşak güç.	

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>ÖZET .....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES.....</b>	<b>VIII</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES.....</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS.....</b>	<b>XI</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>15</b>
1.1. Literature Review .....	15
1.2. The Conceptual Framework .....	22
1.2.1. Diplomacy from Traditional to Public .....	22
1.2.2. Diplomacy in Digital Era.....	26
1.2.3. Digital Diplomacy: Opportunities and Challenges.....	30
1.2.4. Digital Diplomacy Around the World .....	32
1.3. Israel's Digital Efforts.....	34
1.3.1. Israeli Interest in Internet.....	35
1.3.2. Digital Diplomacy Status in Israel .....	37
1.3.3. Digital Diplomacy Efforts Towards Arabs.....	38
1.3.4. The Most Prominent Israeli- Arabic Pages .....	40
<b>CHAPTER 2: THE THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>43</b>
2.1. Nye's Perspective of Soft Power.....	43



2.1.1.	Soft Power in Diplomatic Work .....	45
2.1.2.	Soft Power's Sources .....	46
2.1.3.	Limitations of Soft Power.....	47
2.1.4.	Soft Power Worldwide .....	48
2.2.	The Agenda Setting Theory (AST) .....	50
2.3.	Framing Theory.....	54
2.3.1.	The Core of Framing Theory.....	55
2.3.2.	Framing in Communication.....	57
2.3.3.	Types of Frameworks and Building Frames.....	59
2.3.4.	The Strength and Weakness of the Framing Theory .....	62

**CHAPTER 3: ISRAEL'S DIGITAL EFFORTS: DIPLOMACY OR PROPAGANDA?..... 63**

3.1.	Definitions of Propaganda and its Types .....	63
3.2.	The Israeli- Zionist Propaganda .....	68
3.2.1.	The Structure of the Zionist Propaganda Discourse .....	71
3.2.1.1.	Pre-State Propaganda.....	71
3.2.1.2.	Post-State Propaganda: .....	73
3.2.1.3.	Israel's Current Propaganda: Hasbara .....	75
3.3.	The Emergence of Hasbara 2:0 Or Digital Diplomacy .....	80
3.3.1.	Israel's Hasbara in Conflict Time.....	81

**CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION..... 86**

4.1.	Research Methodology.....	86
4.2.	The Analysis Form and the Operational Definitions of the Variables.....	88

4.3. Research Design.....	91
4.3.1. Study’s Population and Sample ` .....	92
4.3.2. Data Collection Instrument.....	93
4.3.3. Validity and Reliability Procedures.....	94
4.4. Collecting Data From the ‘Israel Speaks Arabic Facebook’ Page.....	95
4.4.1. The Results of the Contents’ Features of ‘Israel Speaks Arabic’ Page..	96
4.4.2. Collected data on the content format of the 'Israel speaks Arabic' page:.....	103
4.4.3. The Collected Date During Times of Conflicts.....	105
<b>CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>112</b>
5.1. Analyzing the Content of the ‘Israel Speaks Arabic’ Page on Facebook .....	112
5.2. Analyzing the results of the form of the ‘Israel Speaks in Arabic’ page: .....	148
<b>REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>APPENDIX .....</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>178</b>
<b>CV .....</b>	<b>195</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 1:</b> Posts' Linkage to Events on the 'Israel Speaks Arabic' Facebook Page .....	96
<b>Table 2:</b> The Most Dominant Themes and Topics on the Study Page .....	96
<b>Table 3:</b> The Used Strategies in Addressing the Arabs .....	97
<b>Table 4:</b> The Used Persuasion Tactics on the Study Page .....	98
<b>Table 5:</b> The Directions of the Study Page's Posts .....	98
<b>Table 6:</b> The Used Propaganda Methods .....	98
<b>Table 7:</b> Types of Used Frameworks .....	99
<b>Table 8 :</b> The Framework Strategy .....	99
<b>Table 9:</b> The Used Proof Means on the Study Page: .....	100
<b>Table 10:</b> The Used Media Discourse on the Study Page .....	100
<b>Table 11:</b> The Geographical Scope of the Publications .....	101
<b>Table 12:</b> The Most Prominent Terms on the Study Page .....	101
<b>Table 13:</b> The Used Quotes on the 'Israel Speaks Arabic' Facebook Page .....	101
<b>Table 14:</b> The Information Sources of the 'Israel Speaks Arabic' Page .....	102
<b>Table 15:</b> The Way of Addressing Palestinians and Their Cause .....	102
<b>Table 16:</b> The Elements of Support and Interaction on the Study Page .....	103
<b>Table 17:</b> The Format of Used Videos .....	104
<b>Table 18:</b> Publics Interactions with the Study Page's Post: Number of Likes .....	104
<b>Table 19:</b> Shares' Number of the Page's Publications .....	104
<b>Table 20:</b> Number of Comments on the Study Page .....	105
<b>Table 21:</b> The Digital Enhancers During Conflict Time .....	105
<b>Table 22:</b> The Used Media Frameworks .....	107
<b>Table 23:</b> Proof Methods During Conflict Time .....	108
<b>Table 24:</b> Propaganda Tactics in Conflict Time .....	109

<b>Table 25:</b> The Used Language During Conflict Times .....	109
<b>Table 26:</b> The Most Prominent Terms.....	110
<b>Table 27:</b> Dealing with the Palestinians and Their Cause .....	111

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure 1.</b> A satirical cartoon of the Islamic Jihad movement in Gaza.....	106
<b>Figure 2.</b> Utilizing Responsibility framework. ....	107
<b>Figure 3.</b> A post that employs an offensive and accusatory language.....	110
<b>Figure 4.</b> A Publication on promoting tourism in Israel.....	114
<b>Figure 5.</b> A post showing humanity of the Israeli occupation.....	115
<b>Figure 6.</b> A publication on military strength. ....	117
<b>Figure 7.</b> A post on simulating the needs and emotions.....	118
<b>Figure 8.</b> A post claiming pluralism in Israel. ....	120
<b>Figure 9.</b> Attacking the Iranian President. ....	122
<b>Figure 10.</b> A post claiming Israel’s belief in Pluralism and coexistence.....	123
<b>Figure 11.</b> A post on employing the tactic of eminent personalities. ....	124
<b>Figure 12.</b> A post on Claiming humanity, diversity, and pluralism in Israel .....	126
<b>Figure 13.</b> A post on lying and falsification strategy. ....	128
<b>Figure 14.</b> Posts showing images of ‘nations peace’.....	129
<b>Figure 15.</b> Post on the strategy of getting closer to the Arabs.....	130
<b>Figure 16.</b> Publication on the Humanization of the Occupation and its Army. ....	131
<b>Figure 17.</b> Publication of incitement and warning.....	132
<b>Figure 18.</b> Publication on promoting peace.....	136
<b>Figure 19.</b> Claiming belief in equality and pluralism.....	138
<b>Figure 20.</b> Claiming receiving supportive letters from Sudanese people.....	139
<b>Figure 21.</b> A publication on promoting peace and normalization with Israel. ....	140
<b>Figure 22.</b> Showing Humanity of the Israelis.....	142
<b>Figure 23.</b> A post applying the screenshot tactic.....	146
<b>Figure 24.</b> A satirical cartoon from Hezbollah. ....	150

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>AST</b>	: The Agenda Setting Theory
<b>DD</b>	: The Digital Diplomacy
<b>FCO</b> Office	: The United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth
<b>Hamas</b>	:(Arabic) The Islamic Resistance Movement
<b>Hezbollah</b>	:(Arabic) The Party of God
<b>ICTs</b>	: The Information and Communication Technologies
<b>IDF</b>	: Israeli Defense Forces
<b>INSS</b>	: The Israeli Institute for National Security Studies
<b>MFA</b> s	: The Ministries of Foreign Affairs
<b>PD</b>	: The Public Diplomacy
<b>SNS</b>	: The Social Networking Sites
<b>UAE</b>	: The United Arab Emirates
<b>US</b>	: The United States of America
<b>WZO</b>	: The World Zionist Organization

## INTRODUCTION

The information and internet revolution has contributed to the evolution of diplomatic work and the emergence of what is now known as Digital Diplomacy (DD), which refers to the "overall impact of ICTs (information and communication technologies) on the practice of diplomacy, from email to social networking sites".<sup>1</sup> Digital diplomacy is a new area of research in many fields such as mass communication, peace, conflict and international relations.<sup>2</sup> In time, digital diplomacy has become an essential component of foreign policy as states and their governmental and non-governmental institutions compete for influence and power through the ease of movement and dissemination of information in cyberspace. Many developed countries have paid attention to this diplomacy for its role in influencing the minds and hearts of foreign masses without having to allocate a huge budget as traditional diplomacy requires.<sup>3</sup> As a result, many nations have established official digital diplomacy departments to promote their interests worldwide, while developing countries are still unaware of the importance of this diplomacy in projecting goodwill and positive images.

Through social media platforms, ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) have been able to communicate directly with their audiences and influence their perceptions. Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are the main tools of digital diplomacy where states can easily engage with others without geopolitical restrictions.<sup>4</sup> Some studies suggest that social networking sites (SNS) can help states to rebrand and build their positive image through engagement and dialogue with the masses. In this regard, Melanie Ciolek suggests that "social media platforms have not fundamentally changed the objectives of public diplomacy (PD), but also represent new tools to

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<sup>1</sup> Ilan Manor, "Are We There Yet: Have MFAs Realized the Potential of Digital Diplomacy? Results From a Cross-National Comparison", **Brill Research Perspectives in Diplomacy and Foreign Policy**, 1(2), 2016, pp.1-110.

<sup>2</sup> Elsa Hedling and Niklas Bremberg, "Practice Approaches to the Digital Transformations of Diplomacy: Toward a New Research Agenda," **International Studies Review**, 23 (4), 2021, pp. 1595-1600.

<sup>3</sup> Kadir Jun Ayhan, "Competition for Hearts and Minds: Cold War Public Diplomacy", **International Studies Review**, (22), (2020), pp. 988-989.

<sup>4</sup> Guy Schleffer and Benjamin Miller, "The Political Effects of Social Media Platforms on Different Regime Types (Summer 2021)", **Texas National Security Review**, 2021, pp.5-27.

facilitate engagement with audiences in an evolving information environment".<sup>5</sup> Thus, digital diplomacy has made it easier for states to pursue foreign policy goals by increasing their influence and reach, facilitating the tasks of countries' consulates in collecting and processing data, and communicating with their audiences, especially in times of conflict and emergency. The two-way communicative nature of social media is the fundamental difference between digital diplomacy and traditional public diplomacy, or twentieth-century diplomacy.<sup>6</sup> Yet some studies show a paradoxical result, arguing that state institutions have not been able to engage the public and create dialogue through social media.<sup>7</sup>

Israel is one the countries in the Middle East that is a major investor in social media platforms to serve its own political interests. In 2016 and 2017, Tel Aviv achieved a leading position among the countries that use digital diplomacy in their external activities.<sup>8</sup> Studies indicate that the Israeli efforts in digital diplomacy have coincided with the increase of Arab usage of social media during the 2010 Arab uprisings that began in Tunisia and Egypt before expanding to other countries such as Syria, Yemen, and Libya. During these new political events, social media platforms represented an alternative space for Arab people to express themselves away from traditional press outlets that represent regimes.<sup>9</sup>

According to the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), the Arab revolution was the main factor that drew the attention of the Israeli Mossad's (the national intelligence agency) attention to the importance of the flow of information through social platforms, monitoring the intellectual and political currents in the Arab countries, predicting events, and identifying areas of concentration of rival

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<sup>5</sup> Melanie Ciolek, "Understanding Social Media's Contribution to Public Diplomacy", **University of Southern California Center on Public Diplomacy at the Annenberg School**, 2010, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ronit Kampf, Ilan Manor, and Elad Segev, "Digital Diplomacy 2.0? A Cross-national Comparison of Public Engagement in Facebook and Twitter", **The Hague Journal of Diplomacy**, 10 (4), 2016, pp. 331-362.

<sup>7</sup> Khatib, L., Dutton, W., and Thelwall, M, "Public Diplomacy 2.0: A Case Study of the US Digital Outreach Team", **The Middle East Journal**, 66, (3), 2012, pp.453-472.

<sup>8</sup> Moath Al Amoudi., "Official Digital Diplomacy, and its Impact on Foreign Policy: A comparative Study between Palestine and the Occupying State of Israel", **Turkish vision Magazine**, vol (7/4), 2018, pp. 134-137.

<sup>9</sup> Linah Alsaafin, "Digital Occupation: What's Behind Israel's social media in Arabic", **Al Jazeera English**, 4 April 2018, [Digital occupation: What's behind Israel's social media in Arabic | Science and Technology News | Al Jazeera](#) 15 May 2022.



factions in countries that are witnessing civil wars, such as the Syrian case.<sup>10</sup> That's why the Israeli government has moved aggressively into the digital world to achieve what it has not been able to do for seven decades, which is to communicate and engage in dialogue with the Arab people. In 2011 the Israeli MFA launched the digital diplomacy department, which has been managing around hundreds of Israeli platforms in several languages. These platforms include official channels for embassies and consulates, Israeli diplomats, and officials, in additions to websites and others.<sup>11</sup>The Israeli digital department has set up a special section for Arabs, which operates several websites. These platforms serve as a 'secret diplomatic weapon', according to Media Line, an American independent news agency covering the Middle East. The report spoke to employees in the digital department who claimed that their work 'exemplifies the diversity that demonstrates Israel's coexistence, innovation and contributions to the world'.<sup>12</sup>

The Israeli digital efforts in Arabic are not limited to the MFA's platforms, but also include pages for Israeli officials, such as Avichay Adraee, the spokesman of the Israeli army, and Ofir Gendelman, the spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Both use Arabic language to communicate with Arabs and Palestinians to promote the Israeli narrative and improve the image of the occupation. In a TV interview on one of the Israeli channels, Adraee said: "Social networks provide a world of high communication, and if Arabs used to hear about Israel, today we are very present in their lives. We try to create a real dialogue with them, without intermediaries".<sup>13</sup>The interests of these digital platforms are not limited to explaining Israel's positions to the Arab masses, but rather to creating an environment capable of improving the chances of Arab normalization with Israel. According to Hasan Kaabiye, who heads the Arab propaganda sector at the IMFA,

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<sup>10</sup> Ilan Manor, "The Digitalization of Diplomacy: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Terminology", Exploring Digital Diplomacy, **Working Paper**, 2017, pp. 1-9.

<sup>11</sup> Maram Humaid, "Israeli Arabic-Language Digital Diplomacy: An analysis of the 'Israel speaks in Arabic' Facebook page", (**Master Thesis**): Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, Doha, 2021, pp. 9-15.

<sup>12</sup> Felice Friedson and Uri Cohen, "800 Channels: Israel's Secret Diplomatic Weapon", **The Media Line**, 22 October 2020, <https://jewishjournal.com/israel/323455/800-channels-israels-secret-diplomatic-weapon/> 12 April, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Saleh Al-Naami, "The Israeli Propaganda in Arabic: Objectives, Tools, and Characters", **Al Arabi**, 5 October 2017, <https://2u.pw/kicILG> 22 March 2022.

these Israeli digital activities are aimed at encouraging Arabs to normalize relations with Israel.

Although Israel succeeded in signing peace treaties with Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994, but communication with the Arabs, without any intervention from officials, was rare and even missing. Israel could not establish any official diplomatic relations with most of the Arab countries, nor with their people who viewed Israel as a state of occupation and terrorism.<sup>14</sup> However, this reality changed in September 2020, when Israel was able to sign a series of normalization agreements (Abraham Accords) with the UAE and Bahrain, with American mediation.<sup>15</sup> Sudan and Morocco quickly followed suit.<sup>16</sup> In this context, the shared concerns of Israel and several Arab Gulf states about Iran's growing influence in the region have paved the way for some hope that Israel can normalize relations with its Arab neighbors. Yonatan Gonen, head of the Arab digital diplomacy department, has already stated one goal: "Our goal is to establish a dialogue with Arabs through social networks and to present the message of the State of Israel to the public in Arab countries, especially those that do not have direct peace with Israel, such as Iraq."<sup>17</sup> However, recent agreements have shed light on the work of Israel's digital diplomacy team, making their work more demanding and persistent.<sup>18</sup> Many researchers argue that Israel has intensified the dissemination of information in the form of social media posts that support the notion of normalizing relations and making peace with Israel.<sup>19</sup> Following this introduction this thesis will explore and analyze the emergence of the term digital diplomacy as a part of Israel's intermediate public diplomacy, and how Israel has been employing this diplomacy to address the Arab peoples and to shift

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<sup>14</sup> Ruth Eglash, "With No Formal Ties, Israel is Using digital Diplomacy to Reach Out to the Arab World", **The Washington Post**, 21 December 2019, [With no formal ties, Israel is using digital diplomacy to reach out to the Arab world - The Washington Post](#) 26 March, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> David Makovsky, "How the Abraham Accords Look Forward, Not Back", **Washington Institute**, 16 Sep 2020, <https://cutt.us/bEjrc> 12 May 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Joel Singer, "The Abraham accords normalization agreements signed by Israel with the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco." **International Legal Materials**, 60. (3), 2021, pp. 448-450.

<sup>17</sup> Wael Abdel-Aal, "Palestinian Digital Diplomacy and Its Position in Palestinian Foreign Policy", **Birzeit University: Media Development Center**, 2018, pp. 5-30.

<sup>18</sup> Humaid, pp. 9-15.

<sup>19</sup> Izzeddin Khaled ALRANTISI, et al, "Utilizing Digital Diplomacy in the Israeli Discourse to Influence Arab Public Opinion during the Israeli Aggression on Gaza 2021", **Baltic Journal of Law & Politics**, 15.1, 2022, pp.736-753.

their views of Israel which has been perceived as an occupying power and a usurper of Palestinian rights. This thesis will also investigate the important and arguably persuasive strategies and propaganda tools employed by the Israeli digital diplomats on the Israeli Arabic-speaking digital pages. Although Israeli digital diplomacy manages dozens of Arabic-language social media accounts, this thesis will focus exclusively on the 'Israel speaks Arabic' Facebook page, which is one of the main platforms for presenting Israel's foreign policy towards Arabs. The platform also has a large following, with more than 3 million followers at the time of writing.

### **Research Questions and Hypothesis**

Public diplomacy aims to inform external audiences about a country's policies and interactions, with the goal of gaining internal or external support for a country's national and foreign policies. After the digitalization of diplomatic work, the interest of many developed countries in this diplomacy has increased due to its ability to transcend space and geographical borders and the speed with which events and developments can be reported as they occur, especially in times of war and conflict.<sup>20</sup> As for Israel, before the age of digital media, interaction between Israel and the Arab people was rare. Traditionally, Arabs see Israel as a terrorist state that occupies Palestinian land and kills Palestinians. Today, through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, Israel is seizing the moment to actively communicate with millions of Arabs.

The Arab Israeli digital sites play an active role in improving Israel's image and spreading its narrative, relying on several tools of influence. In this context, Israel makes great use of its digital pages during times of conflict to justify its crimes against the Palestinians, thus turning the executioner into the victim. More importantly, the Israeli army and various security institutions are also recruited on these platforms to serve the Israeli narrative. These platforms have a massive Arab following, reaching millions of followers. One of the things this thesis will explore is the nature of the interaction or uptake by the followers/viewers and whether this uptake is positive or negative for the content creators. As such, the thesis will look

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<sup>20</sup> Tamir Sheafer and Shaul R. Shenhav, "Mediated public diplomacy in a new era of warfare", **The Communication Review**, 12(3), 2009, pp. 272-283.

at the reactions and fears of Palestinian analysts regarding the possible effects of such interaction in the short and long term. However, regardless of the nature of Arab interaction, Israel is betting on time to bring about a change in Arab attitudes towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Based on the issues raised above, the study seeks to answer this main research question:

**Main research question:**

**Q1.** What methods and strategies does the "Israel Speaks Arabic" Facebook page use to improve Israel's image among the Arab masses?

**Sub- research questions:**

**Q1.** What are the most common propaganda tactics used by the study site?

**Q2.** How does Israeli digital diplomacy frame its publications on the study site?

**Q3.** How does the study site frame its methods of proof?

**Q4.** What kind of multimedia sources does the study site imply?

**Q5.** To what extent does the site use soft power tools?

The thesis argues that Israel uses soft power messages and propaganda tools to communicate with Arabs, through broadcasts that focus on non-political topics such as culture, sports, education, as well as focusing on the mutual interests and commonalities between Arabs and Israelis.

**On this basis, the following hypotheses are proposed:**

**H1.** The 'Israel Speaks Arabic' website focuses on cultural and religious similarities, as well as on humanitarian and compassionate themes that simulate the needs and emotions of the supporters.

**H2.** Israeli digital diplomacy avoids talking about politics, occupation policies and Israeli crimes against Palestinians. Instead, it exaggerates the actions of the Palestinian resistance, where the perpetrator becomes the victim.

**H3.** The thesis argues that Israeli digital diplomacy uses political propaganda strategies to attract Arabs and influence their behavior towards Israel.

**H4.** After normalizing relations with some Arab governments in recent years, Tel Aviv is intensifying its digital discourse to promote peace and coexistence with Israel.

**H5.** Israeli digital diplomacy uses language and discourse that reinforce the Israeli narrative and marginalize the Palestinian cause.

**H6.** The study site frames its publications in a way that tends to attract the masses and influence their behavior.

**Objectives and Significance of the Study:**

One of the aims of this study is to highlight and better understand the role of official Israeli institutions, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in promoting Israeli policies and building a positive image of Israel in the Arab region through digital diplomacy tools. The thesis aims to understand the media discourse used in the 'Israel speaks Arabic' Facebook page, in terms of format and content, as well as to identify the propaganda tools and strategies used to rebrand Israel's image. The study also aims to monitor and analyze the news frameworks to reveal the extent to which the page benefits from the possibilities of the Internet in reaching out to Arabs.

The field of digital diplomacy is new and there is little research on how it works. Although digital diplomacy has attracted scholars from many fields such as international relations, communication and security studies, their studies focus on the potential of digital diplomacy rather than its effects and policy goals. Our study provides an in-depth analysis of the digital diplomacy adopted by the Israeli Foreign Ministry and other official bodies in Arabic. The study aims to assess the way in which nations use digital diplomacy to proactively manage their image, where it is evident that Israel is working on a strategy with specific goals and is using professional means to achieve this goal.

The importance of this study lies in its enrichment of scientific research in this field, as there is a lack of Arab and foreign studies dealing with Israeli digital diplomacy directed at Arabs. In addition, the study can serve as a reference for researchers and graduate students in this field. In addition, the results of this study may be important for the Palestinian Foreign Ministry and Arabs alike to understand the critical role of this diplomacy on a long-term level and to intensify efforts to confront it in the

digital space, especially since the occupying state has recently succeeded in normalizing relations with a few Arab countries, without hiding its intentions to include more Arab countries in the normalization train.

### **Limitations Of the Study**

The main limitation of this study is the lack of literature on digital diplomacy in general and Israel's in particular, as it is a relatively new field of study. There is a growing number of research articles on digital diplomacy in English, but there is insufficient literature on the impact of digital diplomacy on audiences and public opinion.

The second limitation concerns the methodological issues of the existing literature: existing studies on Israeli digital diplomacy do not study Arab users through in-depth interviews or ethnographic methods.

The researcher argues that future research should aim to do so. Allowing Arab users to speak about their experiences can provide important insights into attitudes and beliefs about Israeli digital diplomacy and its potential impact on Arab audiences.

### **Research Methods**

In line with the research questions and the proposed hypotheses, this research aims to examine the strategies that Israeli digital diplomacy uses in its platforms to reach Arab audiences and to embellish the image of the occupation. The thesis uses a qualitative method based on the descriptive approach and the method of content analysis, a method common in communication, media research and popular culture studies that fall under the survey methodology.

The thesis analyses two samples of (764) Facebook posts published on the Facebook page 'Israel speaks Arabic'.

The first sample contains 644 posts published on the study page from the beginning of April until 30 September 2021. This sample was chosen because it witnessed many important events at the level of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Arab-Israeli relations,<sup>21</sup> such as the events in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of Jerusalem and

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<sup>21</sup> Izzeddin Khaled ALRANTISI, et al, pp.736-753.

the Israeli attempts to evict many Palestinian families from the neighborhood in favor of the settlers, a major Israeli attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque during the month of Ramadan, the subsequent Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, the first anniversary of the signing of the peace treaties with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, and the achievement of economic agreements with a number of Arab governments.

The second sample of the analysis includes 120 posts that were published on the study page during the fifth Israeli war (11-23 May 2021) and the sixth war (9-13 May 2023) over Gaza.

### **Why the 'Israel Speaks Arabic' Facebook Page?**

Israel's Arabic digital diplomacy department manages many Arabic pages on various digital platforms, including 'Israel in the Gulf', 'Israel in Iraq', 'The Source' (Al Masdar in Arabic), 'Israel Speaks Arabic' and others. In addition, some official figures are responsible for managing Arabic pages to achieve the goals of Israeli foreign policy towards the Arabs, most notably the page of the coordinator and the page of Avichay Adraee (the spokesperson of the Israeli army in Arabic). The researcher chose 'Israel speaks Arabic' for several reasons, as explained below:

First, the Facebook page 'Israel speaks Arabic' is the main Arabic language platform of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and has attracted more than 3 million followers so far (8 April 2023). It also enjoys a high level of interaction in the Arab world through comments, likes and shares.

Second, the page serves as an unfiltered medium to communicate with Israel's immediate neighbors and contains various messages that showcase Israel's values, culture, and modernity to Arab supporters. Therefore, it is an interesting case for understanding the tools and strategies used in Israeli digital diplomacy platforms targeting Arab audiences.

Third, the Facebook page is the most used social media platform for both general and diplomatic purposes, with the 'Israel Speaks in Arabic' page on Facebook recording the largest number of followers compared to other Israeli accounts on other social media platforms.

Finally, in addition to its widespread presence in the Arab world, the page is characterized by a high and continuous follow-up of events at the Israeli, Arab and international levels, as the page's managers are quick to use daily events to serve the political and strategic goals of the occupying state.

### **Theoretical Basis**

This thesis sheds light on the role of the Israeli digital diplomacy in promoting a positive image of the occupation and influencing Arabs attitudes towards Israel. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, which is to identify the main strategies used to improve Israeli policy, the thesis is based on Joseph Nye's soft power perspective and two common communication theories (Agenda Setting Theory and Framing Theory). The researcher argues that the previous theories are the most compatible with the objectives of the study, as the researcher argues that Israel uses soft power tools in its digital media in general, focusing on issues related to culture, tourism, science, and other matters far from politics to achieve the element of attraction for what is published on the study site. In addition, the researcher argues that the "Israel Speaks Arabic" page depends on several propaganda media strategies that can be understood and monitored through communication theories related to the subject.

Josef Nye's perspective of soft power emphasizes the existence of attractiveness power of the state, which is derived from its culture, values, and legitimate policies consistent with those values.<sup>2223</sup> Nye defines soft power as the ability to set the agenda in world politics through persuasion and attracting others through the force of one's beliefs, values, and ideas, and not through military or economic coercion.<sup>24</sup> However, according to Nye, soft power is more than persuasion, it is the power to attract.<sup>25</sup> Yet, neither soft power is neutral, nor it is always ethical. Rather, it is one-

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<sup>22</sup> Joseph S. Nye, **Bound to lead: The changing nature of American power**, Basic books, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> J. Nye, "Soft Power", **Foreign Policy**, no. 80, 1990, pp. 153–171.

<sup>24</sup> J. Nye, "Soft power: the origins and political progress of a concept", **Palgrave Commune**, 3(1), 2017, pp.1-3.

<sup>25</sup>J. Nye, **Power in the global information age: From realism to globalization**, Routledge, 2004, p.20.



way countries serve their interest, gain influence, and push foreign policy goals.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, it can be bias and manipulate sentiment.<sup>27</sup>

Agenda setting theory, however, examines how the mass media influence others by selecting certain issues and presenting them as a public agenda that the public would be concerned about.<sup>28</sup> In this respect, some argue that the media does not allow people to think, but tells them what to think about.<sup>29</sup> Agenda-setting theory focuses on some events that attract the masses and influence their attitudes.<sup>30</sup> According to the theory, the media reshapes information and image of reality.<sup>31</sup> The researcher uses this theory to explore how Israel's digital diplomacy in Arabic defines the agenda of Arab observers through focusing on certain issues and ignoring others, in a way that serves the Israeli goals and political narratives.

However, by using the framing theory which is consider as the second level of agenda setting especially in building frame,<sup>32</sup> the researcher would understand and explore how the 'Israel speaks Arabic Facebook page' frames its publications. Framing theory is interested in drawing the public's attention to certain attributes of the objects of news coverage, as well as to the objects themselves.<sup>33</sup> It assumes that frames influence public opinion and its choices according to the frame to which it is exposed.<sup>34</sup>

## **Organization of the Study**

In the introduction, the researcher provides an overview of digital diplomacy and how developed countries and their official institutions have migrated to social media platforms to conduct diplomatic work through the digital space. The researcher also

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<sup>26</sup> J. Nye, "The Future of Power", **Public Affairs**, 2011, pp. 6-11.

<sup>27</sup> J. Nye, "The Future of Power", pp.6-11.

<sup>28</sup> W. Leeds-Hurwitz, Littlejohn, S. W., and K. A. Foss, "Encyclopedia of communication theory", **SW Littlejohn & KA Foss (Eds.)**, 1, 2009, pp. 899-905.

<sup>29</sup> Stanley J. Baran, Davis Dennis K., and Kelli Striby, "Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment, and future, 2012, pp.1-25.

<sup>30</sup> A. Freeland, "An Overview of Agenda Setting Theory in Mass Communications", **University of North Texas**, 2012, pp.1-9.

<sup>31</sup> Maxwell McCombs and Sebastián Valenzuela, "The agenda-setting theory", **Cuadernos de información**, 20, 2007, pp. 44-50.

<sup>32</sup> Russell Neuman, Guggenheim W, et al, "The dynamics of public attention: Agenda-setting theory meets big data", **Journal of communication**, 64(2), 2014, pp.193-214.

<sup>33</sup> Daniel Kahneman, "Prospect theory: An analysis of decisions under risk", **Econometrica**, 47, 1979, pp. 263-291.

<sup>34</sup> Kahneman, pp. 263-291.

provides an overview of Israel's digital efforts over the past decade, and how it took advantage of the Arab revolutions and the accompanying political turmoil in the region to communicate with the Arabs for the first time in its history, with the aim of polishing its image and gaining the Arabs acceptance of the State of Israel, without ending the conflict with the Palestinians and recognizing their rights. In the introduction, the researcher outlines the problem of the study, its hypotheses, and its significance at the Palestinian and Arab levels. The introduction also includes an overview of the methodology and theoretical framework used to achieve the objectives of the study, which is to reveal the main tools and strategies used by Israel in its media discourse directed at the Arabs through its digital sites.

The first chapter, "The Literature Review and Theoretical Framework", consists of two parts. The first part reviews previous studies that have examined Israeli media and diplomatic efforts in the digital space to serve its political agendas and rebuild its image after the criticism it has faced as a result of its military practices and attacks against Palestinians. The second part highlights the conceptual evolution of diplomacy as an instrument of soft power from its traditional form to the emergence of what is now known as digital diplomacy. It also focuses on the benefits of digital diplomacy and the extent to which countries and their official and governmental institutions, especially foreign ministries, benefit from digital platforms to achieve countries' policy goals and promote positive images of them locally and internationally.

The second part also sheds light on Israel's digital efforts and investments in digital diplomacy in the context of the Arab revolutions, which demonstrated the ability of social media to bring about political change and influence the consciousness of Arab peoples.

The second chapter, titled "Theoretical Framework" focuses on the theories used to achieve the objectives of the study, namely Nye's perspective of soft power (his theory in diplomacy) and two common communication theories: the Framing Theory and the Agenda Setting Theory.

The third chapter, titled "Israel's Digital Efforts Towards the Arabs: Diplomacy or Propaganda?" provides a general overview of Israel's investment in the Internet to

justify its policies and military wars against the Palestinians on the one hand, and to besiege the Palestinian digital narrative on the other. It also discusses political propaganda and the Israeli media's reliance on it, mainly to achieve Israel's political, security and strategic goals. The researcher therefore examines the development of Israeli propaganda from the Zionist movement era to the present day.

Chapter four, titled 'Methodology, research design and data collection', is divided into two parts; the first discusses the research methodology and consists of seven main headings: Research methodology, research design, data collection instrument, population and sample of the thesis, categories of analysis, operational definitions of the categories, and validity and reliability procedures. As for the second part, it contains the data collected from the study site according to the classifications and categories of the content analysis form that the researcher formed for the analysis process.

Chapter five, titled 'Data Analysis and Research Findings', will present the results of the analytical study of the strategies and tools used by Israeli digital diplomacy on the 'Israel speaks Arabic' Facebook page. The chapter will also discuss the findings and how they correspond to the conceptual theories discussed in the methodology section. The chapter will include two main sections: the analysis of the content of the study page, followed by the analysis of the form-shape of the published posts. The analysis examines 764 posts created on the study site; these posts have been analyzed according to 19 categories.

Finally, in the reflection and conclusion, the results of the study and the analysis are presented in relation to the strategies and tools adopted by the "Israel Speaks Arabic" page. In this regard, the results show that Israeli digital diplomacy is nothing more than political propaganda through digital platforms. There is no real difference between Israeli media and propaganda, but rather they complement each other in a way that serves the political and security goals of the Israeli occupation.

The conclusion is that Israeli digital diplomacy and its tools are a restoration of Zionist propaganda. Finally, the researcher presents several recommendations to confront the Israeli propaganda, which is mainly based on the falsification of

consciousness, facts, misinformation, and the simulation of the religious and emotions of the Arab masses.

## **CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part highlights previous studies and research on Israeli digital diplomacy and Israeli media efforts on social networking sites to polish Israel's image after much criticism against the backdrop of military wars against the Palestinians.

The second part deals with literary references related to the conceptual development of diplomacy from its traditional form to the emergence of digital diplomacy, and sheds light on Israeli digital diplomacy, especially that directed at Arab peoples. There are many materials, studies, journal articles, books, and documents on diplomacy, and less on digital diplomacy, which is considered a new field of study in some fields such as international relations and communication in general.

### **1.1. Literature Review**

Much of the available literature on Israeli digital diplomacy consists of journal articles, journalistic reports, and university studies. The same applies to the literature on Israeli propaganda through digital media platforms. In this section, the researcher reviews several references that deal with digital diplomacy in general and Israeli digital diplomacy in particular. However, the English-language literature on Israel's digital efforts has focused on examining Tel Aviv's use of the digital world in times of conflict and war to defend its narrative and justify Israeli aggressions and military actions against the Palestinians. Moreover, some studies discuss the contradiction between what Israel publishes digitally to improve its image and defend itself, and its real image and policies on the ground, which weaken its efforts on social media platforms.

Lisa Kretschmer examines the reasons why states in conflict use digital media to influence their actual communication by studying Israel's military operation (Pillar of Defense) in Gaza in November 2012, where the military confrontation between Israel and the Hamas movement turned into a clash on social media networks as an additional battlefield. Kretschmer analyzed Israel's online performance during the war on Twitter, based on Ben Mor's self-presentation framework, which explains the

constraints on the structure and content of communication by which states seek to build or defend their image with domestic and foreign audiences.<sup>35</sup> The researcher argues that Israel is engaging in proactive digital diplomacy, anticipating the benefits of direct access to the public and offering an alternative narrative with the aim of humanizing Israel's military image in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, she believes that Israel's efforts have failed to convey messages of peace or to present Israel in a humane light. In the same vein, Miriyam Aouragh diminishes the effectiveness of Israel's digital diplomacy and its ability to change the image of Israel as an occupying state and aggressor against the Palestinians during the 2014 war.<sup>36</sup>

In contrast, Aouragh argues that the Palestinians were successful in publishing their narrative and mobilizing international support for their cause during the war. In the same context, Tal Samuel and Moran Yarchi found that Israeli digital efforts lacked the ability to influence Arab attitudes.<sup>37</sup> Instead, Ilan Manor and Rhye Crilley argue that the Israeli Foreign Ministry was able to shape public perceptions by using several conceptual frameworks that supported the Israeli narrative and justified Israel's attacks on Gaza during the 2014 war, and that Israel used social networking sites to spread its political propaganda.<sup>38</sup> Ayelet Kohn made the same arguments.<sup>39</sup> Hyunjin Seo argues that Israel's digital efforts depend on using political propaganda strategies to serve Israel's wartime narrative.<sup>40</sup> In sum, the Western literature on Israel's efforts in the digital world is divided between those who see it as a successful and effective policy and those who see it as a failed policy based on the use of political propaganda tools to polish the image of the occupation in front of foreign public opinion. However, the available Arabic literature and studies on Israel's

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<sup>35</sup> Lisa Maria Kretschmer, "Imagine There Is War and It Is Tweeted Live – An Analysis of Digital Diplomacy in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", *Global Media Journal*, 7(1), 2017, pp. 2-23.

<sup>36</sup> Miriyam Aouragh, "Hasbara 2.0: Israel's public diplomacy in the digital age", *Middle East Critique*, 25.3, 2016, pp. 271-297.

<sup>37</sup> Samuel-Azran and Moran Yarchi, "Military Public Diplomacy 2.0: The Arabic Facebook Page of the Israeli Defense Forces' Spokesperson", *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 13.3, 2018, pp. 323-344.

<sup>38</sup> Ilan Manor and Rhye Crilley, "Visually framing the Gaza War of 2014: The Israel ministry of foreign affairs on Twitter", *Media, War & Conflict*, 11.4, 2018, pp. 369-391.

<sup>39</sup> Ayelet Kohn, "Instagram as a naturalized propaganda tool: The Israel Defense Forces Web site and the phenomenon of shared values", *Convergence*, 23(2), 2017, pp. 197-213.

<sup>40</sup> Hyunjin Seo, "Visual propaganda in the age of social media: An empirical analysis of Twitter images during the 2012 Israeli-Hamas conflict", *Visual Communication Quarterly*, 21.3, 2014, pp. 150-161.

digital efforts have been viewed through the lens of misleading and falsifying facts in a way that presents a good image of Israel, rather than its real image as an occupying power that has practiced ethnic cleansing and racial discrimination against the Palestinian people for more than seven decades.

Sami Hararah argues that the Israeli digital media platforms frame their publications with multiple frameworks and use propaganda tools to target Arabs.<sup>41</sup> In the same vein, Haider Al Masdar believes that Israeli digital websites in Arabic are mainly based on political propaganda strategies in a deliberate and systematic manner, with the aim of bringing about change and influencing Arab public opinion.<sup>42</sup> In the same context, Saleh Al-Masry noted that Israel's digital efforts depend on attractive elements such as images, videos and graphics, with the aim of distorting the marches that took place from the Gaza Strip to the Israeli border to demand an end to the Israeli blockade on Gaza.<sup>43</sup> Huda Naim also monitors the Israeli discourse towards the Palestinian resistance in Gaza during times of conflict by analyzing the content of two Israeli pages: The 'Coordinator's Page' on Facebook and the 'Avichai Adraie Page' on Twitter. The researcher used survey methodology, agenda setting theory and framing theory. Her study revealed that the Israeli media discourse adopted a policy of intimidation, misinformation, and distortion of the Palestinian resistance.<sup>44</sup>

However, Tina Al- Jallad indicates that Israeli digital diplomacy plays an active role in influencing stereotyping on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the United States of America by attacking the Palestinian military organizations or Iran, while presenting Israel as a democratic state in an Arab environment full of chaos.<sup>45</sup> The researcher believes that Israeli efforts are aimed at shaping public opinion and the positions of decision-makers in a way that serves the occupation's narrative about the reality of

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<sup>41</sup> Sami Harara, "Promotional Methods on Arabic- speaking Israeli Digital websites towards the city of Jerusalem - a comparative analytical study", (**Master Thesis**): The Islamic University, Gaza, 2018, pp. 10-22.

<sup>42</sup> Haider Al-Masdar, "Israeli cyber propaganda to block the marches the Palestinian Return", **Al Jazeera Center for Studies and Research**, Doha, 11 July 2018, pp. 22-25.

<sup>43</sup> Saleh Al-Masry, "The Nature of the Israeli Discourse Directed towards the Return Marches through the New Media", (**Master Thesis**): Gaza: Al-Aqsa University, 2020, pp. 5-200.

<sup>44</sup> Huda Naim, "The Palestinian Resistance in the Israeli Propaganda Discourse in Arabic on social media: A comparative study", (**Master Thesis**): The Islamic university, Gaza, 2017, pp. 10-290.

<sup>45</sup> Tina Al-Jallad, "Israeli digital diplomacy and event investment: A reading of the George Floyd murder model", **Palestinian Affairs Magazine**, 2020, pp. 72-82.

the conflict with the Palestinians. In her study, Al Jallad followed the case study methodology and theories of communication and influence. The results of her study revealed the success of Israeli digital diplomacy and its ability to influence American society, as well as highlighting the importance of digital diplomacy in general.

The study by Al Saifi and others aimed to identify the propaganda techniques used by the Israeli army spokesman, Avichai Adraei, on Tik Tok to influence the Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim public during the May 2021 war on Gaza. The study followed the descriptive analytical approach and the content analysis method, where 47 video clips from the study site were analyzed. The study found that the most important topics covered by the page are those related to attacking Hamas and the Palestinian resistance factions and boasting about Israel and promoting it as a country with high medical, scientific, and military capabilities.<sup>46</sup> In the same context, Mustafa Alwan argues that the Israeli digital efforts present a positive image of Israel by focusing on issues related to culture, civilization, and technology. He examined the image of "I and the Other" on the 'Israel Speaks Arabic page' and 'Avichai Adraee's page'. The researcher relied on the media survey and the content analysis method, where the study revealed that the two pages focus on presenting the Israeli military superiority and a positive image of Israel in terms of cultural, civilizational, intellectual, and technological progress.<sup>47</sup>

However, Maram Humaid discusses Israel's use of social media platforms to reach out to Arabs following the normalization agreements with some Arab countries in recent years. She analyses the 6-month sample of the 'Israel speaks Arabic Facebook page'. Her study shows that the page focuses on cultural and promotional topics, where the number of posts increased significantly after the normalization agreement. The study suggests that Israel effectively uses digital diplomacy tools to promote online engagement with Arab audiences through soft-powered content and avoids

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<sup>46</sup> Firas Al-Saifi, Manal Issa and Moeen Ku`a, "The propaganda techniques used on the IDF Spokesperson's page on TikTok during the Gaza war in 2021, **The Arab Journal for Scientific Publishing**, Issue 40, 2022, pp. 735-766.

<sup>47</sup> Mustafa Alwan, "The image of the ego and the other in the contents of Israeli social networking sites in Arabic. The Facebook Model: An Analytical Study", **Media Research Journal**, Al-Azhar University, 55(2), 2020, pp.806-912. [https://jsb.journals.ekb.eg/article\\_117970.html](https://jsb.journals.ekb.eg/article_117970.html) 12 May 2022.



posting conflicting content.<sup>48</sup> Heba Mustafa's study identifies the mechanisms of Israel's use of digital public relations with the Palestinians using humanitarian and economic issues, both of which are attractive to a large segment of the Palestinian population. The researcher analyses the 'coordinator's Facebook page' using the descriptive approach and content analysis method, and the theories of uses, gratifications and framing. The study reveals that the coordinator's page exerts its influence by presenting issues that simulate Palestinian needs, such as health, tourism, and trade, and by offering Israeli facilities in these areas.<sup>49</sup>

Alaa Abdullah Al-Latif examines Israeli public diplomacy strategies for communicating with Arabs in times of peace and crisis by analyzing Israeli discourse on Facebook. The study focused on several issues, including the Israeli Iranian conflict, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the international economic boycott of Israel. The study found that Israel pursues a failed policy of silence towards the economic boycott, as well as a discourse that attacks Palestinian organization such as Hamas and Al Islamic Jihad or Iran, while presenting Israel as a democratic state in an environment full of chaos.<sup>50</sup> Saeed Abu Mulla examined the official Israeli propaganda strategies on social networks, represented by the page of the official spokesperson for the Israeli army, Avichai Adraei. The study found that the page used propaganda strategies to highlight security, military, social and religious issues, as well as attraction strategies that simulate public emotions and humanize the Israeli army.<sup>51</sup>

The researcher Wael Abdel-Al compares the Israeli efforts aimed at Arabs with the official Palestinian efforts. He suggests that the main goal of the Israeli efforts in Arabic is to improve the image of the occupation among Arabs, since much of the content of the Israeli platforms is humanitarian, cultural and artistic in nature, as

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<sup>48</sup> Humaid, pp. 5-12.

<sup>49</sup> Heba Mustafa, "Employing digital popular diplomacy to influence Palestinian society: Case study: Coordinator's Facebook page", (**Master Thesis**): An-Najah National University, Palestine, 2021, pp. 10-200.

<sup>50</sup> Alaa Abdul Latif, "The Communication Strategies of Israeli Public Diplomacy via the Internet: An Analytical Study", (**Master Thesis**): Cairo University, 2015, pp. 12-200.

<sup>51</sup> Saeed Abu Mualla, "The Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the field of the virtual world, an analytical study of the Israeli propaganda in social networks: Facebook as a model", **the Journal of the Arab American University for Research**, No. 2, Vol. 3, 2017, pp. 52-75.

well as using modern technological tools, which has made Israel superior to advanced countries such as Switzerland, Canada, and Spain. Abdul Al points out the weakness of Palestinian digital content compared to Israeli content and recommends that the Palestinian Authority pay attention to digital diplomacy as one of the soft power tools and a form of Palestinian struggle that is in line with the developments of the times.<sup>52</sup> In the same vein, Moath Al Amoudi discusses the weakness of Palestinian digital diplomacy compared to that of the Israelis. The study analyzed some of the Palestinian official and unofficial digital diplomacy sites, examined the Palestinian organized institutional work and the impact of their digital diplomacy on the Palestinian collective consciousness.

Al Amoudi argues that Israel uses more modern technologies to reach internal and external audiences. In this context, the researcher presented the challenges facing Palestinian diplomacy, such as the cyber war waged by Israel, in collusion with major technology companies, against Palestinian digital content, and the closure of dozens of Palestinian pages on social networking sites.<sup>53</sup> However, the study by Khalaf Kiush and A. Muhammad suggests that Israeli digital engagement focuses on promoting the idea of Arab-Jewish community. The study analyses the content of the Facebook page 'Israel in Iraqi dialect' and relies on the descriptive analytical approach and the content analysis method. The study shows that the page was primarily concerned with talking about Iraqi-Jewish rapprochement, the life of Jews in Iraq in the past, and improving Israel's image among the Iraqi people.<sup>54</sup> Muhammad Abdel Aziz analyzes the content of official Israeli digital diplomacy in Arabic via Facebook during the celebrations of the 47th anniversary of the October 1973 War. His study found that Israel intensified its diplomatic activity during the study period to promote the idea of peace and normalization, while showing the

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<sup>52</sup> Abdel-Aal, pp. 5-30.

<sup>53</sup> Al Amoudi, pp. 126-130.

<sup>54</sup> Khalaf Kiush and A. Muhammad, "The communicative content of Israeli popular diplomacy from the perspective of international public relations: An analytical study of the page of Israel in the Iraqi dialect on Facebook", *Al-Hakim Journal*, No. 52, 2021, pp. 87-110.

military superiority of the Israeli army with the aim of shaking Egyptians' confidence in their army.<sup>55</sup>

Previous studies contributed to the crystallization of the problem of the current study and benefited from different approaches and tools to analyze the collected data. However, the researcher found that most of the presented studies are similar in form, content, and theoretical framework, and that the analysis was not in-depth, but rather a superficial study of political propaganda tools in the Arabic-speaking Israeli digital platforms during the conflict. In addition, most of the previous studies focused on Israeli digital efforts specifically targeting Palestinians through the analysis of Avichai Adraee's or the Coordinator's pages. Although the current study overlaps with some studies in terms of methodology or theoretical framework, it is an in-depth analysis of the content of the 'Israel speaks Arabic' Facebook page, which expresses Israel's official policy towards the Arabs. It also includes a study of the tools and strategies used by the study page to address the Arabs, through an analysis of more than 700 publications on the page during conflict and non-conflict periods, based on Nye's theory of diplomacy 'soft power' and two theories in the media: Framing Theory and Agenda Setting Theory.

In fact, this paper is one of the first to discuss Israel's digital efforts in terms of digital diplomacy and soft power. In addition, this paper is relatively recent, and the selected study sample includes important events in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, such as the last two wars in Gaza, major events in Jerusalem, and the normalization agreements with several Arab countries. Therefore, it is expected that the dissertation will produce interesting, important, and different results from the findings of previous studies, especially since it examines the Israeli discourse directed at the Arabs, not just the Palestinians.

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<sup>55</sup> Muhammad Abdel Aziz Asida, "Contents of the official Israeli digital diplomacy in Arabic via Facebook during the celebrations of the 47th anniversary of the war of October 1973", **The Egyptian Journal for Media Research**, 77 (2), 2021, pp. 193-268

## 1.2. The Conceptual Framework

In this section, the researcher reviews the conceptual evolution of diplomacy from its traditional form to what is now known as digital diplomacy. The researcher also discusses how countries, and their governments use digital platforms to achieve their political goals and agendas with ease. In this context, the researcher sheds light on Israel's digital efforts, especially those aimed at Arab populations.

### 1.2.1. Diplomacy from Traditional to Public

Diplomacy in its traditional form is one of the elements of soft power that states use to promote their values and ideas peacefully. The term soft power was first used by international relations scholar Joseph Nye in 1990 in the post-Cold War era. He defined it as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment".<sup>56</sup> As such, diplomacy is one of the most effective means of resolving and managing international conflicts through official state institutions. Although diplomacy has been around since the seventeenth century, it was recognized through formal protocols between rulers and kings.<sup>57</sup> Traditional diplomacy includes international rules, procedures, and norms that regulate relations between states and international organizations through diplomatic representatives, with the aims of serving the security, economic and political interests of states. These goals can be achieved through communication, political negotiations, international agreements, and treaties.<sup>58</sup>

Robin Cohen described diplomacy as the “engine room” of international relations.<sup>59</sup> It is, how states seek to secure their interests, and implement the goals, strategies, and broad tactics of foreign policy.<sup>60</sup> However, Bull’s definition of the diplomacy as “the conduct of relations between states and other entities withstanding in world

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<sup>56</sup>J. Nye, **Power in the global information age: From realism to globalization**, Routledge, 2004, p.20.

<sup>57</sup> Faruk Sönmezoğlu, **Uluslar arası İlişkiler Sözlüğü**, İstanbul Cem Yayınevi, 1992, p.107; Vedat Demir, **Kamu diplomasisi ve yumuşak güç**, İstanbul: Beta Yayınları, 2012, 60, p.9.

<sup>58</sup> Tamer Kamel Muhammad, **Contemporary Diplomacy and Negotiation Management Strategy**, Amman: Dar Al Masirah Publishing and Distribution, 2000, p. 21.

<sup>59</sup> Raymond Cohen, “Putting diplomatic studies on the map. Diplomatic studies program newsletter”, **Leicester: Centre for the Study of Diplomacy**, 1998, p.1.

<sup>60</sup> Olubukola S Adesina, “Foreign policy in an era of digital diplomacy”, **Cogent Social Sciences**, 3.1, 2017, pp. 3-6.

politics by official agents and peaceful means”,<sup>61</sup> remains the most used one among diplomatic schools. Watson characterized diplomacy as the process of “negotiation between political entities which acknowledge each other’s independence”.<sup>62</sup> All these definitions share a fundamental feature of diplomacy, that is, its peaceful approach to reconciling interests among states and actors.

Diplomacy in any country includes several activities, including representing the interests of that country, providing information to the authorities, negotiating, interacting with civil society, especially opinion leaders, and protecting the country's citizens.<sup>63</sup> Thus, traditional diplomacy can be seen as an attempt by one international actor to manage the international environment through engagement with another international actor. However, the use of cyberspace in diplomatic work and the information revolution have led to a redefinition of traditional diplomacy into public diplomacy (PD), which Gordon Smith defines as "the art of advancing and preserving national interests through the exchange of information between the government and other states and groups".<sup>64</sup> Diplomacy focuses on the role of communication in the emergence of other actors and thus the emergence of diplomatic actors outside the state. It has become one of the most important features of contemporary international relations. Public diplomacy emerged during the Cold War, when both the Soviet and US powers used international broadcasting to persuade foreign publics to adopt their ideologies and values.<sup>65</sup>

This form of diplomacy is a combination of foreign policy activities that tend to facilitate the acceptance of another country's foreign policy by other publics. However, the study of public diplomacy is still a new and expanding field where there is no single agreed definition. Some studies suggest that the term public

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<sup>61</sup> Adesina, pp. 3-6.

<sup>62</sup> Adesina, pp.3-6.

<sup>63</sup> French Diplomacy Website, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/ar/politique-etrangere-de-la-france> 15 April 2022.

<sup>64</sup> Adel Abdel-Sadiq, “Electronic Diplomacy and the New Entrance for Foreign Policy Management”, **Arab Centre for Cyberspace Research**, 9 Dec 2017, [http://accronline.com/article\\_detail.aspx?id=28976#\\_ftn](http://accronline.com/article_detail.aspx?id=28976#_ftn) 12 May 2022.

<sup>65</sup> Daya Kishan Thussu, "Legitimizing Humanitarian Intervention? CNN, NATO, and the Kosovo Crisis", **European Journal of Communication**, 15.3, 2000, pp. 345-361.

diplomacy was first used by Edmund Gulin in 1965,<sup>66</sup> Dean of the School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in the US. Public Diplomacy (PD) is defined as "the process by which a government communicates with foreign publics to create understanding of its ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, and its national objectives and current policies".<sup>67</sup> It is also known as "a tool that states use to understand cultures, attitudes and behavior; build and manage relationships; influence ideas and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values".<sup>68</sup> In the same vein, Nicholas Cull argues that public diplomacy refers to the process where international bodies work to achieve their foreign policy goals through engagement with foreign publics.<sup>69</sup> James Pamment considered the two-way communication as the core of the new public diplomacy.<sup>70</sup>

Public diplomacy, however, does not aim to win hearts and the minds as an end, but to create a basis for collaboration for achieving not only military victory but winning peace.<sup>71</sup> PD is not only a direct attempt to influence a foreign public, but also part of it is to listen to a foreign public and change its approach or even its high policy as a result.<sup>72</sup> Thus, PD is a medium through which a sovereign state communicates with foreign publics with the aim of influencing them and promoting that country's national interests and foreign policy objectives. This is one of the most fundamental differences between traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy. While the former is considered an integral part of diplomacy between one country and another, i.e., the conduct of official relations between official representatives (leaders and diplomats) who represent sovereign states, public diplomacy involves communication activities between the officials of a country and the people of other countries with the aim of influencing them. In this sense, public diplomacy includes

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<sup>66</sup> Nicholas John Cull, "Public diplomacy: Lessons from the past", **CA: Figueroa Press**, Los Angeles, Vol. 12, 2009, p.18.

<sup>67</sup> Hans N. Tuch, "Communicating with the world: US public diplomacy overseas", New York: **St. Martin's Press**, 1990, p.3.

<sup>68</sup> Jan Melissen, "Public diplomacy", in Andrew F. Cooper, Jorge Heine, and Ramesh Thakur, eds, **The oxford handbook of modern diplomacy**, 2013, p. 436.

<sup>69</sup> Humaid, pp. 9-15.

<sup>70</sup> Humaid, pp. 9-15.

<sup>71</sup> Colin McInnes, **Spectator-sport war: The West and contemporary conflict**, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002, p. 362.

<sup>72</sup> Cull, **Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past**, p.12.

activities such as educational exchange programs, cultural events and exchanges, and radio and television broadcasts.<sup>73</sup>

Thanks to the information and communication revolution, public diplomacy has been able to bypass traditional diplomacy by seeking to shape public opinion in other countries and influence international relations. It has also become one of the main actors in international relations, which include many informal actors such as civil society organizations, social and political actions, international non-governmental organizations,<sup>74</sup> as well as communication between publics and cultures. ICTs and globalization, which have made the world a small village, have contributed to the increase in the activities and influence of PD, facilitating the way people communicate and exchange information without borders, as they have helped to change the political, social, and economic landscape around the world, making it easy to reach millions of people directly and without borders.

ICTs have also enabled less developed countries to open to the world and share their culture and values. For example, the Internet has become central to public and private communication, while contemporary tools, including social media, have brought millions of people into open conversation spaces, changing people's lives, and making the world smaller.<sup>75</sup> This has led to a new evolution in the practice of diplomacy and the emergence of what is now called Digital Diplomacy (DD).<sup>76</sup> In time, the public digital diplomacy has replaced the advertising and the media for marketing brands through digital media platforms and has contributed to the introduction of new international concepts, such as national branding, with the aim of influencing people's perceptions and ideas.<sup>77</sup>

More importantly, in today's world, individuals and organizations have a role to play in international affairs. However, despite the promise that digital diplomacy holds

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<sup>73</sup> Firas Ahmed, "Public Diplomacy and Chinese Soft Power", **The International and Political Journal**, 2016, pp. 629-664.

<sup>74</sup> Venera Iztaeva and Laura Abzhaparova, "THE PURPOSE AND METHODS OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY", IN **THE EXAMPLE OF KAZAKH-TURKISH RELATIONS**, 1(1), 2017, pp. 43 – 51.

<sup>75</sup> Ellen Hallams, "Digital diplomacy: The internet, the battle for ideas & US Foreign policy", **CEU Political Science Journal**, 04, 2010, pp. 538-574.

<sup>76</sup> Nicholas Westcott, "Digital diplomacy: The impact of the internet on international relations", (working paper), **Oxford Internet Institute**, 1 July 2008, p3.

<sup>77</sup> Ahmed, pp. 629-664.

for the conduct of international relations, little is known from an analytical perspective about how digital diplomacy works, with what degree of success, and what its limitations are.<sup>78</sup>

### 1.2.2. Diplomacy in Digital Era

Thanks to digital media tools and their role in enhancing public participation via the Internet, many developed countries and their official and unofficial institutions are increasingly migrating towards digital media platforms to carry out their political and official actions, as digital media tools provide ease of communication. The impact of the digitalization of media and communication on public diplomacy is widely recognized. There is still little consensus on how to define digital diplomacy, which can refer to the use of the Internet in general or focus on the use of social media networks.<sup>79</sup> Some approaches give a broader definition of digital diplomacy as "a strategy for managing change through digital tools and virtual collaboration".<sup>80</sup> Others explicitly define the role of digital media as including public diplomacy, foreign policy and other aspects of diplomacy, including consular affairs and crisis management.<sup>81</sup>

In recent years, a variety of terms have been used to refer to the migration of diplomatic organizations and foreign ministries into the online space, including 'public diplomacy', 'cyber diplomacy', 'net diplomacy' and, more recently, 'digital diplomacy'. The term 'digital diplomacy (DD)' has a wide range of definitions that refer to the negative and positive influences of digitization on diplomatic organizations. It is an extension of public diplomacy, which has provided individuals with many communication channels to express their views, rather than considering them only as targets.<sup>82</sup> In fact, digital diplomacy can go beyond one-way cultural promotion by harnessing the powerful capabilities of digital media to provide means

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<sup>78</sup> Corneliu Bjola and Marcus Holmes, **Digital Diplomacy: Theory and practice**, New York: NY:Routledge, 2015, pp. 1-9.

<sup>79</sup> Bjola and Holmes, pp.1-9.

<sup>80</sup> Bjola and Holmes, pp.1-9.

<sup>81</sup> Jennifer Cassidy and Ilan Manor, "Crafting strategic MFA communication policies during times of political crisis: A note to MFA policy makers", **Global affairs**, 2.3, 2016, pp. 331-343.

<sup>82</sup> Natalia Grincheva, "Digital Diplomacy Rhetoric: International Policy Frame Transformations in Diplomatic Discourse (The case study of the UK)", **ENCATC Journal of Cultural Management and Policy**, 2(2), 2012, pp.12-19.



for interactive communication between different parties and to create engaging environments across borders.

Many governments have been quick to recognize the importance of digital diplomacy in advancing their foreign policy and interests and have set up specialized digital diplomacy departments in foreign ministries, chiefs' offices, and other official institutions. The proliferation of digital initiatives in foreign ministries can be described as a revolution in the practice of diplomacy, changing the way companies, individuals, governmental and non-governmental organizations interact. The most prominent part of this revolution has been the change in the way diplomats practice traditional diplomacy, negotiation and even crisis management.

In his peer-reviewed article on digital diplomacy and foreign policy, Adesina Olubukola noted that information and communication technology is one of the major factors that have influenced diplomacy in this era. It has brought about "a major change in the way people communicate and exchange information, as well as a change in political, social and economic life around the world".<sup>83</sup> Digital diplomacy has added a new pattern to the work of diplomacy, which includes government's interaction with people (gov-to-people) and people's interaction with government (people-to-gov).<sup>84</sup> While traditional diplomacy is limited to official interactions between governments (gov-to-gov), digital diplomacy is more face-to-face.<sup>85</sup>

Thanks to digital media, governments and diplomats no longer have a monopoly on international relations, as digital tools increasingly allow the public to connect, engage and mobilize. Given the newness of the term, there are few literary definitions of digital diplomacy and no specific definition of it, as the term is flexible and rapidly evolving. However, there is agreement that it means the introduction of modern technology and its tools into traditional diplomacy. Manor and Segev defined digital diplomacy as the increasing use of social media platforms by the

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<sup>83</sup> Adessina, pp. 5-6.

<sup>84</sup> Adel Abdel Sadiq, "Electronic Diplomacy and the New Entrance to Foreign Policy Management", **ARAB CENTER FOR CYPERSPACE RESEARCH**, 9 Dec 2017, [http://accronline.com/article\\_detail.aspx?id=28976#\\_ftn\\_2](http://accronline.com/article_detail.aspx?id=28976#_ftn_2) May 2021.

<sup>85</sup> Adessina, pp. 4-6.

state, to implement its foreign policy, and to manage its reputation and image.<sup>86</sup> The researchers defined digital diplomacy at two levels: At the level of the State Department and its embassies around the world, it depends on the state's ability to shape political messages to foreign audiences in accordance with the history, culture, and customs and traditions of those peoples.<sup>87</sup>

Dev Lewis defines digital diplomacy as the use of digital communication tools by diplomats to communicate with each other and the public.<sup>88</sup> Whereas Devan Potter defines it as “diplomatic practices via digital channels including the internet and mobile phone”.<sup>89</sup> *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* remains one of the most important references on digital diplomacy. It presented various definitions of digital diplomacy as a new term in the humanities, but all shared a common view of digital diplomacy as a form of public diplomacy, which includes the use of digital technologies and social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, etc. to communicate with foreign audiences in a cost-effective way.<sup>90</sup> However, digital diplomacy is also known by several other terms such as electronic diplomacy (e-diplomacy), diplomacy 2.0 and twiplomacy. Fergus Hanson defines e-diplomacy as “the use of the Internet and new information and communication technologies to support diplomatic objectives”.<sup>91</sup>

From the foregoing, digital diplomacy can be defined as the promotion of foreign countries' policies and the enhancement of their image using various social media technologies that allow for rapid dissemination and easy communication with the masses without conditions or geopolitical restrictions. Here, the success of political messages requires an understanding of the target audience through the study of its history, culture, customs, and psychology. Online Effect consists of several layers, each requiring a different strategy, as diplomats navigate from one to the next to

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<sup>86</sup> Ilan Manor and Elad Segev, “America’s selfie: How the US portrays itself on its social media accounts”, In C. Bjola and M. Holmes, **Digital diplomacy**, New York, NY: Routledge, 2015, pp. 89–108.

<sup>87</sup> Manor and Segev, pp. 89–108.

<sup>88</sup> Manor and Segev, pp. 89-108.

<sup>89</sup> Evan Potter, **Cyber-diplomacy: Managing foreign policy in the twenty- first century**, Ontario: McGill-Queen’s Press, 2012.

<sup>90</sup> Bjola and Holmes, pp. 5-12.

<sup>91</sup> Fergus Hanson, **Baked in and wired: eDiplomacy@ State**, Washington: Brookings Institution, 2012, p.2.

achieve the goal of influence and change the behaviors and activities of others. This influence can be perceived through four layers, which are: <sup>92</sup>

First, the Agenda Setting layer, which relates to the issues that the public discusses on the Internet, as foreign ministries and diplomats can post one-way messages online, influencing the issues discussed by news channels and thus setting the media agenda.

Second, the resonance: This refers to the interaction of the online audience with the content of digital diplomacy. This requires foreign ministries and diplomats to create content that resonates with the values, norms and culture of their followers and positions. If this is achieved, followers will share or interact with this content.

Third: Attitudes layer, it relates to changing an individual's attitude and tendencies. Here, the impact can be achieved through ongoing dialogue between diplomats and the public online.

Fourth, the behavior change layer, which is the ultimate and most important goal of diplomatic activity, i.e., to persuade foreign audiences to accept another country's foreign policy and to mobilize support for that policy among national decision-makers. <sup>93</sup>

Beyond the goal of influencing others, measuring digital diplomacy activity, as Bjola argues, "requires that MFAs define their goals and the parameters for evaluating the successful achievement of those goals". <sup>94</sup>Digital diplomacy units often measure online activities because of the need to demonstrate a return on investment in digital activities. This can lead to a misleading convergence of quantitative measures such as the number of online followers or the level of engagement with posted content (i.e., posts and retweets). However, these figures are not accurate as they do not measure the impact of online content on the perceptions and attitudes of online audiences. Ultimately, some argue that digital diplomacy must abandon the goal of influence in order to be successful and achieve

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<sup>92</sup> Corneliu Bjola and Lu Jiang, "Social media and public diplomacy", In: Corneliu Bjola and Marcus Holmes, **Digital Diplomacy: Theory and practice**, Routledge, 2015, pp. 71-88.

<sup>93</sup> Adesina, p. 11.

<sup>94</sup> Bjola and Jiang, pp. 71-88.

its desired objectives.<sup>95</sup> According to them, MFAs should be committed to meaningful and ethical dialogue with foreign audiences, with the aim not of persuasion but of an open exchange of ideas that can lead to incremental changes in the way governments and online audiences view and communicate with each other.<sup>96</sup>

Academic research on digital diplomacy focuses on how digital diplomacy is used by diplomatic organizations and institutions such as consulates, embassies, foreign ministries, international bodies such as the United Nations, NATO and NGOs, and on its potential capacity rather than its actual application in the field.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, recent studies on digital diplomacy have failed to explore how diplomatic organizations have used digital technologies and what adaptations they need to make in order to use these technologies effectively, such as developing new work routines, training diplomats, and strengthening current routines.

### **1.2.3. Digital Diplomacy: Opportunities and Challenges**

Today, digital diplomacy has become a fundamental part of foreign policy. States and governmental and even non-governmental institutions compete for influence and power through cyberspace. This would not be possible without social media platforms, which make communication easier and cheaper than traditional means of public diplomacy. Several platforms such as Facebook and Twitter allow for more dynamic content such as videos, photos, and links to be used instead of traditional methods of public diplomacy such as giving speeches or distributing brochures. Here, the researcher outlines some of the opportunities and challenges associated with the use of digital diplomacy.<sup>98</sup>

First, digital diplomacy, when used properly, complements traditional diplomacy by helping states pursue their foreign policy objectives by increasing their influence and reach. It also contributes to public diplomacy in the areas of information gathering and processing, consular activities, and communication during

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<sup>95</sup>Ilan Manor and James Pamment, "Towards prestige mobility? Diplomatic prestige and digital diplomacy." **Cambridge Review of International Affairs**, 32.2, 2019, pp. 93-131.

<sup>96</sup> Manor and Pamment, pp. 93-131.

<sup>97</sup> Manor, "Are We There Yet", pp. 10-15.

<sup>98</sup> Ilan Manor, "What is Digital Diplomacy, and how is it Practiced around the World? A brief introduction", **The Annual Review of the Diplomatist Magazine**, 3, 2016, pp. 4-6.

emergencies and disasters. In addition, there are other objectives for the use of digital diplomacy, including concerted efforts by all state institutions to advance their national interests and increase their soft power, to communicate with and influence the public in the virtual world, and to benefit from the huge flow of information in policy making that can anticipate social and political movements that are about to occur.

In addition, digital diplomacy has contributed to the development of diplomatic work and foreign policy of countries by providing them with easy communication and exchange of ideas between officials or decision-makers and internal and external audiences. It has also contributed to the decentralization of diplomatic work by reducing costs and facilitating communication and has allowed countries to reshape and promote their image, where MFAs have been able to set up virtual embassies in virtual worlds to rebrand their nation. One example is the virtual embassy 'Tehran', a web-based embassy launched by the US State Department in late 2016 to communicate with Iranian citizens, given the lack of diplomatic contact between the two countries.<sup>99</sup>

However, digital diplomacy is not immune to risks, including information leakage, hacking, and anonymity of Internet users.<sup>100</sup> In this context, digital diplomacy can easily be exposed to electronic threats, such as hacking into the accounts of officials and spreading false comments and positions about them. In addition, digital diplomacy in general and twiplomacy in particular have other negative aspects, such as Diplomats are likely to be exposed to criticism and negative comments from their audience, which can affect diplomats in public. In addition, there is sometimes an overlap between official positions and the personal opinions of diplomats, which can lead to diplomatic crises between countries. Even practitioners of digital diplomacy sometimes make mistakes in their use.

Yet, the social networking site algorithms remain the most important challenge of digital diplomacy.<sup>101</sup> For example, an algorithm can identify people's political

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<sup>99</sup> Manor, "What is Digital Diplomacy", pp. 4-6.

<sup>100</sup> Fatiha Leitim, "Electronic diplomacy between effectiveness and limited effect", **Journal of Middle Eastern Affairs**, pp. 124-126.

<sup>101</sup> Manor, "What is Digital Diplomacy", pp.4-6.

affiliations and how they think about the world, so the algorithms only present them with content that matches their views and beliefs. This can make it difficult for diplomats to change the way people think about their country. Despite the promise that digital diplomacy holds for the conduct of international relations, information management and public diplomacy, countries continue to conduct their work in foreign ministries and consulates in traditional ways, such as holding meetings, conferences, negotiations, and crisis resolution through intergovernmental procedures. However, the researcher argues that managing digital diplomacy with skills would enhance the country's efforts in international relations and foreign policy activities in a faster and more effective manner.

#### **1.2.4. Digital Diplomacy Around the World**

After migrating to the Internet, the first concern of foreign ministries and diplomats was to maintain a massive presence on social media. As a result, the social networking sites of all embassies and diplomats were buzzing with activity. But was this enough to influence and connect with others? Realizing the potential of digital diplomacy requires long-term strategic planning. In fact, measuring the effectiveness of digital diplomacy has become increasingly important as foreign ministries move from social media presence to social media competence. Many countries have recognized the importance of digital diplomacy in international relations and have established specialized centers and circles for digital technology.

For example, the US Department of State, under Secretary Colin Powell, established a dedicated office for digital diplomacy activities in 2002 following the September 11 attacks. It was renamed the Office of e-Diplomacy and became the department's knowledge management lead.<sup>102</sup> Former US President Barack Obama was the first head of state to set up a Twitter account in March 2007 in connection with his presidential campaign. As of September 2012, the US had more than 150 full-time staff working in various e-diplomacy nodes at headquarters, with more than 900 people using e-diplomacy at US missions abroad.<sup>103</sup> After his election in 2016, former US President Donald Trump engaged in Twitter diplomacy to become one of

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<sup>102</sup>Hanson, p.3.

<sup>103</sup> Hanson, p.36.

the most influential political leaders on social networking sites, especially Twitter, which he uses heavily to communicate with the American public and the outside world to spread his political messages and views on various events.<sup>104</sup>

According to the 2017 report on digital diplomacy efforts, the United States of America ranked first, followed by the UK in second and France in third, while Israel ranked ninth globally, a progressive position for the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>105</sup> Many other countries are following suit, adopting some form of digital diplomacy strategy, usually involving the use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Kasper Kling, the Danish ambassador to California's Silicon Valley since 2017, became the world's first tech ambassador in 2019. Kling says that: "Our values, our institutions, democracy and human rights, in my opinion, are now being challenged by the emergence of new technologies, these companies have gone from being companies with commercial interests to actually becoming foreign policy actors."<sup>106</sup>

Due to the importance of digital diplomacy in international relations, many foreign ministries have turned to social media networks, most notably Twitter, giving rise to the concept of 'twiplomacy', which is the most prominent manifestation of interactive digital diplomacy.<sup>107</sup> Twitter diplomacy has paid attention to other social networking sites such as Facebook and called it Facebook diplomacy, referring to the pages of leaders, officials and official circles on the Facebook platform. This is in addition to interest in other communication networks such as Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and others.<sup>108</sup>

The definition of digital diplomacy varies from country to country, with the US State Department calling it "21st century statecraft". Canada calls it an open policy.<sup>109</sup> The UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) defines digital diplomacy on its

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<sup>104</sup> Elaine Filadelfo, "#This Happened in 2019", **Blog at Twitter**, 9 Dec 2019, [https://blog.twitter.com/en\\_us/topics/insights/2019/ThisHappened-in-2019.html](https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/insights/2019/ThisHappened-in-2019.html) 12 May 2021.

<sup>105</sup> Al-Amoudi, p. 126.

<sup>106</sup> Andreas Sandre, "2019 in Review: top 10 digital diplomacy moments", **Digital Diplomacy**, 12 Dec 2019, <https://medium.com/digital-diplomacy/2019-in-review-top-10-digital-diplomacy-moments-d4e6d9752904> 15 April 2022.

<sup>107</sup> Manor and Segev, pp. 89-108.

<sup>108</sup> Abdel-Aal, p10.

<sup>109</sup> Adesina, p.6.

website as "using the internet to solve foreign policy problems".<sup>110</sup> Where the French MFA saw digital diplomacy as an extension of public diplomacy, using technology to transfer information with the aim of changing the form of diplomatic activity.<sup>111</sup> India is one of the major states using new and digital media in its public diplomacy initiatives to digitally communicate the state's messages, achieve its foreign policy objectives and counter rhetoric hostile to Indian interests.<sup>112</sup>

Parama Palit examines Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's use of social media platforms in his political career and how Indian public diplomacy has benefited from social media platforms to facilitate two-way communication, dialogue, and direct engagement. According to Palit, India has increasingly used public diplomacy to brand its image as democratic and attractive for trade, tourism, and investment. However, Palit showed that there is a problem with the Indian experience on the ground, which reflects the dichotomy of public diplomacy.<sup>113</sup> That is, the ease with which it connects with hearts and minds within and across territories is accompanied by the ease with which leaders are held accountable for lack of meaningful action and poor governance.

### **1.3. Israel's Digital Efforts**

Israel has shown great interest in using the Internet for more than two decades. In 2002, the Israeli government began using websites to inform Israelis about what they needed. Tel Aviv has created websites for all Israeli ministries, the army, schools, and institutions. In addition, various Israeli media outlets, including newspapers, television, and radio, have set up their own websites to broadcast their programs and news.<sup>114</sup> Over time, Israeli online efforts on various social media sites to convey the Israeli narrative in times of conflict with the Palestinians increased.

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<sup>110</sup> Adesina, p.4.

<sup>111</sup> Al Amoudi, p.130.

<sup>112</sup> Kalathmika Natarajan, "Digital public diplomacy and a strategic narrative for India," **Strategic Analysis**, 38.1, 2014, pp. 91-106.

<sup>113</sup> Parama Sinha Palit, "India's Use of Social Media in Public Diplomacy", **Public Diplomacy of Rising and Regional Powers**, Volume 3, Issue 3, 2018, pp. 151-171.

<sup>114</sup> Omar Abu Arqoub, "Israeli Media Coverage for the Gaza War 2014", **Eastern Mediterranean University**, 2015.



### 1.3.1. Israeli Interest in Internet

Tel Aviv recognised the importance of social media in manipulating public attitudes and perceptions early on during Israeli military operations over Gaza, such as the "Cast Lead war", a massive 22-day military assault on the Gaza Strip that Israel launched on 27 December 2008, killing more than 1,400 Palestinians, most of them civilians.<sup>115</sup> During the war, Israel imposed a media blackout on information coming out of Gaza and prevented foreign journalists from entering. Instead, Israel organized a media campaign that combined traditional media with new and diplomatic means against Gaza and the Palestinian resistance movements to justify the Israeli military operation on social media platforms.<sup>116</sup> In the face of the media blackout, the traditional media began to rely on social media as a primary source for reporting on the war. However, the Hamas movement and activists in Gaza were able to post pictures, tweet and send videos to social media using mobile phones. Thus, the importance of social media on the battlefield became apparent, and each side began to use it to their advantage.

In June 2010, Israel repeated the media blackout following the attack on the Marmara ship (the six-ship flotilla carrying activists and humanitarian aid to Gaza). The Israeli army confiscated cameras and photographs taken by the ship's activists. In contrast, the Israeli army released a video on a YouTube channel to spread the Israeli narrative and justify the attack on the ship, claiming that the activists were armed and attacked the soldiers.<sup>117</sup> The Israeli narrative remained the dominant one, until social media platforms published footages taken by participants who were on board the ship. In November 2012, the importance of social media in the conflict had reached a climax, when the Israeli defense forces IDF announced the operation 'Pillar of defense' against Hamas on Twitter, saying: "We recommend that no Hamas operatives, whether low level or senior leaders, show their faces above ground in the days ahead."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> "Operation Cast Lead", **IMEU**, 4 Jan 2012, <https://imeu.org/article/operation-cast-lead> 12 May 2022.

<sup>116</sup> Anat Ben David, "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Social Media", in **Encyclopedia of social media and Politics**, Sage Publications, 2014, pp. 741-744.

<sup>117</sup> Ben-David, pp. 741-744.

<sup>118</sup> The post was tweeted on 14 November 2012, <https://twitter.com/idf/status/268780918209118208>

In fact, social media has become a battleground between the Israeli IDF and the Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas. Both sides have taken Twitter as a venue for dueling by broadcasting their military actions, attacks, and casualty numbers, in addition to giving their perspective on the conflict. Over time, Israel expanded its social media war against the Palestinians by monitoring Palestinian content and removing anything that contradicts the Israeli narrative under the pretext that it is inciting against Israel. This has included the removal of news networks, videos and stories that support the Palestinian cause and narrative. In 2015, the Israeli Foreign Ministry established a command center of 8,200 former soldiers, the military's electronic intelligence unit, to lead the battle online and spy on content posted on social media.

In 2017, Israel launched the Act.IL application to track and remove Palestinian content and flood social media sites with Israeli propaganda. This initiative was supported by the Israeli intelligence. In the same year, the Anti-Defamation League, a pro-Israel lobby group, set up a 'command Centre' in Silicon Valley to monitor so-called 'online hate speech' and was appointed by YouTube as a 'trusted informant' to report and remove content.<sup>119</sup> The Israeli government has also created the Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Information to organize propaganda campaigns (Hasbara) around the world and fight the delegitimization of Israel, offering high salaries to those involved in this program to write comments on social networks that reinforce the Israeli narrative and improve its image.<sup>120</sup>

Recently, several Israeli universities, such as Tel Aviv University and Haifa University, have started offering courses in the Hasbara program.<sup>121</sup> The main goal is to spread the Israeli narrative and promote Israel's digital diplomacy through social media. The hasbara program was not enough for Israel to promote itself, for which many official institutions, led by the MFAs, have established specialized departments, and created many channels through digital media in different languages

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<sup>119</sup> Jonathan Cook, "Social media's erasure of Palestinians is a grim warning for our future", **Middle East Eye**, 26 October 2020, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/palestine-facebook-twitter-google-erasure-warning> 15 May 2022.

<sup>120</sup> Hassan Jamal, "The Role of Digital and Popular Diplomacy in the Industry and Confronting Normalization", **Quds Net**, 28 Sep 2020, <https://cutt.us/qWTC0> 15 April 2022.

<sup>121</sup> Al Amoudi, pp. 134-135.

(such as Arabic, Persian, Kurdish, English) to interact with the global and Arab public to broadcast Israel's foreign policy and rebrand its image.

### 1.3.2. Digital Diplomacy Status in Israel

In 2010 the Israeli ministry of foreign affairs (MFA) launched, among a wide variety of social media channels, a Facebook page in Arabic. Today, it has more than a million followers.<sup>122</sup> In 2011, the Ministry established the Digital Diplomacy Department, as it became increasingly clear that what was once a secondary task for a diplomat, online activity, was now a major part of the job. The aim was to complement the work of Israeli public diplomacy by using digital media and its various tools.<sup>123</sup> The department began its work with what it called 'peer-to-peer diplomacy', which moved diplomacy from its old traditional concept to the diplomacy of the digital world.<sup>124</sup> 'Bear to Bear Diplomacy' means that citizens not only receive and consume government information, but also participate in its industry and interact with it in two directions, with the possibility of bypassing government agencies.<sup>125</sup>

In time, Israel's digital diplomacy activities have expanded to include more than 800 digital channels (including 250 official channels at embassies and consulates, some 250 accounts of Israeli diplomats, as well as websites, headquarters accounts and more) on five main platforms - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Telegram. These digital channels cover 50 languages and have nearly 10 million followers.<sup>126</sup> These platforms are run by a team of young, active social media experts working with the Israeli MFAs in Jerusalem.

On 30 March 2016, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the partner institute at Tel Aviv University co-hosted Israel's first conference on digital diplomacy. It

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<sup>122</sup> Nancy Snow, "Rethinking public diplomacy in the 2020s", in **Routledge handbook of public diplomacy**. Routledge, 2020, pp.3-12.

<sup>123</sup> Linda S. I. Shalash, "The Israeli digital diplomacy directed to the Arabs: An analysis of the Israel speaks Arabic Facebook Page", **Journal of Al-Tamaddun**, 18.1, 2023, pp. 245-263.

<sup>124</sup> Shay Attias, "Israel new peer to peer diplomacy", **The Hague Journal of Diplomacy**, 7(4), 2012, pp. 473- 482.

<sup>125</sup> Linda Shalash, "Israeli Digital Diplomacy: A Reading in Propaganda Strategies," in Abdallah Adway, **Israeli Propaganda: A Reading in Soft Power**, Istanbul: Vision Center for Political Development, 2023, pp. 71-104.

<sup>126</sup> Friedson and Cohen, **The Media Line**.

was attended by 50 diplomats from 20 countries, as well as academics from 25 universities. The conference aimed to examine the impact of digitalization on diplomacy in general, and on diplomats in particular.<sup>127</sup> Yiftah Curiel, head of digital diplomacy, said: “We were one of the first countries to open up digital channels, and today we are one of the largest operations in the world”.<sup>128</sup> Considering digital activities as a core activity of the Ministry.

In 2017, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted the second international conference on digital diplomacy, which was attended by 120 diplomats and digital diplomacy experts from more than 25 countries. The conference discussed the future of digital diplomacy, including the impact of algorithms on diplomacy and international affairs, the challenges of online extremism, the use of data for foreign policy purposes, and intergovernmental relations. Israel's intensive practice of digital diplomacy and its hosting of conferences on the subject have made it one of the world's leading countries in digital diplomacy, with its diplomacy ranked among the top 10 in the world since 2016.<sup>129</sup>

This thesis sheds light on Israeli digital diplomacy in Arabic, to examine the strategies used by official institutions in Israel, especially the Foreign Ministry, to communicate with the Arabs, and the goals of such interaction. Moreover, the study will try to examine the impact of this diplomacy on the Arab public and whether it is a successful diplomacy or not.

### **1.3.3. Digital Diplomacy Efforts Towards Arabs**

Israeli diplomatic efforts towards the Arabs are not new; they began in the first decade of the establishment of the state of Israel on Palestinian land. However, the aim of these efforts was psychological warfare to influence the Arab masses and undermine their trust in their leaders and local media. In the 1967 war, for example, the Voice of Israel Radio reported that Israeli jets had destroyed most Arab air forces

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<sup>127</sup> Shalash, “The Israeli digital diplomacy directed to the Arabs”, pp. 245-263.

<sup>128</sup> Shalash, “The Israeli digital diplomacy directed to the Arabs”, pp.245-263.

<sup>129</sup> Safaa Said, “Propaganda methods in the Israeli discourse directed to the Palestinians through interactive media”, **Al Jazeera media institute**, (2020), p. 20.

on the first day of the war.<sup>130</sup> During this period, Israeli radio deliberately broadcast interviews with Arab POWs in which they were forced to deny the Arab radio narrative of Arab victories and in turn affirm Israeli military superiority in the war.<sup>131</sup>

Later, Israeli media efforts in Arabic began to rely on the tools of soft power, instead of relying mainly on the power of force or psychological warfare, while continuing the strategies of demonstrating Israeli military superiority. In 1968, the Israeli TV channel was launched, broadcasting Arab films and programs with the aim of attracting Arab audiences. The use of soft power in media messages directed at the Arabs was aimed at communicating with the remaining Palestinian population in Israel (within the borders of the territories occupied in 1948) as belonging to the Jewish state and showing the common denominators between them and the Jews.<sup>132</sup> However, with the emergence of Arab channels in the mid-1990s, led by Al-Jazeera in 1996, Israel began to lose its Arab audience, who turned to Arab satellite channels for information. In 2004, for example, an Israeli study showed that more than 58% of Palestinians living within Israel's borders preferred to watch Al-Jazeera rather than Israeli channels.<sup>133</sup>

With the revolution in communications and digital media, Israel found the right way to communicate with the Arab and Palestinian masses, but with advanced political goals and strategies. Before social media, interaction between the Arab public and Israel was rare because many Arab countries do not have diplomatic relations with Israel. Today, the Arabic Digital Diplomacy team at the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs can communicate with Arabs and share stories about Israel, focusing on diversity, peace, and coexistence with millions of Arabs around the world. So, Israel turned to digital media to implement a strategy of reaching out to Arabs and interacting with them using their language and culture. What has helped Israel achieve its strategy is Arab interest in the Internet. Of the nearly 280 million Arabs

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<sup>130</sup> Samuel-Azran, Tal, and Moran Yarchi, "Military Public Diplomacy 2.0: The Arabic Facebook Page of the Israeli Defense Forces' Spokesperson", *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 13.3, 2018, pp.323-344.

<sup>131</sup> M. B. Oren, "Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East", (**Book Review**): *New Statesman*, 131, 2002, pp. 34-36.

<sup>132</sup> Oren, pp. 34-36.

<sup>133</sup> Humaid, pp. 7-20.

living in the Middle East, about 145 million use the Internet and 100 million use Facebook and other communication sites such as Instagram, Twitter, and others. In this regard, Israel has used the Arab revolutions to implement this strategy, especially after the revolutions demonstrated the ability of Arab youth to bring about political change in their countries through digital media.<sup>134</sup>

The members of the Arabic Language Digital Diplomacy team are fluent in Arabic and are aware of the customs and traditions of the Arabs, what they like and dislike, what attracts them and what repels them.<sup>135</sup> Yonatan Gonen, head of the Arabic digital diplomacy team, says: "We want to publish content that demonstrates Israel's coexistence, innovation and contributions to the world. The Arabic Digital Bureau includes many pages dedicated to countries with which Israel has established diplomatic relations, as well as those with which it does not have official relations, such as Iraq, Morocco, and Lebanon".<sup>136</sup> Officials in Israel's digital diplomacy department describe efforts through digital media as successful, especially those aimed at countries and peoples that previously viewed Israel as an enemy state. Most official Israeli institutions aim to interact with audiences at home and abroad and have dedicated social media pages.

What is striking, however, is the number of Israeli pages in Arabic aimed specifically at Palestinians and Arabs. The common goal of these sites is to promote Israel as a peace-loving democracy. Ofir Gendelman, a spokesman for the Israeli prime minister, tweeted that social media platforms have given Israelis and Arabs a chance to get to know each other.<sup>137</sup>

#### **1.3.4. The Most Prominent Israeli- Arabic Pages**

The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs runs many social media pages in Arabic to promote Israel as a normal country seeking peace with the Arabs. The Arabic pages show the close cultural ties between Israel and its Arab neighbours. It is noteworthy

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<sup>134</sup> Shalash, "The Israeli Digital Diplomacy: A Reading in Propaganda Strategies", pp. 80-88.

<sup>135</sup> Humaid, pp. 5-20.

<sup>136</sup> Humaid, pp. 7-10.

<sup>137</sup> Stephen Farrell, Maha El Dahan, Lisa Barrington, and Zainah El-Haroun, "Inside Israel's social media campaign to woo the Middle East", **Reuters**, 12 JANUARY 2021, [HTTPS://WWW.REUTERS.COM/ARTICLE/ISRAEL-GULF-NORMALISATION-INT-IDUSKBN29H1FY](https://www.reuters.com/article/israel-gulf-normalisation-int-idUSKBN29H1FY)

that these pages are widely followed, regardless of the nature and form of the interaction, whether it is a criticism of Israel or a response to the publications of these pages. In this section, the researcher examines the main Arabic-speaking Israeli pages on social networking sites:

A. 'Israel Speaks Arabic' page: This is the main Israeli site in Arabic. This page was launched by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2010 to serve as the official spokesperson for Israel in Arabic. The Israel Speaks Arabic page is widely followed by Arabs on both Facebook and Twitter. On Facebook, the page has more than 2 million followers.<sup>138</sup> While it joins more than 405 thousand followers on Twitter.<sup>139</sup>

B. 'Israeli Defense Forces' (IDF) Arabic Spokesman Adraee's Page': Adraee is a Lieutenant Colonel in the Israeli Defence Forces and serves as the Head of the Arab Media Division of the IDF Spokesperson's Unit. He is of Syrian Jewish, Iraqi Jewish, and Turkish Jewish descent.<sup>140</sup> His page runs in parallel with the Foreign Ministry, although the two have slightly different goals and budgets. If 'Israel Speaks Arabic' is the most followed page in the Arab world, then Adraee's Facebook account is the most popular Israeli-Arab page. The page is responsible for the IDF's activities towards foreign media and international audiences, with the main goal of promoting the ethics and values of the Israeli army.<sup>141</sup>

The page is run by more than 400 employees, soldiers, and civilians, and some 1,200 officers and reservists. They publish daily messages to promote Israel in a positive way to foreign audiences during times of conflict.<sup>142</sup> Through his page, Avichay tries to establish the rule that the IDF is indomitable, besides focusing on the strength of the IDF and deliberately publishing some photos that claim that the Israeli army is humanitarian. The page also tickles Arab sensibilities by using religion, such as reading verses from the Koran or the Prophet's hadiths and publishing emotional

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<sup>138</sup> Israel speaks Arabic Facebook page, [https://www.facebook.com/IsraelArabic/?locale=ar\\_AR](https://www.facebook.com/IsraelArabic/?locale=ar_AR) 12 May 2022.

<sup>139</sup> Israel speaks Arabic page on Twitter, <https://twitter.com/IsraelArabic> 12 May 2022.

<sup>140</sup> Gwen Ackerman and Saud Abu Ramadan, "Sheikh Avichay Gets Under Gazans' Skin With Koran Quotes", **Bloomberg**, 7 June 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-06/sheikh-avichay-gets-under-gazans-skin-with-quotes-from-koran?yptr=yahoo> 15 May 2022.

<sup>141</sup> Yarchi, Azran, and Bar-David, pp.360-375.

<sup>142</sup> Nachman Shai, **Hearts and minds: Israel and the battle for public opinion**, State University of New York Press, 2018.

messages during special Arab and Muslim occasions such as Ramadan and religious holidays.<sup>143</sup>

C. The coordinator's page: It is the page dedicated to communicating with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The page was launched on Facebook in March 2015, with a phone number and an email address for communication. It has over 600,000 followers.<sup>144</sup> This PAGE is managed by General Yoav Mordechai, who was appointed by the Israeli government in November 2013 to coordinate its activities in the Palestinian territories (West Bank and Gaza). Mordechai is well known among Palestinians, having previously served as military spokesman for the Israeli army, and before that as head of the Civil Administration in the West Bank and head of the Coordination and Liaison Command in the Gaza Strip.

This page provides humanitarian services to Palestinians related to work, travel, and treatment, which raised official Palestinian security concerns and was considered a trap to recruit Palestinians into Israeli intelligence by exploiting their humanitarian needs.<sup>145</sup>

D. Israel in the Gulf Page: This page is a virtual embassy, re-launched by the Israeli MFA via Twitter at the beginning of 2019, for rapprochement with Gulf countries and deepening understanding between their people and Israelis in various fields. The page is currently followed by over 70,000 people. The Twitter account for 'Israel in the Gulf' was launched in July 2013, but has not tweeted since 10 December 2014.<sup>146</sup>

Many other Israeli Arabic pages are documented on social media. These include the 'Stand with Us' page, the 'Official Spokesperson for the Prime Minister' page, the 'Israel in Egypt' page, and 'Israel in Jordan' page, among many others.

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<sup>143</sup> Waheeb Abu Wasel, "How did the Israeli army spokesman become the king of "Facebook" among the Arabs? (2 of 3), **MCD**, 26 Aug 2020, [https://cutt.us/OZti4\\_15](https://cutt.us/OZti4_15) May 2022.

<sup>144</sup> Adnan Abu Amer, "The Israeli Coordinator page ... Going beyond the humanitarian to the political and security page", **Adnanabuamer**, 5 March 2018, <https://adnanabuamer.com/post/834> 12 May 2022.

<sup>145</sup> Naim, pp. 135-136.

<sup>146</sup> "Israel launches a "virtual embassy" on Twitter for dialogue with the Gulf", **Al-Jazeera Net**, 7 Feb 2019, <https://cutt.us/fpOZ7> 12 May 2022.



## CHAPTER 2: THE THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is theoretically based on Joseph Nye's perspective of soft power (theory in diplomacy), which refers to the process of setting the agenda in world politics through persuasion and attracting others through the power of one's beliefs, values, and ideas, without the use of military force or economic coercion.<sup>147</sup> Understanding soft power helps us to analyze and evaluate Israel's attempts to influence and attract the Arab masses. The paper is also informed by two prominent media and communication theories: Agenda Setting Theory and Framing Theory. Both can help us to understand how the media frames its publication in a way that affects the attitudes and behavior of its audience.

The researcher argues that the applying the above theories would help to reveal the main strategies used by Israel in its digital media in Arabic. In this regard, the researcher argues that Israeli digital diplomacy towards the Arabs is based on conscious and studied approaches in a systematic and organized manner.

### 2.1. Nye's Perspective of Soft Power

The concept of soft power is relatively new to the international relations literature and has attracted many researchers and policymakers. In politics, soft power refers to the ability to attract and appeal to other nations through persuasion rather than coercion or force, and in diplomacy it is used by public diplomacy and digital diplomacy. It emphasizes the role of non-military power in implementing countries' foreign policies and achieving their interests without resorting to force or coercion. US political scientist Joseph Nye first coined the term 'soft power' in an article entitled 'Soft Power' and then in his book 'Bound to Lead' in the late 1980s.<sup>148</sup>

Power is one of the most important criteria for distinguishing between states and their international standing. Nye used the term soft power in the context of his theory of international relations (diplomacy): Influencing the behavior of others through persuasion and attraction, not conflict.<sup>149</sup> Nye distinguished between hard and soft

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<sup>147</sup> Nye, "Soft Power", p. 176.

<sup>148</sup> Joseph S. Nye (Jr.), 1991, pp.188–220.

<sup>149</sup> Nye, "Soft Power", p. 176.

power. While the former refers to the ability to force others to act in ways contrary to their initial preferences and strategies through threats and temptations (sticks and carrots), the latter refers to the ability to lead others to desired outcomes and goals through attraction rather than coercion.<sup>150</sup>

As hard power has involved countries in many political problems and challenges, many countries have realized the need to adopt a different strategy based on the use of soft power in their foreign policy in order to expand their spheres of influence. In this context, Nye suggests that soft power is more necessary than hard power in international political relations because it can encourage and change the behavior of others without resistance or conflict by using persuasive and attractive means.<sup>151</sup> He suggests that the use of soft power would 'change the nature of public diplomacy' as the state increasingly uses the 'power' of persuasion and attraction rather than hard power or command. Nye (2004) refers to soft power as 'an intangible attraction that persuades us to align ourselves with the goals of others without any explicit threat or exchange taking place'.<sup>152</sup>

One example is the diplomatic use of Internet networks. In the field of public diplomacy, the framing of attractive messages is used to align publics with the intended ideologies of states. However, he notes that the most effective approach to foreign policy in the twenty-first century is smart power, which Nye refers to as the "balance of hard and soft power".<sup>153</sup> A notable example of the use of this power is China. It is using smart power to transform itself into the world's largest trading nation. Although China relies on soft power to expand its economic, technological, and political agenda globally, it maintains a one-party political system that rejects pluralism and the principles of democracy (hard power).

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<sup>150</sup> Nye, **Power in the global information age: From realism to globalization**, p.5.

<sup>151</sup> J. S. Nye Jr, "The information revolution and American soft power", *Asia Pacific Review*, 9(1), 2002, pp. 60-76.

<sup>152</sup> Nye, **Power in the global information age: From realism to globalization**, p.5.

<sup>153</sup> J. Nye, "Soft power and higher education", In **Forum for the future of higher education (Archives)**, 2005, pp. 11-14.

### 2.1.1. Soft Power in Diplomatic Work

Nye (2004) suggests that success in the field of diplomacy in the twenty-first century will involve the use of new media tools to capture people's minds. He argues that the benefits of soft power include the importance of transparency through the dissemination of information, rather than the 'hoarding' of information by a country's government, which was a popular practice during the Cold War.<sup>154</sup> Drawing on Nye's view of soft power, Entman (2008) describes digital diplomacy as “a government's attempts to use the media to influence and persuade foreign audiences”.<sup>155</sup> He also argues that the conceptualization of digital diplomacy is constantly evolving and systematically moving towards 'theory building'. Power competition is a central issue in international relations, and in order to compete for soft power, states must make use of new media. Nye notes that the core of soft power is shaping the preferences of others, but resources (such as laws, culture, or institutions) are important in defining the effectiveness of soft power.<sup>156</sup>

Nye's (2004) perspective on soft power emphasizes the shrinking of time and space to achieve political gains. The analysis of digital diplomacy and soft power leads to an understanding of how Israel manages its digital diplomacy platforms to achieve political goals at the right time. Using this approach, the study also highlights how Israeli diplomacy tools act as soft power in reaching out to Arab audiences in order to reshape the common image of Israel (as an occupying power) in their minds, with the increasing role of social media platforms in influencing audiences.<sup>157</sup> The research examines the content of Israeli digital diplomacy, the tone and interaction of the audience, and how this content might influence their reactions towards Israel. The expected impact of this policy on Israeli-Arab relations, its consequences and how this may shape the future of relations in the region.

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<sup>154</sup> Nye, **Power in the global information age: From realism to globalization**, pp. 3-5.

<sup>155</sup> Robert M. Entman, “Theorizing Mediate Public Diplomacy: the U.S. Case”, **Pres/Politics**, 13, 2008, pp. 87- 102.

<sup>156</sup> Nye, **Power in the global information age: From realism to globalization**, pp. 5-6.

<sup>157</sup> Nye, **Power in the global information age: From realism to globalization**, pp. 5-6.

### 2.1.2. Soft Power's Sources

According to Nye, a country's soft power is based on three resources: "its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (if it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policy (if others see it as legitimate and with moral authority)".<sup>158</sup> Because of its ability to influence, soft power is widely used in many contexts of international relations and global politics. The main sources of soft power include:

1. Internet and social media (electronic or digital diplomacy): This is one of the most important soft power tools. Electronic diplomacy is the use of social media networks and websites, mainly to communicate with other people and to shape public opinion. As mentioned earlier (in the introduction), the Arab Spring played an important role in highlighting the importance of social media, especially Twitter and Facebook, in bringing about change and encouraging Arab youth to revolt against dictatorial regimes. In fact, Facebook and Twitter diplomacy at the time led to the emergence and spread of the concept of digital diplomacy, as countries and governments realized the importance of digital media in shaping public opinion.
2. Culture and education: This means attracting other nations by explaining a country's values and culture through the organization of festivals, student exchanges, scholarships, educational programs, and support for cultural projects. Such programs can improve diplomatic relations and international cooperation.
3. Sport: Examples of the use of sport to promote the state and improve its public image include Qatar's hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. This international event has played an important role in improving the public image of the State of Qatar and has been widely publicized around the world, which will have a positive impact on the State by promoting tourism to Qatar and increasing its influence on the international scene. The great role of sports in world politics is a major reason why countries are keen to host major sporting events such as the Olympic Games, the World Cup, and others.

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<sup>158</sup> Nye, "The Future of Power", p. 84.

4. Economic: It is related to the presentation of economic initiatives and infrastructure projects for other countries. Example: The European Union provided financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority to build projects and modernize infrastructure in refugee camps in the West Bank.

5. Economy and trade: This soft power resource focuses on the country's commercial center, which depends on its economy, productive, innovative and investment capacity. Japan is one of the most important examples of the use of this power because of its high capabilities in the field of inventions, electronics, and automobiles in the world.

6. Public diplomacy: All the above soft power tools fall under the umbrella of public diplomacy, which is the broader concept of using soft power. Public diplomacy aims to foster relationships, promote the foreign policy objectives of states, and increase their influence in the international arena.

In summary, the sources of soft power come mainly from the values that an international actor (state or organization) demonstrates in its culture (which can be conveyed through various means, including tourism, personal connections, trade, exchanges, visits). Nye tries to use various means of soft power, including public diplomacy, state branding, drama, speeches, TV shows, films, education (books, universities, scholarships), culture, scientific centers, and concepts (democracy and globalization), Olympics, sports, music, food, immigration, internet, video games, Nobel prizes, NGOs, brands (electronics and cars), peacekeeping missions, aid to developing and poor countries. In 2012, Nye said that in soft power, "the best propaganda is no propaganda"<sup>159</sup>, adding that because of the information age, credibility is becoming the scarcest resource.<sup>160</sup>

### **2.1.3. Limitations of Soft Power**

Niall Ferguson was one of the scholars who criticized soft power, describing it as ineffective.<sup>161</sup> In the same vein, neorealists, rationalists and most nationalists claim

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<sup>159</sup> Joseph Nye, "China's Soft Power Deficit To catch up, its politics must unleash the many talents of its civil society", **The Wall Street Journal**, 8, 2012, pp. 151-160.

<sup>160</sup> Nye, "China's Soft Power Deficit To catch up, its politics must unleash the many talents of its civil society", pp. 151-160.

<sup>161</sup> Niall Ferguson, "A world without power", **Foreign Policy**, 2004, pp. 32-39.

that actors in international relations respond to only two types of incentives: economic incentives and force. Moreover, some scholars argue that it is not easy to distinguish between soft and hard power. Janice Mattern uses George W. Bush's famous dictum "You're either with us or with the terrorists" as an example to support her view. Although he did not resort to the use of military and economic power to force other countries to join his coalition, his statement implicitly included the use of hard power and intimidation of others, forcing them to do what Bush proposes or they will be the villains according to his proposal.<sup>162</sup>

Therefore, the soft power that Nye is talking about is not actually soft, but has other aspects represented in the use of coercion in some way. Other approaches criticized the soft power concept's neglect of its defensive nature. While Nye focuses on how to attract others, some scholars argued that rising powers, such as China, are creating new approaches to soft power by using it defensively.<sup>163</sup> Some have also warned of the counterproductive effects of actors' use of soft power, which can lead to reputational damage rather than improvement, or what is known as 'soft disempowerment'.<sup>164</sup>

A government's attempt to use soft power is called public diplomacy. Israel's practice of soft power in the Arab world is evident in its attempts to promote itself as a democratic state, its economic, scientific, and medical progress, and the promotion of tourism to Israel through social media, which is one of the tools of soft power. The promotion of Israel's humanitarian aid to poor communities in Africa also falls into this category.

#### **2.1.4. Soft Power Worldwide**

The most prominent use of soft power occurred during the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States (US). Both struggled for influence to convince world opinion of their own ideologies. While the Soviet Union sought to convince

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<sup>162</sup> Janice Bially Mattern, "Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction in World Politics", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 33 (3), 2015, pp. 583–612.

<sup>163</sup>Eliküçük Yıldırım, Nilgün and Mesut Aslan, "China's Charm Defensive: Image Protection by Acquiring Mass Entertainment", *Pacific Focus*, 35 (1), 2020, pp.141–171.

<sup>164</sup> Brannagan, Paul Michael, and Richard Giulianotti, "The soft power–soft disempowerment nexus: The case of Qatar", *International Affairs*, 94 (5), 2018, pp. 1139–1157.

the world of the communist system, the United States sought to spread the capitalist system. In fact, the Soviet Union was effective in rallying many in Europe against Hitler in 1945 and succeeded - to some extent - in winning the hearts of colonized regions around the world by opposing European imperialism.<sup>165</sup> It also relied on public diplomacy to promote its culture and values. But the West, led by the United States, won the soft power war by promoting ideals such as democracy, respect for women's rights, individual freedom, and other attractive concepts.<sup>166</sup>

Traditionally, the US and Europe have been known to use culture, art, music and claims of support for human rights and democracy to extend their influence over others. However, there are some countries that have excelled in this area in recent years. The researcher highlights some examples below.

Germany: It leads countries in the use of soft power, surpassing the United States, with a global soft power index score of 62.2 out of 100.<sup>167</sup> This is underlined by Germany's progress in international relations, governance, economics, and trade. Some believe that the credit for this goes to Angela Merkel, as it was during her time that Germany played the best role globally in using soft power and staying away from unrest and conflict with others.<sup>168</sup>

Japan: Despite the demographic challenge it faces due to its small population, Japan has been able to prove itself and its international presence through excellence and investment in technology, business, trade, science, the use of robots and artificial intelligence. As a result, Japan has an excellent reputation and great influence worldwide.<sup>169</sup>

India: India's investment in cinema and the production of films, music and other cultural and artistic tools that achieve global spread, which contributed to increasing the cultural influence of India globally.

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<sup>165</sup> Patryk Babiracki, **Soviet soft power in Poland: culture and the making of Stalin's new empire, 1943-1957**, UNC Press Books, 2015.

<sup>166</sup> Nye, **Power in the global information age: From realism to globalization**, pp.5-6.

<sup>167</sup> Nye, **Power in the global information age: From realism to globalization**, pp.5-6.

<sup>168</sup> Steve Thomson, "Soft Power: Why it Matters to Governments, People, and Brands", **brand finance**, 2020, <https://brandfinance.com/insights/soft-power-why-it-matters> 30 June, 2022.

<sup>169</sup> Thomson, "Soft Power: Why it Matters to Governments, People, and Brands", 2020.

Qatar: Although Qatar is a small country, it has made significant use of soft power by leveraging its financial wealth. The most important of these was the organization of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, which placed Qatar among the top countries in the use of soft power. On the other hand, it uses the satellite channel Al-Jazeera to promote Qatar's foreign policy, and today Al-Jazeera is considered one of the most influential international news channels. Qatar also uses educational diplomacy through scholarships, educational initiatives, and academic awards.<sup>170</sup>

The analysis of digital diplomacy and soft power helps us to understand how Israel manages its digital diplomacy platforms to achieve political goals. Using this approach, the study highlights how Israeli diplomacy tools act as soft power in addressing Arab audiences in order to reshape the common image of Israel (as an occupying power) in their minds, with the increasing role of social media platforms in influencing audiences. Examples of soft power include the use of the country's culture, tourism and entertainment, technological excellence, scientific and medical development, and economic success.

All of these are used by Israel in its digital diplomacy towards the Arabs, as previous studies have shown.<sup>171</sup>

## **2.2. The Agenda Setting Theory (AST)**

Agenda Setting Theory (AST) is concerned with the study and description of the ability of the news media to determine which issues are most important on the public agenda. The theory suggests that the media can shape public opinion by identifying the issues that attract the most attention, thus creating a hierarchy of news prevalence.<sup>172</sup> The history of Agenda Setting Theory dates back to 1922 in Walter Lippmann's book 'The Public Opinion', in which he suggests that the media are the main link between what is happening in the world and the images in the minds of the masses. In this regard, Lippmann suggests that the media pushes audiences to

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<sup>170</sup> Aldo Matteucci, "Soft Power in 2023 geopolitics", *Diplo*, 2005, [Soft Power and Geopolitics in 2023 \(diplomacy.edu\)](#) 12 May 2022.

<sup>171</sup> Humaid, pp. 7-10.

<sup>172</sup> Everett M Rogers and James W Dearing, "Agenda-setting research: Where has it been, where is it going?," *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 11.1, 1988, pp. 555-594.



form mental images about the events happening around them in a way that influences their opinions and behavior towards a particular issue.<sup>173</sup>

Although he did not use the term "agenda-setting", he expressed what theory means today. Audiences, Lippman said, are not really responding to events in the environment around them, but to "images in our heads", which he called the pseudo-environment, because the environment is so vast, too complex and needs to be examined and scrutinized deeply. In 1963, Bernard Cohen observed that the press is highly successful in telling its readers what issues to think about, according to the agenda set by the writers, editors, and publishers of the paper they read.<sup>174</sup>

However, the theory was developed and formalized in 1968 in a study conducted by Dr Maxwell McCombs and Dr Donald Lewis Shaw, which examined the role of the media in people's attitudes during the North Carolina presidential election, known as the 'Chapel Hill study'.<sup>175</sup> The study found that there was a strong correlation between what one hundred Chapel Hill resident thought was the most important issue in the election and what the local media reported. In other words, there is a correlation between what the media covers and what the public perceives to be important issues. Indeed, both McCombs and Shaw are credited with providing empirical evidence of the power of the media and its influence on the public agenda. This gave the agenda-setting theory its credibility among other social science theories.<sup>176</sup>

Some argue that another scholar, G. Ray Funkhouser, was involved in formalizing the theory by conducting a study very close to McCombs and Shaw's around the same time and presenting the results of his article at the same academic conference. However, Funkhouser did not enjoy the same esteem and fame as McCombs and Shaw because Funkhouser did not even mention the name of the theory in his study,

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<sup>173</sup> Walter Lippmann, Public opinion, *The Western Journal of Medicine*, 157.3, 1922. See: Walter Lippmann, *Public opinion*, Routledge, 2017.

<sup>174</sup> Bernard Cecil Cohen, *Press and foreign policy*, Princeton university press, Vol. 2321, 2015, pp. 3-20.

<sup>175</sup> Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The agenda-setting function of mass media", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36 (2), 1972, p.176.

<sup>176</sup> E. Rogers, "The anatomy of agenda-setting research", *Journal of Communication*, 43 (2), 1993, pp.68–84.

nor did he work on developing his original article as others did.<sup>177</sup> Moreover, he was geographically isolated at Stanford, so he did not stir up researchers in general or contact them about his study.

Most research on agenda-setting is based on two main assumptions: that the media do not reflect the reality of information; that they filter and reshape information and images of reality by focusing on a particular issue and ignoring others; and that the media's focus on some aspects of issues leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than others.<sup>178</sup> In this context, the AST can work by using framing and priming methods to get audiences to think about what the media are saying. Framing means "focusing the media on the essence of an issue more than other issues".<sup>179</sup>

From the above it can be seen that agenda setting acts as a gatekeeper, telling the audience not only what to think about, but also how to think about it. Agenda setting theory also suggests that the media has a major influence on its audience by telling them what to think about rather than what they think. In other words, Agenda Setting Theory suggests that if the media focus on an issue and repeat it constantly, the public will consider it an important issue, and therein lies the danger of Agenda Setting Theory, in its ability to direct attention and influence people's thinking through what the media broadcasts according to the media's agenda and editorial policy orientations that aim to persuade audiences and set their agenda according to the agenda of those who control media outlets.<sup>180</sup> Therefore, the media's determination of the public's news agenda is driven by the media's bias on things like politics, economics and culture.<sup>181</sup>

In this regard, Baran and Davis (2003) argue that the media does not allow people to think, but rather tells them what to think about. That is, people are forced to think

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<sup>177</sup> G. Funkhouser, "The issues of the sixties: An exploratory study in the dynamics of public opinion", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37 (1), 1973, pp.62–75

<sup>178</sup> J. Dearing and E. Rogers, "Agenda-setting research: Where has it been, where is it going?", *Communication Yearbook*, 11, 1988, pp. 555–594

<sup>179</sup> Framing theory (online), 2010.

<sup>180</sup> Amber M. Freeland, "Second level agenda setting: An overview of second-level agenda setting and framing." **Unpublished manuscript**: University of Northern Texas, 2012, p. 2-12.

<sup>181</sup> M. McCombs, "A look at agenda-setting: Past, present and future", *Journalism Studies*, 6 (4), 2005, pp. 543–557.

about what the media presents to them in a way that sets their agenda. Thus, the media play an important role in highlighting certain aspects of events in order to capture the attention of the audience and influence their opinions and attitudes.<sup>182</sup> Recent research on agenda setting has sought to answer the key questions: who sets the media agenda, and to what extent and how does the media contribute to setting the political agenda?<sup>183</sup>

McCombs and Shaw's study showed that the amount of media exposure given to an issue influences the public salience of that issue.<sup>184</sup> In other words, it is repeated exposure that leads the public to regard an issue or topic as important. Politicians and political parties realized the basic idea of the theory that: more exposure means more salience, and they began to invest time and space in the media to define their agenda through social media, as many studies have proven the organic relationship between the three agendas: the traditional media agenda, the social media agenda of candidates, the social media agenda of politicians, and their effects among multiple agendas.<sup>185</sup> However, Baran and Davis argue that the weakness of agenda theory lies in its limited impact on certain issues, such as political campaigns and election campaigns.<sup>186</sup>

The study of agenda-setting compares the salience of issues in the news with the public's perception of the most important issue, and then analyses the extent of the media's influence. Max McCombs proposes three models to study and analyses the effect of agenda-setting, which are: The 'Awareness Model', the 'Priorities Model' and the 'Salience Model'. Most research focuses on these three models.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Richard West, Turner and H. Lynn, **Introducing Communication Theory: Analysis and Application**, (5th ed.), New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education, 2013, pp. 377–378.

<sup>183</sup> Stefaan Walgrave and Peter Van Aelst, "Political Agenda Setting and the Mass Media", **Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics**, 2016. See: Turner, and H. Lynn, pp. 377–378.

<sup>184</sup> M. E. McCombs, J. P. Llamas, E. Lopez-Escobar, and F. Rey, "Candidate's images in Spanish elections: Second-level agenda-setting effects", **Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly**, 74 (4), 1977, pp. 703–717

<sup>185</sup> Fabrizio Gilardi, Theresa Gessler, Maël Kubli, and Stefan Müller, "Social Media and Political Agenda Setting", **Political Communication**, 39, 2021, pp. 39–60.

<sup>186</sup> S. J. Baran, D. K. Davis, and K. Striby, "Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment, and future", **Solution Manuals**, 2012, pp. 5-8.

<sup>187</sup> Y. Kim and S. Zhou, "Theoretical and methodological trends of agenda-setting theory: A thematic analysis of the last four decades of research, **the agenda setting journal**, 1(1), 2017, pp.5-22.

Agenda setting occurs through a process called accessibility, which means that the more frequently news outlets and media cover an issue, the more instances of that issue become accessible in the memories and minds of the masses.<sup>188</sup> For example, if you ask the public in some places what the most important problem facing the country is, they will answer with the most accessible news issue in their memory, which is usually the same one that the news media have frequently focused on.<sup>189</sup> Here we can measure the agenda-setting effect through the impact of many news stories on the same general issue. In addition, media coverage in general and agenda-setting in particular have a strong influence on what individuals think others are thinking, and so they attach more importance to issues that have been covered frequently.<sup>190</sup> This leads us to what is known as 'schema theory'.<sup>191</sup> In psychology and cognitive science, a 'schema' describes a pattern of behavior that organizes categories of information and the relationships between them.

### 2.3. Framing Theory

Framing theory is one of the most prominent theories in media and communication studies. It describes the ability of the media to influence people's attitudes and behavior depending on how an issue is presented to them. Framing theory is related to agenda-setting theory but extends the research by focusing on the core of the issues at stake, rather than on a specific issue. In this respect, some scholars argue that framing theory is parallel to agenda setting, particularly in the construction of frames.<sup>192</sup> In recent years, however, framing theory has replaced agenda setting as the most applied research approach in communication studies.<sup>193</sup> This thesis relies on framing theory as the main theoretical basis to achieve the results of the study, which is to reveal the main strategies and tools that Israeli digital diplomacy relies

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<sup>188</sup> S. Iyengar, "The accessibility bias in politics: Television news and public opinion", **International Journal of Public Opinion Research**, 2, 1990, pp.1–15

<sup>189</sup> E. Noelle-Neumann, "Turbulences in the climate of opinion: Methodological applications of the spiral of silence theory", **Public Opinion Quarterly**, 41 (2), 1977, pp. 143–158

<sup>190</sup> Dearing and Rogers, pp. 555-594.

<sup>191</sup> Neumann, pp.103-115.

<sup>192</sup> Russell Neuman, Guggenheim W, et al, "The dynamics of public attention: Agenda-setting theory meets big data", **Journal of communication**, 64(2), 2014, pp.193-214.

<sup>193</sup> Jennings Bryant and Dorina Miron, "Theory and research in mass communication", **Journal of Communication**, 54(4), 2004, pp. 662–704.

on when addressing the Arabs. Sociologist Erving Goffman first coined the term in 1974 in his article "Framing Analysis".<sup>194</sup> Framing represents social issues and the ability of individuals to gain an experience of understanding and interpreting what is going on around them through their primary framework.<sup>195</sup> However, framing does not belong to communication scholars alone, but has been adopted by other disciplines, including sociology, economics, communication studies and others.

### 2.3.1. The Core of Framing Theory

Framing theory focuses on how audiences make certain judgements about the information they receive from the news media. In this regard, framing theory suggests that "how something is presented to the audience (called the frame) influences their decisions about how to process that information".<sup>196</sup> The idea of framing, then, is to draw attention to certain attributes of the objects of news coverage, as well as to the objects themselves. Framing focuses on how the media draw the public's attention to certain issues - setting the agenda - and then goes a step further to create a frame through which the audience will understand this information.<sup>197</sup>

The creation of frames for stories is usually a deliberate choice by sources, reporters, journalists and/or editors. This approach justifies the media as gatekeepers who 'mindfully collect, select, organize and present the ideas, events and issues they cover'.<sup>198</sup> Frames are abstractions that serve to organize the meaning of news. In this context, framing theory explains that the media create these frames by presenting news with a predefined and narrow contextualization.<sup>199</sup>

In 1974, Goffman proposed that people interpret what is going on around them according to their primary frameworks. He argues that there are two types of primary

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<sup>194</sup> Abu Arqoub, pp. 44-49.

<sup>195</sup> M. Salih GÜRAN and Hüseyin ÖZARSLAN, "Framing Theory in the Age of social media", **Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi**, (48), 2022, pp. 446-457.

<sup>196</sup> Dietram A. Scheufele, "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects," **Journal of Communication**, 49 (4), 1999, pp.103-22

<sup>197</sup> Zhongdang Pan, and M. Kosicki Gerald, "Framing analysis: An approach to news discourse", **Political communication**, 10.1, 1993, pp. 55-75.

<sup>198</sup> GÜRAN and ÖZARSLAN, pp. 446-457.

<sup>199</sup> R. M. Entman, **Projections of power: Framing news, public opinion, and US foreign policy**, University of Chicago Press, 2004, pp. 23-24.

frameworks (natural and social), "both of which help individuals to interpret data and strongly influence how data is interpreted, processed and communicated".<sup>200</sup> The difference between the two is functional. Goffman's basic assumption is that individuals use these frameworks in their daily lives, whether they are aware of them or not.<sup>201</sup> This means that people take in events and interpret them according to their own frameworks or those provided by the media, which usually influence their choices and behavior towards news and everyday issues.<sup>202</sup>

Framing can be defined as "conceptual tools which media and individuals rely on to convey, interpret, and evaluate information".<sup>203</sup> Robert Entman argues that the term frame can be replaced by script, or by labels such as representation, argument, or genre.<sup>204</sup> Framing theory refers to the interactive process of interpreting behavior, identifying problems and finding solutions, before framing them according to the editorial policy of the medium, in order to highlight some aspects of an issue and ignore others.<sup>205</sup> It assumes that frames affect public opinion and their decisions according to the frame that they are subjected to.<sup>206</sup> In addition, framing theory suggests that the news media highlight certain events more than others and then place them in a particular context to encourage and influence people's interpretations.

In other words, the framing of news is a deliberate and selective process that does not necessarily reflect reality. The anthropologist Gregory Bateson first introduced the concept of frames in 1972, where he defined psychological frames as "temporary boundaries of a set of interactive messages that function as a form of metacommunication".<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Erving Goffman, **Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience**, Harvard University Press, 1974.

<sup>201</sup> D. Tewksbury and D. A. Scheufele, "News framing theory and research", In **Media effects**, Routledge, 2009, pp. 33-49.

<sup>202</sup> Kahneman, p. 278.

<sup>203</sup> Marion R. Just, Russell Neuman and Ann Crigler, "An economic theory of learning from news", **Shorenstein Center Research Paper Series**, 1992.

<sup>204</sup> Entman, "Theorizing Mediate Public Diplomacy: the U.S. Case", pp. 87- 102.

<sup>205</sup> Entman, **Projections of power: Framing news, public opinion, and US foreign policy**, pp. 23-24.

<sup>206</sup> Entman, **Projections of power: Framing news, public opinion, and US foreign policy**, pp.22-24.

<sup>207</sup> K. Hallahan, "Strategic Framing", **International Encyclopedia of Communication**, 2008.

The role of framework theory is similar to agenda-setting theory, in that the latter works to highlight a particular issue in the media in such a way that it becomes more important than other news, and audiences perceive and interpret it as the most important news and information given to them.<sup>208</sup> As a result, many add agenda-setting theory as the first step in framing theory and sometimes refer to framing theory as second-level agenda-setting. Both tend to make the audience see the given issue in a certain light, in line with the communicator's agenda and goals. However, framing theory goes further by creating a framework for the news and information presented. This is done through a deliberate choice by journalists. That is, the media act as gatekeepers, organizing and presenting the ideas, events, and issues they cover.<sup>209</sup>

It is clear from the above that framing theory focuses on how the media draw the public's attention to certain issues - setting their agenda and then creating frames through which the targeted masses will understand this information. According to Entman, there are five types of framing of news and information: conflict framing, human interest framing, economic consequence framing, moral framing, and responsibility framing.<sup>210</sup> Framing is a systematic process that involves many steps:<sup>211</sup> First, journalists choose the topics and issues they want to present and decide how to present them. Secondly, the chosen issues determine what the audience thinks about and how they think about it. Then, audiences interpret the information given according to their own frames. The audience's frames may overlap or contradict those of the media. Finally, frames are constantly reinforced, whether positively or negatively.

### **2.3.2. Framing in Communication**

Although framing has been present in human life since ancient times, interest in it began in the last fifty years, particularly among media, communication, and public relations practitioners, because of the importance of framing in focusing the

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<sup>208</sup> Maxwell E. McCombs, Donald L. Shaw, and David H. Weaver, "New directions in agenda-setting theory and research", **Mass communication and society**, 17.6, 2014, pp. 781-802.

<sup>209</sup> McCombs, Shaw, and Weaver, 2014, pp. 781-802.

<sup>210</sup> Entman, "Framing US Coverage of International", p.4.

<sup>211</sup> Entman, "Framing US Coverage of International", p.4.

attention of the masses and public opinion on certain issues in a way that achieves the desires and agendas of communicators. In media and communication studies, framing refers to “the process of organizing everyday reality”,<sup>212</sup> by giving “meaning to an unfolding strip of events”,<sup>213</sup> and promoting “particular definitions of political issues”.<sup>214</sup>

Tracking frames is an important issue in media studies for identifying trends in topics covered, comparing coverage across media, and examining differences between media types.<sup>215</sup> In this respect, one media outlet may frame an issue in one way, while another may frame it in the opposite way. In other words, the aim of framing stories is to place them in a particular field of meaning. The process of framing in media and communication is driven by the agenda of the communicators (e.g., journalists, editors, reporters), who act as gatekeepers, carefully selecting and presenting the issues they cover. Frames are important in communication because of their influence on the behavior and attitudes of others towards certain issues and problems. It is therefore not surprising that many politicians rely on some frames, especially those used by others (e.g., politicians, journalists, or citizens), to achieve their political goals. At the same time, media and citizens may adopt the frames of others (e.g., politicians, citizens, media).<sup>216</sup>

It highlights the importance of media frameworks in helping to diagnose problems, their causes, and effects, as well as suggesting treatments and predicting their various effects. In addition, the framework determines the extent to which individuals perceive and understand the problem, and how they evaluate and act upon it. Scheufele found that the framing of events and news in the media can systematically affect how recipients understand news, and that the focus of the frame on highlighting certain information increases the recipient's ability to perceive,

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<sup>212</sup> Dietram A. Scheufele, "Framing as a theory of media effects", **Journal of communication**, 49.1, 1999, pp. 103-122.; Gaye Tuchman, "Making news: A study in the construction of reality", 1987, p. 193.

<sup>213</sup> William A. Gamson, and Andre Modigliani, "The changing culture of affirmative action", **Research in political sociology**, 3.1, 1987, p. 143.

<sup>214</sup> Scheufele, pp. 103-122.

<sup>215</sup> Scheufele, pp. 103-122.

<sup>216</sup> Scheufele, p. 109.



process and store it in memory.<sup>217</sup> This means that framing has powerful effects on individuals' social perceptions and political preferences.

However, Entman argues that the framing of a text does not guarantee its effect on the audience's thinking, but rather helps individuals to construct an appropriate discourse by providing them with a set of concepts to use in the process of interpreting an event or issue. On the other hand, frameworks influence individuals' attitudes by focusing on certain issues more than others.<sup>218</sup>

Frameworks play a strategic role in social institutions and movements, influencing behavior, attracting members and resources, and helping to link the individual to the group, its values and ideology, consistent with the fact that the framework has social power. Institutions and social movements use frameworks to influence perceptions of the principles, beliefs, and actions of different target groups. Part of this power comes from the media's ability to define the framework without the public being aware of it. It is important to note that the journalistic framing of issues and events does not happen automatically, but is shaped by social and political factors, the role of organizations and social movements and their sources.

### **2.3.3. Types of Frameworks and Building Frames**

There are several types of media frameworks according to their relevance to the event:<sup>219</sup>

A framework defined by a case: in this case, the focus is on a specific issue because of its connection to reality and current events that concern the public more than others, where the framework focuses on this issue and its repercussions.

b. The general framework: this framework places the events in a general context and provides general explanations, linking them to cultural and political criteria.

c. The strategic framework: this framework places the events in a general context and provides general explanations, linking them to cultural and political criteria.

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<sup>217</sup> Scheufele, pp.103-122.

<sup>218</sup> R. M. Entman, J. Matthes, and L. Pellicano, "Nature, sources, and effects of news framing", **The handbook of journalism studies**, 2009, pp. 175-190.

<sup>219</sup> Entman, Matthews, and Pellicano, pp. 175-190.

D. The human-interest framework: It explains events in the context of their general human and emotional impact, where the messages are formulated in templates and dramatic stories with an influential emotional tendency.

E. The economic framework: This framework places the facts in the context of the economic outcomes of the events and refers to the expected impact on individuals, countries, and institutions. Here the material outcome is used to make the media message more effective for people and more relevant to their interests.

F. Responsibility framework: here the communicator frames the message to answer the question "Who is responsible? Individuals, institutions, and the state are concerned with knowing who is responsible for the event and identifying it in a particular person, institution, law, behavior, or government.

G. The conflict framework: Here the events are presented in a competitive, intense conflict framework, where the media messages may ignore important elements to highlight the context of the conflict from the point of view of the communicator and his interests.

H. The moral framework: It presents the facts in a moral and value context of the society, and here the communicator may use religious quotations and evidence to support his narrative.

Framing mechanisms are the position of the news story in the newspaper, the presence of symbols or signals indicating its importance, the use of formal and interactive elements. According to Entman, media frameworks often include keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols, visual images, contextualization, personalization, dramatization, fragmentation, normalization, dehumanization, demonization, equalization, sanitization, captions, sources, quotations, tone of reporting, reframing, words of reinforcement and repetition.<sup>220</sup>

Framing theory is also necessary for those who work in public relations to guide public behavior towards a particular belief. Practitioners use framing by highlighting certain aspects of an issue or the services they represent. Framing in public relations is defined as "the process of establishing mutually beneficial relationships between

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<sup>220</sup> Entman, "Framing US Coverage of International", pp. 4-6.

an organization and its own publics".<sup>221</sup> Kirk Hallahan argues that the more messages and information provided to the public that reflect their attitudes, opinions, and beliefs, the more effective and impactful the information will be.<sup>222</sup> Therefore, when creating a message, it is essential to understand how people perceive it and what is important to that audience. Although there is no standard metric for studying and defining the frames used, the most compelling studies tend to follow many steps:<sup>223</sup>

Firstly, the issues are identified according to their relationship to a particular event or political actor. This means that the frames for one issue are different from those for others. Moreover, the same issue may evoke alternative frames at different times. Second, scholars need to isolate a particular attitude and then establish frames inductively to create a coding scheme. Third, a coding scheme is created by inductively identifying a set of frames for an issue and selecting sources for content analysis. These sources may include, more typically, the analysis of mass media sources such as newspapers, websites, and television programs.<sup>224</sup> Fourth, the coders analyze the sample and identify the presence or absence of one of the predefined frameworks in the story or article. The researcher followed the previous steps to identify the trends and frames used by Israeli digital diplomacy on the study page. The thesis examines how the 'Israel speaks Arabic Facebook page' was framed in almost 700 publications.

Simply put, what is presented to the masses by the dissenting media does not fully reflect the motive. Rather, the final story presented is sometimes manipulated, as it is inevitably framed in terms of what serves the values and ideology of the institution and leads to the results that the institution seeks. This applies equally to digital platforms, as everything published on them is subject to the policies and agendas of the communicators. For this reason, the public must always critically evaluate everything they read or watch, otherwise they may be voluntarily driven by what

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<sup>221</sup> Tankard and James, pp 111-121.

<sup>222</sup> Hallahan, pp.205-242.

<sup>223</sup> Entman, **Projections of power: Framing news, public opinion, and US foreign policy**, pp. 23–24.

<sup>224</sup> Jr Tankard and W. James, "The empirical approach to the study of media framing", **Framing public life**, Routledge, 2001, pp.111-121.

they receive from the various media outlets, and this is the main idea of framing theory.

#### **2.3.4. The Strength and Weakness of the Framing Theory**

The strength of the theory lies in its focus on the individual in the communication process and its extreme flexibility in that it can be applied in various political, cultural, social, and economic fields. In addition, its ability to explain the role of the media in shaping the public's knowledge and attitudes towards various issues, the possibility of monitoring and measuring the behavioral effects of media framing on audiences, and its validity for application in different branches of media studies such as: editing, international media, advertising, public relations, and image studies.<sup>225</sup>

However, the theory is not without some weaknesses, for example, its flexibility means it lacks specificity, it does not have the ability to determine the magnitude of the presence or absence of effects, and its reliance on qualitative approaches precludes causal explanations. In addition, the theory is criticized for the lack of a common intellectual model agreed upon by scholars, due to the controversy surrounding the concept of framing and its measurement methods. Moreover, several trends in framing research have ignored the relationship between media framing and factors related to political and social power, and this omission is caused by several reasons, including the problem of defining framing, the failure to study framing contexts, and the underestimation of framing as a form of media influence.

In addition, the theory suffers from the diversity of elements that influence the process of framing, the mechanisms of influence, and the understanding and perception of recipients. This raises many questions about the extent to which the results of theoretical studies can be generalized. The use of framing theory in this research would help the researcher to understand the mechanism and main strategies used by the 'Israel speaks Arabic' Facebook page to appeal to the Arab public, and to explore how the page frames its publications in a way that supports the Israeli narrative.

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<sup>225</sup> Porismita Borah, "Conceptual issues in framing theory: A systematic examination of a decade's literature", *Journal of communication*, 61.2, 2011, pp. 246-263.

## CHAPTER 3: ISRAEL'S DIGITAL EFFORTS: DIPLOMACY OR PROPAGANDA?

Today, digital diplomacy plays an indispensable role in advancing Israel's foreign policy goals. Israel was quick to recognize the importance of digital media in communicating with other nations,

especially the Arabs and peoples of the Middle East. Although many Arab leaders have been willing to negotiate with Israel in recent years, Israel has been unable to penetrate Arab public opinion, which for decades has viewed Israel as an enemy state. However, the age of digital media has given Israel the opportunity to communicate directly with Arab publics for the first time. However, many see Israeli digital activity on social media as political propaganda rather than pure diplomacy. The researcher therefore returns to the history of Israeli propaganda in this section. Before delving into the roots of Zionist/Israeli propaganda, the researcher gives a brief introduction to the concept of propaganda, its main forms, and schools.

### 3.1. Definitions of Propaganda and its Types

The concept of propaganda is old and has been part of human history, associated with international communication, dating back to ancient Greece.<sup>226</sup> Some scholars believe that the term was first used by the Roman Catholic Church in the 17th century, when Christian groups began to break away from the Catholic Church. In response, Pope Gregory XV appointed a group of cardinals in 1622 to control all Catholic missions abroad in order to unify them and spread the Catholic faith.<sup>227</sup> Propaganda, however, refers to "a form of communication often used by formal and informal institutions to influence individuals and societies and to elicit a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist".<sup>228</sup>

Although the schools of political propaganda differ from one community to another, or from one era to another, the core of propaganda is the attempt to influence the

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<sup>226</sup> Nicholas John Cull, David Holbrook Culbert, and David Welch, **Propaganda, and mass persuasion: A historical encyclopedia, 1500 to the present**, ABC-clio, 2003.

<sup>227</sup> Scott M. Cutlip, **Public relations history: From the 17th to the 20th century: The antecedents**, Routledge, 2013.

<sup>228</sup> G. S. Jowett and V. O'Donnell, **Propaganda, and persuasion. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999, p. 1.**

ideas and beliefs of others. In his book 'Psychological Warfare', Anthony Linebarger defines propaganda as the systematic use of any form of mass communication to influence the minds and emotions of a particular group for a specific purpose, whether military, economic or political.<sup>229</sup> This view is shared by Douglas Walton, who defines propaganda as “the act of a lobby group or organization in imposing, presenting and promoting a point of view to a wide audience”.<sup>230</sup>

In the same context, Alex Carey, defines propaganda as “a set of communications that can be chosen for bringing some target audience to adopt attitudes and beliefs”.<sup>231</sup> For Bogart, propaganda is an art that requires a talented person to do the job, as it is not a scientific or mechanical kind of work. In his view, the propagandist sending messages to others must be experienced, highly intelligent, sensitive, and knowledgeable about how people think and react.<sup>232</sup> Qualter focuses on the effectiveness of propaganda and its ability to engage the audience. He believes that for propaganda to be effective, it must be circulated, remembered, seen, understood, and adapted to specific needs and target audiences.<sup>233</sup>

Propaganda plays a fundamental role in shaping public opinion, so politicians rely on the media to influence the public and prepare them to accept political action. However, it also includes half-truths, limited facts and facts taken out of context, where the propagandist seeks to change opinions by psychological means designed to make individuals or groups conform.<sup>234</sup> In the information age, propaganda has become an important tool for states today.<sup>235</sup> Doob saw propaganda as an attempt to influence people and control their behavior in order to achieve specific, unscientific goals in a particular society and at a particular time.<sup>236</sup> This kind of propaganda

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<sup>229</sup> Paul Linebarger, “Psychological warfare”, **Pickle Partners Publishing**, 2015, p 39.

<sup>230</sup> Douglas Walton, “What is propaganda, and what exactly is wrong with it?” **Public affairs quarterly**, Vol. 11, No. 4, 1997, p. 387.

<sup>231</sup> Alex Carey and Andrew Lohrey, **Taking the risk out of democracy: Corporate propaganda versus freedom and liberty**, University of Illinois Press, (1-2), 1997.

<sup>232</sup> Leo Bogart, "A Study of the Operating Assumptions of the US Information Agency", **Public Opinion Quarterly** 19, no. 4, 1955, pp. 195-196.

<sup>233</sup> Raed M I. Qaddoura, “ISRAEL'S PROPAGANDA STRATEGIES: CASE STUDY OF THE PROTECTIVE EDGE OPERATION IN GAZA 2014”, **International Journal of Development Research**, Vol. 07, Issue, 12, 2017.

<sup>234</sup> Jacques Ellul, “Propaganda: The formation of men's attitudes”, **Vintage**, 2021, pp.12-20.

<sup>235</sup> Qaddoura, pp.17938-17950.

<sup>236</sup> L. W. Doob, “Public opinion, and propaganda”, **New York: H. Holt**, 1948.

serves to brainwash people, where some argue that propaganda has potential power because it can destroy an individual's sense of history and inhibit critical thinking.<sup>237</sup> For some scholars, successful propaganda does not allow individuals to recover, but instead occupies every moment of their lives through various mass media communications. Thus, propaganda can create new beliefs through imperceptible influences that are only effective through constant repetition.<sup>238</sup> Pratkanis and Turner state that the functional aspect of propaganda is to make the recipient adopt any perspective using certain speeches and photographs that reduce thought by instigating bias.<sup>239</sup> According to Jacques Ellul, there is no propaganda without the use of mass media.<sup>240</sup> The previous definitions agree that propaganda refers to the publication of ideas, beliefs, and political positions through various communication channels with the aim of sharing them with a large segment of public opinion and influencing their positions and behavior until they adopt the ideas of this propaganda. However, the most held concept of propaganda is that it is a series of tall tales and a tissue of lies that lies are necessary for effective propaganda.<sup>241</sup>

There are many forms of political propaganda, but the literature on propaganda since the Second World War has distinguished three main forms based on their source and content: white propaganda, black propaganda, and grey propaganda.<sup>242</sup>

Black propaganda, usually hides its aims, its identity, and its source. It aims to give credit to a false source to mislead and distract from the real source. In this case, people will not be able to know that someone or some organization is trying to influence them in a certain direction. It also tends to use mystery and silence.<sup>243</sup>

However, White Propaganda is the most public form of propaganda, open and clear, with a known source; and with identified aims and intentions. People are aware of the attempts to influence them and the source of the information. Although White

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<sup>237</sup> Alex and Lohrey, pp.1-2.

<sup>238</sup> Ellul, pp. 12-20.

<sup>239</sup> Anthony R. Pratkanis and Marlene E. Turner, "Persuasion and democracy: Strategies for increasing deliberative participation and enacting social change", **Journal of Social Issues**, 52, no. 1, 1996, p.190.

<sup>240</sup> Ellul, p.15.

<sup>241</sup> Ellul, p.15.

<sup>242</sup> Barbara Diggs Brown, "Strategic Public Relations: Audience Focused Practice", **Boston: Wadsworth Publishing**, 2011, p. 44. See: Stanley Cunningham, "The Idea of Propaganda: A Reconstruction", **Praeger Publishers**, 2002, pp.67-71.

<sup>243</sup> Linebarger, p. 44.

Propaganda is necessary to confront enemies and show the power of the propagandist, Black Propaganda is more effective, especially when the goal is to push followers in a certain direction without them realizing it.<sup>244</sup>

As for grey propaganda, this is where the audience does not recognize the source of the information. It remains in a grey area, even though the information may be true and correct.<sup>245</sup> In his book 'Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes', Ellul identifies two types of propaganda according to their source: "covert propaganda" (Black propaganda) and "overt propaganda" (White propaganda).

In terms of the aims of political propaganda, Ellul classified four forms of propaganda:<sup>246</sup>

First, sociological propaganda, which means the use of specific means of communication aimed at supporting the propagandist's ideas and widening the base of his supporters and sympathizers. This type of propaganda is based on a plan to study the target social groups, determine their behavior and thinking, and thus use the best means of communication to influence them. Sociological propaganda is based on a general atmosphere that influences people imperceptibly, without having the appearance of propaganda. Sociological propaganda must work slowly, by infiltration, and is most effective in a relatively stable and active society.

Second: Agitation propaganda: This is the most visible and widespread form of propaganda. It generally aims to attract attention and could be described as subversive propaganda and bears the stamp of opposition. It is led by a group that wants to destroy the government or the established order and seeks rebellion or war. In this type of propaganda, it is enough for the propagandist to communicate an idea to a wide audience with the aim of provoking people and urging them to denounce a certain issue. In this way, the propagandist creates a general atmosphere that prepares public opinion to accept the slogans proposed by the propaganda campaign. In this type of propaganda, the propagandist or agitator stirs up public opinion and acts as a nationalist.

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<sup>244</sup> Ellul, p.15.

<sup>245</sup> Qaddoura, pp.17938-17950.

<sup>246</sup> Ellul, pp. 16-20.



Third: Propaganda of integration: This contrasts with the propaganda of agitation. It is a long-term and self-reproducing propaganda that seeks to achieve stable behavior, to adapt the individual to his everyday life, to reshape his thoughts in terms of a permanent social setting. Its primary aim is to direct the attitudes of the public. It then urges the audience to receive this propaganda for support, commitment, and performance.

Fourth: Classical propaganda: This is vertical propaganda that comes from above, i.e., from a leader, a political figure or any other person who acts from a superior position of authority and tries to influence the crowd below. This type of propaganda is the most widespread. It uses all the methods of mass communication; it surrounds a mass of individuals; but those who practice it are on the outside. It demands a passive attitude from those who are subjected to it.

After the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party) came to power in Germany, led by Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), Joseph Goebbels (who joined the Nazi Party in 1924) became key to the Nazis' use of propaganda to broaden their appeal.<sup>247</sup> Goebbels undertook the Nazi propaganda programs, relying on a combination of modern media such as films, radio and traditional campaigning tools such as posters and newspapers to reach as many people as possible and spread the idea of socialism. In this way, he was able to create an image of Hitler as the strong, stable leader Germany needed to become a great power again. This image of Hitler was known as 'The Hitler Myth'. Goebbels' success made him Reich Minister of Propaganda in 1933.<sup>248</sup> Hitler himself led many rallies to arouse the emotions and minds of the masses.<sup>249</sup>

In his book *Mein Kampf*, Hitler devoted two chapters to propaganda and its importance in political life, arguing that the primary success of propaganda lay in the belief in the idea and the devotion of the leaders to it.<sup>250</sup> As for communist propaganda in the Soviet Union, it was based on Marxist-Leninist ideology to

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<sup>247</sup> K. Lee Lerner, Brenda Wilmoth Lerner, and Adrienne Wilmoth Lerner, "Government, politics, and protest: essential primary sources", **Thomson Gale**, 2006, pp. 264-270.

<sup>248</sup> Lerner, Wilmoth, and Adrienne Wilmoth Lerner, pp. 264-270.

<sup>249</sup> Roger B. Nelson, "Hitler's Propaganda Machine." **Current History (1916-1940)**, 38.3, 1933, pp.287-294.

<sup>250</sup> Lerner, Wilmoth, and Wilmoth, pp. 264-270

promote the ideas of the Communist Party and to confront the class struggle and global capitalism. Vladimir Lenin saw propaganda as a strategic and tactical tool for leading the class struggle, educating the working class, and inciting revolutionary participation, as strikes and their instigation were a communist approach to promoting communist ideas.<sup>251</sup> However, the western capitalist propaganda aimed to confront the communist camp after the western world entered a cold war with the Soviet Union after the Second World War.

Some American and British institutions specifically took on the responsibility of managing the propaganda against the communist ideology by adopting concepts that focus on inciting communism and talking about the advantages of the capitalist system and the ideas and values it believes in, such as democracy and others.<sup>252</sup> Therefore, capitalist propaganda took the form of an anti-communist propaganda war, and various media and forms of propaganda were used to reach the largest segment of the masses around the world.

### **3.2. The Israeli- Zionist Propaganda**

This section examines the roots of Israeli propaganda from the beginning of the Zionist movement to the present day. It also focuses on the main strategies of the Israeli propaganda discourse, its tools, and its development over time.

In order to trace the roots of Israeli propaganda, one must delve into the sources that shaped Zionist consciousness in the press and information. However, I will not be able to go through the entire history of Zionist propaganda, but I will focus on the most important milestones since the birth of the first Zionist conference in Basel in 1897 until today. The Zionist/Israeli interest in media and propaganda is not new. Rather, it goes back to the very beginning of the history of the Zionist movement, which placed media, public relations, lobbying and propaganda at the top of its agenda, to establish the State of Israel.<sup>253</sup> During its first conference in 1897 in the

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<sup>251</sup> Roger, pp. 264-270

<sup>252</sup> J. B. Smith, "The British Information Research Department and Cold War Propaganda", in Greg Barnhisel, Catherine Turner (eds.), **Pressing the Fight: Print, Propaganda, and the Cold War**, (University of Massachusetts Press), 2021, pp. 112-126

<sup>253</sup> Al Tamimi, p. 49.

Swiss city of Basel, the movement mentioned the important role of the media in spreading awareness among Jews worldwide and convincing them to immigrate to the Palestinian land. Literature on Zionism suggests that the movement saw the media as a 'weapon' to promote its project.<sup>254</sup>

Today, digital technology plays a fundamental role in improving Israel's image internationally, especially after Israel was subjected to a wave of international criticism following the Israeli military attacks on the Gaza Strip, especially in 2008-2009, 2012 and 2014, as well as the ongoing military operations in the West Bank and the city of Jerusalem. These attacks severely damaged Israel's international reputation, exposing Israel's public diplomacy to internal criticism as well, which ultimately led to the creation of a department specializing in rejuvenating Israeli diplomacy, known in Hebrew as 'hasbara'.<sup>255</sup>

In the pre-state period, as well as after the establishment of the state in 1948 and until the 1960s, practitioners relied on professional communicators to influence public opinion and to mobilize and motivate the public for the establishment of the Jewish homeland.<sup>256</sup> Some believe that the French pamphlet published in 1860 entitled 'The New Eastern Question', which outlined the economic benefits to Europe if the Jews were to settle in Palestine, provided the impetus for the World Zionist Organization to develop its propaganda discourse aimed at Western public opinion.<sup>257</sup> Therefore, Zionist propaganda deliberately used methods that were compatible with the mentalities and emotions of the groups receiving these messages, be they Jews, Arabs or the international community.

The World Zionist Organization saw propaganda as “an instrument of change that creates countries and destroys others In Prague in 1869, Rabbi Reich horn presented gold as an irresistible force to control the minds and the world, but he saw the press as a great power for this purpose, stating: “If gold is the first force, then the press is

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<sup>254</sup> Ahmed Fouad Anwar, **Religious Press in Israel, Issues of Conflict with the Arabs, and Internal Conspiracy**, (Cairo: Scholar books), first edition, 2005, pp. 13-14.

<sup>255</sup> Aouragh, "Hasbara 2.0: Israel's public diplomacy in the digital age", pp.271-297.

<sup>256</sup> Anat First, "Public relations and nation building: influencing Israel", **Asian Journal of Communication**, 25:2, 2015, pp. 232-234.

<sup>257</sup> Meir Litvak and Esther Webman, "Perceptions of the Holocaust in Palestinian public discourse", **Israel studies**, 8.3, 2003, pp.123-140.

the force of the second, but the second does not work without the first, so we must seize control of the press by means of gold”.<sup>258</sup> Adding: “By repeating certain ideas incessantly, the press finally succeeds in making them accepted as facts. The theatre performs a similar service. Everywhere, the press and the theatre obey our orders”.<sup>259</sup> The Zionist movement's interest in propaganda was clearly expressed by the founder of the modern Zionist movement, Theodore Herzl, who, shortly before the first congress of the movement in 1897, founded the magazine *The World*, which became the official mouthpiece of the Zionist organization.<sup>260</sup>

At the time, Herzl said: “In order to create a home for the Jews in Palestine, we need a lot of noise”.<sup>261</sup> In fact, Herzl was the foundation of the Zionist campaign that later led the Israeli hasbara/propaganda project for most of the twentieth century. He organized one of the world's most impressive international campaigns, which helped to build a successful political movement and set out the principles and values that guided the movement's efforts to reach and influence public opinion around the world.<sup>262</sup> The pioneers of the Zionist movement recognized early on the role of the media and its importance in realizing the dream of Zionism and establishing a national home for the Jews in Palestine. The movement relied on several pretexts to justify its claim to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, including religious pretexts, represented by considering Palestine as the land promised to them by God, and the historical claim that the Jews have a historical right to the land of Palestine.<sup>263</sup>

In fact, Zionist propaganda has been one of the most successful media propagandas in brainwashing public opinion on a global level, helped by the Jews' possession of economic and financial capabilities. In addition to their knowledge of the most appropriate ways to appeal to the Western mind, their European roots played a role

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<sup>258</sup> Taqi al-Din Tanir and Muhammad Atawi, **The Israeli Media and Confronting It**, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, 1999, p. 28.

<sup>259</sup> No name, “Rabbi Reichhorn's Protocols”, **The Journal of History**, Vol. 9, Issue 2, 2009, [http://www.truedemoc\(20.net/hj32/28.html](http://www.truedemoc(20.net/hj32/28.html) 20 July 2016.

<sup>260</sup> Fayez A. Sayegh, “The Zionist diplomacy”, Research Centre, Palestine Liberation Organization”, **Palestinian Studies Series**, No. 13, 1967, p. 31.

<sup>261</sup> Nawaf Al Tamimi, “Zionist lobby in Britain: Emergence and activities”, **Siyasat Arabiya**, (21), 2016, pp. 41-42.

<sup>262</sup> Al Tamimi, p. 42.

<sup>263</sup> Marwa Al-Asadi, “Zionist Propaganda: Characteristics of Planning”, **Annabaa 'Network**, 2019, <https://m.annabaa.org/arabic/studies/18688> <https://m.annabaa.org/arabic/studies/18688> 15 May 2023.

in achieving their cause and goal of establishing a national home for them in Palestine.<sup>264</sup>

### **3.2.1. The Structure of the Zionist Propaganda Discourse**

The Zionist propaganda discourse differed from period to period, depending on the goals and strategies formulated by the Zionist movement and the target audience at each stage. We can divide the stages of the development of the propaganda discourse into three: pre-state propaganda, post-state propaganda and current propaganda.

#### **3.2.1.1. Pre-State Propaganda**

This phase runs from the first congress of the Zionist movement in 1897 to 1984, the date of the establishment of the State of Israel. At the end of the nineteenth century, the political ideas of the Zionist movement began to emerge with the holding of the first conference of the Zionist movement in 1897 in the Swiss city of Basel. Through this conference, the World Zionist Organization expressed its propaganda objectives and established an organizational framework of five bodies, the most important of which was the Central Guidance Office, which linked the Zionist movement to the head of the World Zionist Organization.<sup>265</sup> The primary aim of Zionist propaganda was to emphasize the Jewish question and the need to establish a national home that would unite Jews throughout the world, gain international recognition, improve the image of Jews in Europe and win Western sympathy for Zionist aims.<sup>266</sup>

Many Jewish scholars interested in the Jewish question used their fields of journalism and writing to call for Jewish immigration to Palestine and the establishment of a national home for the Jews there. In order to achieve these goals, Zionist ideology focused on constantly portraying Jews as victims by invoking anti-Semitic and Holocaust stereotypes. Most of the Zionist propaganda work was done by the Jewish National Fund. It was also the first to work in this field in Hebrew and

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<sup>264</sup> Sayegh, pp. 30-32.

<sup>265</sup> Al Tamimi, pp. 30-40.

<sup>266</sup> Abdul-Raziq Al-Dulaimi, "the Evolution of Zionist Propaganda and Media Styles", **University of Baghdad**, 1986, p.17.

in Mandatory Palestine. Its Propaganda Bureau was established in Palestine as early as 1929.<sup>267</sup>

The main goals of the propaganda at that time were to connect the new Jewish immigrants with their new homeland (Palestine), to create a new national identity with new myths and traditions, and to motivate the Jews to participate in this collective process.<sup>268</sup> In this way, we can see that Zionist propaganda initially worked in two directions: Jews in the Diaspora and Western public opinion. At the same time, the organization did not neglect to direct a media discourse in Arabic to the Palestinians and Arabs, even before achieving the goal of establishing the Israeli state. The Zionist gangs such as the *Haganah* used Arabic-speaking media to spread fear among Palestinians and then force them to leave their land. Moreover, Jewish organizations present in Palestine at the time also took part in the psychological warfare against the Palestinians, broadcasting news of massacres and crimes against Arabs in order to force the Palestinians to flee.<sup>269</sup>

Toledano and McKie argue that the Jewish community in the Diaspora used PR to build unity, solidarity, and consensus, and that these values were transferred to the pre-state Yishuv and later to the government of Israel.<sup>270</sup>

Fayez A. Sayegh grouped five major proposals of Zionist propaganda content under the heading "Proposals aimed at establishing the right of the Jewish nation to Palestine": (1) The Jewish nation has a divine right to Palestine by divine promise; (2) The Jewish nation has a historical right to Palestine by virtue of its past historical occupation of the land; (3) The Jewish nation has a legal right to Palestine by virtue of the Balfour Declaration, (4) the League of Nations Mandate and the partition resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1947; (5) The Jewish nation has a humanitarian right to Palestine.

In this respect, the Zionist means that this nation has proved itself more capable of developing Palestine than the Arabs who owned it. The Israeli media at that time

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<sup>267</sup>Haitham Al-Kilani, "Military Strategies for the Arab Israeli Wars, 1948-1988", **Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies**, 1991, p. 24.

<sup>268</sup> M. Toledano and D. McKie, **Public Relations and Nation Building Influencing Israel**, Routledge, New York, 2013, p. 245.

<sup>269</sup>Naim, p. 85

<sup>270</sup> Toledano and McKie, p. 36.

was based on a set of arguments formulated by the Zionist ideology to legitimize its goals of establishing a national home for the Jews. This ideology had several foundations, including:<sup>271</sup> the legitimacy of immigration to Palestine; the legitimacy of the establishment of the Israeli state; the legitimacy of the dual political system, based on democracy and at the same time the oppression of the Palestinians; the return to the Promised Land is a historical right of the Jews; the Jews have a civilizing mission and believe in leadership and achievement; the right of self-determination for the Jews is an established principle; and the national security of the Jews is also an established principle.

Formally, however, the main goal of Zionism was recognized in the 1947 UN decision to divide the land into an Arab state and a Jewish state. A decision rejected by many nations of the world, especially the Arab states.<sup>272</sup>

### **3.2.1.2. Post-State Propaganda:**

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was the result of an extensive political campaign involving the use of strategic communications and a settlement movement led by the World Zionist Organization. Although Zionist propaganda achieved its primary goal of establishing a homeland for the Jews in the land of Palestine and gained international support for it, the State of Israel continued to use propaganda and evolved it over time in line with the state's goals and to maintain public opinion support.<sup>273</sup> After the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948, David Ben-Gurion, the first Israeli Prime Minister, did not ignore the role that the media played in establishing the State of Israel on the map, gaining its international legitimacy and establishing its existence, which has become a reality on the ground.<sup>274</sup> At the time, Ben-Gurion explained the importance of the media in the service of Israeli propaganda, seeing it as a shield and a weapon to protect the Jews.

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<sup>271</sup> Atef Odeh, **Israeli Media and Conflict Determinants: Journalism as a Model**, Beirut: The Arab Foundation for Studies and Publishing, 2004, pp. 55-56.

<sup>272</sup> Odeh, pp. 55-56.

<sup>273</sup> Al Tamimi, pp. 35-40.

<sup>274</sup> Al Tamimi, pp 35-40.

Indeed, Israeli interest in media and propaganda increased in the post-state period. In the 1950s and 1960s, numerous newspapers, radio and television stations were established in Arabic. The aim of these means of communication was to create confusion in the Arab world and to foment incitement between the Palestinians in the territories occupied in 1967 and those occupied in 1948 (what is now Israel).<sup>275</sup> During this period, Israeli propaganda or public diplomacy efforts were directed at the Arab world as well as the Western world. For the Arabs, the aim was psychological warfare to weaken Arab confidence in their leaders and local media. In 1967, for example, Kol Yisrael (Voice of Israel) reported in Arabic that Israeli jets had destroyed most of the Arab air force on the first day of the war.<sup>276</sup> Not only that, but the radio also broadcast interviews with Arabs who had been taken prisoner of war, saying that Arab radios broadcasting an Arab victory were lying to them, and presenting evidence of Israel's military superiority.<sup>277</sup>

After the 1967 war and Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories (West Bank and Gaza Strip), Israeli propaganda efforts expanded beyond psychological warfare, focusing on Israel's military excellence and superiority. In addition, its propaganda relied on soft power messages to communicate with Palestinians living in Israel and other occupied territories.<sup>278</sup> At the time, Voice of Israel Radio's Arabic programs focused on non-political issues such as culture and education to demonstrate the mutual interests and commonalities between Jews and Arabs in Israel.<sup>279</sup> In 1968, the Israeli Television Channel was launched, presenting Arab films and Arab-Jewish programs every day, attracting Arab-Israeli audiences. In 1980, a popular radio station called Voice of Peace was launched as a private station by the left, broadcasting Western music to promote peace values to both Israeli and Arab listeners. But it was shut down in 1993.<sup>280</sup>

In terms of its content, Zionist propaganda did not differ from the pre-state propaganda structure. It was based on the achievement of legitimacy, and the claim

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<sup>275</sup> Humaid, pp. 5-10.

<sup>276</sup> Samuel and Yarchi, pp. 323-344.

<sup>277</sup> Oren, pp. 33-36.

<sup>278</sup> Oren, pp. 33-36.

<sup>279</sup> Samuel and Yarchi, pp. 323-244.

<sup>280</sup> Humaid, pp. 5-20.



was that "we deserve it because we are a nation among nations; we deserve it because we have a 'historical right' to the Land of Israel; and furthermore, after the Holocaust, we deserve it because we were slaughtered, and the option of exile no longer exists".<sup>281</sup> Later, propaganda focused on the moral superiority of the IDF and the state's right to defend itself.<sup>282</sup> However, the launch of Arab channels in the mid-nineties, especially Al-Jazeera in 1996, made Arabs rely more on Arab media, so the percentage of Arab viewership of Israeli media dropped to record levels. In 2004 a study in Israel showed that when the Israeli media and Al Jazeera cover an event, more than 58% of the Arab population in Israel trust Al Jazeera's coverage of events, compared to only 4% who trust the Israeli media.<sup>283</sup>

### 3.2.1.3. Israel's Current Propaganda: Hasbara

Israel's current public diplomacy efforts have focused on online diplomacy operations aimed at preventing Arab isolation by sending messages of peace to audiences in Arab countries, suggesting that online communication with Israeli platforms may be the only way to understand Israeli perspectives on events.<sup>284</sup> These audiences accessing Israeli platforms could be citizens of hostile Arab countries and countries with which Israel has peace agreements, notably Egypt and Jordan.

More recently, Israel has used the Hebrew word 'hasbara' (explaining) to refer to PD or propaganda.<sup>285</sup> While the Foreign Ministry has adopted the term 'public diplomacy'.<sup>286</sup> Hasbara is not a new phenomenon in Israeli history. Rather, it is a basic concept in the history of the Zionist movement and later the State of Israel and has been used in the framework of Zionist internal and external propaganda and

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<sup>281</sup> Ron Schleifer, "JEWISH AND CONTEMPORARY ORIGINS OF ISRAELI HASBARA", **Jewish Political Studies Review**, 15(1-2), 2003, pp. 130-133.

<sup>282</sup> Ron Schleifer, pp. 130-133.

<sup>283</sup> A. Jamal, "The Culture of Media Consumption among National Minorities: The Case of the Arab Society in Israel", **I'lam Media Center for Arab Palestinians in Israel**, 2006, <https://www.ilam-center.org/en/publication.aspx?id=106>

<sup>284</sup> Samuel and Yarchi, pp. 323-344.

<sup>285</sup> Gideon Levy, "Israeli Propaganda Isn't Fooling Anyone – Except Israelis", **Haaretz**, 4 June 2015, <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-propaganda-without-end-amen-1.5369189> 15 April 2022.

<sup>286</sup> Eytan Gilboa, "Searching for a theory of public diplomacy", **The annals of the American academy of political and social science**, 616.1, 2008, pp.55-77.

Israeli public diplomacy. It is a Jewish, Zionist, and Israeli concept of public relations, propaganda, and public diplomacy.<sup>287</sup>

Theodore Herzl gave priority to information and propaganda in his political and diplomatic activities. However, the founder of hasbara, its theory and practice, was Nachum Sokolow (1859-1936), a politician, writer and later one of the leaders of the World Zionist Organization (WZO president from 1931 to 1935).<sup>288</sup> Sokolow's *Guide to the Zionist Propagandist* used the concept of “Hasbara”, to describe soft propaganda.<sup>289</sup>

The term ‘hasbara’ instead of ‘propaganda’ was introduced relatively late into the vocabulary of the official bodies of the Zionist movement. This change stemmed from the negative image of Nazi “propaganda”, from whose ideas and theories the Zionist movement benefited, along with other schools of propaganda.<sup>290</sup> Hasbara, however, continues to this day as a synonym for public relations and public diplomacy in Israel. It encompasses strategies designed to improve Israel's reputation, manage growing criticism of its policies, and garner international public support.<sup>291</sup> Some official documents, such as *The Israel Advocacy Guide*, show the characteristics of current Israeli propaganda. The document explains the principles of Zionist propaganda and restores international attitudes towards Israel after its image has been damaged in recent years by the wars and military attacks that Israel has waged against the Palestinians. These military campaigns have exposed Israel's legitimacy to criticism and skepticisms and have affected Western support for Israel.

The structure of the current Israeli propaganda discourse does not differ much from the old propaganda content, but rather adds to its other content, all of which is aimed at promoting a positive image of Israel and gaining foreign support for it.<sup>292</sup> The most prominent of these contents are Israel's Arab neighbors do not accept the Jewish people's right to self-determination, nor do they recognize their historical

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<sup>287</sup> “Hasbara, the Zionist Propaganda: New Findings and Contributions to Its History and Contemporary Applications”, *iamcr*, 2020, <https://iamcr.org/node/13130> 15 May 2023.

<sup>288</sup> Gideon Kouts, “From Sokolow to “Explaining Israel”: The Zionist “Hasbara” First “Campaign Strategy Paper” and Its Applications”, *Revue Européenne des Études Hébraïques*, No. 18, 2016, pp. 103-146.

<sup>289</sup> Toledano and D. McKie, p 244.

<sup>290</sup> Kouts, pp 103-110.

<sup>291</sup> Toledano and D. McKie, p. 244.

<sup>292</sup> Toledano and McKie, p. 244.

rights in the land of "Israel", The Arabs and Israel's enemies in general seek to delegitimize Israel, The historical rejection of Israel is the reason for the wars Israel has fought with the Palestinians and Arabs since 1948, Israel is a small country threatened by Arab regimes and armed organizations such as Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, In contrast, the propaganda discourse focuses on presenting Israel as a state that loves and seeks peace with the Arabs and Palestinians, and Israel is a successful and developed state in various fields (economic, scientific and technological development).<sup>293</sup>

Nawaf Al Tamimi adds further content: Israel is the only democratic country in the Middle East, surrounded by countries with dictatorial regimes. The Israeli army is invincible and one of the most powerful armies in the world, and Israel is a country that loves peace with its neighbors and does not seek war with them to maintain its security and survival.

Israel's weakness in hasbara quickly became apparent, both in terms of organization and content. Hasbara lacked clarity about its goals, its audience, the means to achieve them, and its importance. All this led to organizational chaos and the shifting of responsibility for it from one body to another.<sup>294</sup> In 2001 and 2002, the State Comptroller's report on the hasbara system concluded that although the government recognized hasbara as one of the most important tools in formulating and implementing foreign policy during the second intifada, the system had failed to deal with Arab and Palestinian propaganda. The report attributes the failure to several factors: the lack of a coordinator for the national hasbara effort; the lack of hasbara strategies and programs; and insufficient resources.<sup>295</sup>

For Eytan Gilboa, one of the factors behind the failure of hasbara is the strong criticism of Israel's policies by many parties in Israel and abroad, and the strong support for the Palestinians in return. These critics include members of human rights organizations such as Rabbis for Human Rights, *B'Tselem* and Amnesty International. Moreover, various groups of Israelis in the Diaspora also accused the

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<sup>293</sup> Al Tamimi, pp. 35-42.

<sup>294</sup> Schleifer, "Jewish and Contemporary Histories of Israeli Hasbara ", pp. 130-133.

<sup>295</sup> Schleifer, pp. 130-133.

Israeli army of "war crimes" and defended the Palestinians, such as London-based Daniel McCaffery, who accused senior Israeli officials of committing "war crimes".<sup>296</sup>

In fact, Israel's reputation has been severely damaged by its military campaigns over the past decades - most notably the wars over Lebanon in 1982 and 2006, and the second intifada in 2000, especially Operation Defensive Shield over the West Bank (2002). These military actions exposed Israel to international criticism and damaged its public image in many countries, governmental and non-governmental organizations.<sup>297</sup> In the same vein, many international organizations, including the UN and its agencies, human rights organizations and non-governmental organizations in Europe and North America condemned Israel.<sup>298</sup> Public opinion polls have shown that Israel is viewed by the international community as a military, religious and dangerous state. Israel's military operations have also provoked self-criticism.<sup>299</sup>

The State Comptroller's 2007 report once again showed that "hasbara" is weak and suffers from many key problems,<sup>300</sup> including the lack of clear and structured protocols for the work of the government bodies that make up hasbara (the Prime Minister's Office, the Foreign Ministry, the Defense Ministry, the Home Front Command, the Israel Police and the Israel Defense Forces), the lack of cooperation between these institutions, the lack of coordination between internal messages directed at Israelis and external messages directed at international public opinion, and the lack of a unified media strategy for it, and the lack of linguistic diversity, such as Arabic, to promote Israeli policies among Arabs or other peoples.<sup>301</sup> For the Comptroller, however, the fundamental problem was the lack of a governmental

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<sup>296</sup> Gilboa, pp.55-77.

<sup>297</sup> Rommey Hassman, "The Israel Brand: Nation Marketing under Constant Conflict", **Tel Aviv University**, 2008.

<sup>298</sup> G. Rosenblatt, "Marketing a New Image", **New York Jewish Week**, 20 January 2005, <http://israel21c.org/blog/jewish-week-marketing-a-new-image/> 12 May 2022.

See: N. Popper, "Israel Aims to Improve Its Public Image", **The Jewish Daily Forward**, 14 Oct 2005 <http://forward.com/articles/2070/israel-aims-to-improve-its-public-image/> 15 May 2022.

<sup>299</sup> Schleifer, pp. 123–153.

<sup>300</sup> "Facts and myths", p. 56.

<sup>301</sup> Shivi Greenfield, "Israeli Hasbara: Myths and Facts", **Molad** (the center for the renewal of Israeli democracy), 27 December 2012, <http://www.molad.org/en/researches/israeli-hasbara-myths-and-facts> 12 May 2022.

body to oversee and direct the hasbara effort, coordinate its activities, and represent its needs to the government and the National Security Cabinet.<sup>302</sup>

Melanie Phillips, senior Jewish news analyst for Britain's Daily Mail, says: "Israeli hasbara is a joke. An absolute joke. Israel is completely outclassed and outmaneuvered on a battlefield it does not even understand it is on. It does not even have the basics of proper hasbara. Somebody should be telling the truth, and the Israeli government has not done that for many years".<sup>303</sup> Aouragh argues that Israeli 'hasbara' must fill the gap between crude propaganda and sophisticated psyops on the one hand, and public diplomacy on the other. In her view, the main problem with hasbara lies in its nature. While Israel tries to convince the world through hasbara of its right to occupy and oppress the Palestinians, it does so while carrying out military campaigns in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and continuing the policy of apartheid against the Palestinians inside Israel.<sup>304</sup>

Consequently, the conflict between public diplomacy and hasbara will remain as long as the goals of Zionist colonial Israel remain. Toledano and McKie share the same vision. For them, the hasbara machine ignores Palestinian human rights. Toledano and McKie conclude that Israel may have been effective in creating a brand, but 'a shift towards a closed, centralized, and less democratic state in the new millennium poses new challenges to human rights and freedoms. And it poses serious risks for the profession.'<sup>305</sup>

Some suggest adopting a new strategy based on many principles: Aim for outreach; convey a universal message; be proactive; provide basic information; focus on core issues; advocate rather than "PR"; encourage grassroots efforts; and use the web and the Internet.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Aouragh, "Social media, mediation and the Arab revolutions", pp. 482-515.

<sup>303</sup> Greenfield, p. 12.

<sup>304</sup> Aouragh, "Social media, mediation and the Arab revolutions", pp. 482-515.

<sup>305</sup> Toledano and McKie, p.178.

<sup>306</sup> Isseroff, pp. 1-13.

### 3.3. The Emergence of Hasbara 2:0 Or Digital Diplomacy

Despite Israel's role in the development of information technology as a 'startup nation' and its global position as a leader in the cyber warfare industry, its reputation and image have not been immune to criticism, as mentioned above. In response, in 2007, the Israeli government established a specialized office to revamp Israel's diplomacy, or hasbara, and the Israeli Public Diplomacy Service was transformed into the Prime Minister's Office, dubbed the 'Hasbara National Headquarters', which adopted advanced communication strategies combining traditional and new media.<sup>307</sup> Earlier, particularly during the second Palestinian intifada in 2000, the IMFA established a special department for the Arab press, and in 2002 the government created the post of Israeli army spokesman in Arabic to address Arabs directly.<sup>308</sup>

However, the 2006 Second Lebanon War against Hezbollah was the turning point in Israel's approach to digital media. Even though Israel enjoyed military superiority in the war, Hezbollah was able to influence public opinion through various information operations (IO) via the Internet. It was thus able to claim victory in this war thanks to its ability to shape the narrative of the conflict for an international audience.<sup>309</sup> This forced Israel to set up the 'Winograd Committee' to examine its shortcomings on the battlefield as well as its public image throughout the war. The committee led to the creation of the 'National Information Directorate', to provide direction and coordination in the field of information, so that the relevant bodies would present a unified and clear message to convey a single government voice.

In addition, the post-Second Intifada period witnessed the widespread use of the Internet among Palestinians, which contributed to the transformation of cyberspace into an arena of conflict parallel to the political struggle against the Israeli occupation.<sup>310</sup> For this reason, Israel has escalated its war through the internet to counter the Palestinian and Arab narrative and improve the image of the Israeli

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<sup>307</sup> "Facts and myths", p.26.

<sup>308</sup> Naim, pp. 85-86.

<sup>309</sup> W Caldwell and D. Murphy, "Manning A. Learning to leverage new media: the Israeli defense forces in recent conflicts", *Military Rev.*, 2009, pp. 2-10.

<sup>310</sup> Abu Mualla, p. 180.

occupation globally and in the Arab world. However, the criticism of Israel was repeated loudly during other military campaigns (2008-09 - Operation Cast Lead), 2012 (Operation Pillar of Clouds) and 2014 (Operation Protective Edge). These operations were strongly condemned as war crimes. In addition, Israel's imposition of a comprehensive land, sea and air blockade on Gaza since 2006 and the attack on the Mavi Marmara flotilla in 2010, which was attempting to break the blockade, also played a role in exposing Israel's true image to the world and thus affecting its international reputation.<sup>311</sup>

These aggressive actions marked a turning point in international dealings with Israel, which in turn strengthened the international solidarity movement with the Palestinians. So, Israel decided to adopt a more assertive diplomacy. But what really happened is that it started a war in cyberspace, intensifying its activities and presence on the Internet to confront Palestinian and international activism in support of their cause. The levels of digital hasbara during these military attacks were intense.<sup>312</sup> Hasbara has witnessed a significant intensification in its activities, its technical tools, and the number of recruits in this system. It can be said that Hasbara 2.0, or what is now known as 'digital diplomacy', has emerged in response to two fundamental shifts: First, on a conceptual level, to determine whether hasbara is an aggressive propaganda alternative or a version of public diplomacy. Second, on a technical level, to update its tools (from Web 1 to Web 2) and practices (relying on an army of volunteers).<sup>313</sup>

### **3.3.1. Israel's Hasbara in Conflict Time**

The internet and social networks have changed the way information is created and shared with a wide audience around the world. As Y. Benkler says, "the Internet has changed 'the cultural practice of public communication'".<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Aouragh, "Social media, mediation and the Arab revolutions", pp. 482-515.

<sup>312</sup> B. Makuch, "Israel is Outgunning Hamas on social media, too", **Motherboard Vice**, 25 July 2014, <http://motherboard.vice.com/read/israel-is-outgunning-hamas-on-social-media-too>, 15 Aug 2021.

<sup>313</sup> Aouragh, Hasbara 2.0: Israel's public diplomacy in the digital age", p.286.

<sup>314</sup> Y. Benkler, "The wealth of networks: How social production transforms markets and freedom", New Haven and London: **Yale University Press**, 2006, p.180.

Over the past decade, states and their governments have begun to use social media channels to interact with and influence global publics without restrictions or control. In this competition, some have used social media for propaganda purposes. One of the most recent examples is Israel, which has relied on social media tools over the past decade to become one of the leading countries in using social media to promote its narratives and policies, especially during times of war and conflict. In this regard, Banham notes that Israel has proven to be the most innovative and pioneering user of new digital media technologies among democratic states. The IDF has used them extensively in two conflicts in Gaza with Hamas to sell its war narrative directly to its citizens.<sup>315</sup> In this context, Brigadier Alison Creagh, Director General of Public Affairs for the Australian Defense Force, described Israel's use of social media during the Gaza campaigns as powerful.<sup>316</sup>

The Israeli army's involvement in Hasbara 2:0 activities was remarkable, as the army set up its own channels, which gained popularity during times of conflict. When Lieutenant Sacha Dratwa became head of the New Media Desk, he pushed the IDF's involvement in the "media war" even further.<sup>317</sup> A native French speaker, he led the Francophone online interventions during the attack on the Mavi Marmara to undermine the Palestinian narrative.<sup>318</sup> However, studies of Israeli digital diplomacy during the conflict found that the Israeli narrative is 'extremely defensive', with Israeli digital diplomacy promoting Israel as the victim of Palestinian terrorism.<sup>319</sup>

During Israel's military operations in Gaza, social media platforms played an important role in countering the Palestinian narrative. For example, during the 2014 war (dubbed Operation Protective Edge), another war was waged through the internet, which was an extension of the military attack.<sup>320</sup> What was remarkable was that, for the first time, Palestinians were able to spread the reality of the war by

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<sup>315</sup> Cynthia Banham, "Legitimizing war in a changing media landscape", **Australian Journal of International Affairs**, 67(5), 2013, p. 615.

<sup>316</sup> Banham, p. 617.

<sup>317</sup> J. Urich, "Meet the Head of the IDF's New Media desk, Israel Defense Forces", **IDF**, 27 June 2011, <http://www.idf.il/1398-12231-en/Dover.aspx> 15 Aug 2022.

<sup>318</sup> D. Allan and C. Brown, "The Mavi Marmara at the Frontlines of Web 2.0", **Journal of Palestine Studies**, 40(1), 2010, pp. 63.

<sup>319</sup> Humaid, pp.5-20.

<sup>320</sup> "Gaza Crisis Appeal", **UNOCHA**, 9 Sep 2014, [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/gaza\\_crisis\\_appeal\\_9\\_september.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/gaza_crisis_appeal_9_september.pdf) 15 April 2023.



broadcasting images of the destruction and killing of innocent people and children during the military operation. These documented scenes and videos had an impact on world public opinion, prompting thousands to protest the devastating Israeli military operation and exposing Israel to international criticism.<sup>321</sup>

For the first time, the Palestinians were winning the war, while pro-Israeli propaganda was losing the war in the minds of the public. Here, the international press could not ignore the flow of information and live coverage that showed images of casualties, including children and women, civilians trapped for days under the rubble of destroyed homes, and scenes of the destruction of schools and hospitals that sheltered them..<sup>322</sup> With Israel's failure to promote its narrative through digital media in recent years, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has stepped up its activity online, investing millions to reshape the image of the occupation and counter Palestinian and international activity in support of its cause.

In 2015, the Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Information took over the management of the Hasbrah industry in the 'Solomon's Sling' project to beautify the image of the occupation globally, but the project failed.<sup>323</sup> However, the Israeli propaganda effort failed again during the fourth Israeli war on Gaza in 2021 (Israel called it the Guardian of the Walls). The effects of the war, which began on 10 May 2021 and ended after 11 days with the killing of 253 Palestinians, the wounding of about 2,000, and the destruction of thousands of Palestinian homes, extended to the digital space, as Israel waged a fierce war in cyberspace to besiege the Palestinian narrative and defenders of their rights globally.<sup>324</sup> However, the Palestinians succeeded in spreading their narrative and gaining unprecedented global support, represented by dozens of marches that took place in major cities around the world to denounce Israeli crimes against the Palestinians.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>321</sup>M. Aouragh "Social media, mediation and the Arab revolutions", In Marx in **the age of digital capitalism**, Brill, 2016, pp. 482-515.

<sup>322</sup> Qaddoura, pp.17938-17950.

<sup>323</sup> Refaella Goichman, "This anti-BDS Initiative Failed. So, Israel Throws Another \$30 Million at It", **Haaretz**, 26 Jan 2022, <https://2u.pw/I0vgGEI> 15 May 2023.

<sup>324</sup> Shalash, "Israeli Digital Diplomacy: A Reading in Propaganda Strategies," pp. 80-88.

<sup>325</sup> Linda shalash, "The Israeli digital diplomacy to polish the image of the occupation in the region", **TRT**, 28January 2021, <https://2u.pw/qKYcux> 12 May 2022.

During the battlefield, dozens of Palestinian, Arab, and foreign activists engaged in open broadcasts on digital platforms to expose the politicians and the crimes of the occupation against civilians, children, and women in Gaza. The result was that Israeli digital diplomacy suffered a setback, as the Palestinian narrative once again outperformed Israeli digital attempts to deny the Palestinian narrative and spread the Israeli narrative and propaganda.<sup>326</sup> Once again, in early 2022, the Israeli cabinet approved the "concert plan"; to revive the "Solomon's Sling" project and covertly spread government propaganda in the United States and Western countries under the leadership of Foreign Minister Yair Lapid.<sup>327</sup>

The project also aimed to recruit influencers and Jewish organizations to speak positively about the occupying state in media channels, social media and conferences at home and abroad, and to change the global discourse about Israel via the internet. Some argue that the concert project is the result of Netanyahu's logic that good public relations can cover up bad policies, i.e., Israel can continue its policies of violence and racism, and enact discriminatory legislation that perpetuates Jewish superiority and Arab inferiority; because a few tweets and posts on Facebook and Instagram will be enough to create a positive feeling about Israel.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> Shalash, "The Israeli digital diplomacy to polish the image of the occupation in the region".

<sup>327</sup> "Israel throws millions into new clandestine hasbara initiative", **Middle East monitor**, 28 Oct 2022, <https://2u.pw/WqKPRs> 15 May 2022.

<sup>328</sup> "A Concert of Shame", **Haaretz**, 26 Jan 2022, <https://2u.pw/2RS6zq> 12 April 2022.

## **Conclusion**

It seems that it is not possible to understand the Israeli media mentality and strategies without understanding the security, national and political objectives of the occupying state and realizing the degree of interdependence and completeness between them. However, since the 'Israel Speaks Arabic' page belongs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and expresses Israel's foreign policy towards the Arabs, it becomes easier to identify the mechanisms used to attract Arab attention in order to serve the occupation's narrative about the conflict with the Palestinians.

In fact, Israeli digital efforts in Arabic are an extension of the legacy of the Zionist movement, which used political propaganda strategies to appease Western public opinion and falsify historical facts in order to establish a national homeland for the Jews in the land of Palestine. However, those in charge of Israeli digital diplomacy believe that flooding various social media sites with tweets and publications that glorify Israel's image and humanize its army will be able to erase the effects of Israel's ugly and racist policies against the Palestinians. In fact, this is an illusion and more like a diplomatic joke, as Israeli researchers and journalists have already described. If the occupation policy continues the ground, it will not be easy to completely deceive the Arab peoples and change their positions towards Israel. The best proof of this are the results of Israeli and Western opinion polls, which show a weak Arab acceptance of normalizing relations with Israel.

## CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

In line with the research questions and the proposed hypotheses, the thesis is designed to examine the strategies and tools used by formal Israeli digital diplomacy in its Arabic-speaking platforms.

This chapter is divided into two parts; the first discusses the research methodology and consists of 7 main headings: (research methodology, research design, data collection tool, population and sample of the thesis, categories of analysis, operational definitions of the categories, and the validity and reliability procedures). The second part contains the data collected from the study site according to the classifications and categories of the content analysis form.

### 4.1. Research Methodology

The thesis follows a quantitative approach, which is based on the use, collection, and analysis of data through mathematical techniques that lead to results expressed as percentages to answer the questions posed.<sup>329</sup> The use of this approach was favored to obtain precise results.<sup>330</sup> This research is also descriptive research that examines current issues through the collection of data that allows a more complete description of the situation.<sup>331</sup>

In order to achieve the aims of the thesis and answer the main questions, the content analysis method was used. Lombard, Snyder-Duch and Bracken (2002) argue that content analysis is particularly suited to the central work of communication scholars.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Glyn Winter, "A comparative discussion of the notion of validity in qualitative and quantitative research", **The qualitative report**, 4.3, 2000, pp. 1-14. See: N. Binita Devi, "Understanding the Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in the Context of Content Analysis, **International Conference organized by International Federation of Library Associations**, 2009, pp. 4-10.

<sup>330</sup> Winter, pp. 1-14.

<sup>331</sup> W. Fox and M. S. Bayat, **A Guide to Managing Research**, Juta and Co., 2008, p. 45.

<sup>332</sup> Matthew Lombard, Snyder-Duch, Jennifer, and Chery Bracken, "Content analysis in mass communication: Assessment and reporting of intercoder reliability", **Human communication research**, 28(4), 2002, pp. 587-604.

Content analysis is a common research method in media studies, communication, psychology, sociology, and popular culture studies that fall under the survey methodology.<sup>333</sup> Content analysis is defined as a “set of methodological steps that seek to discover the meanings of the content through objective, quantitative and organized research”.<sup>334</sup> It is also known as a method for monitoring and quantitatively describing the apparent content of communication, and it must include quantitative dimensions in the field of observation of the research phenomenon.<sup>335</sup> Ole Holsti defines content analysis as “any technique for drawing conclusions by objectively and systematically identifying certain characteristics of messages”.<sup>336</sup> It could be a useful technique to allow researchers to discover and describe the focus of individual, group, institutional or societal attention.

Content analysis is used to analyze the manifest meaning of the content of different documents in an objective, systematic and quantitative way. This method is a descriptive and quantitative one for communication research and is used to describe communicative phenomena.<sup>337</sup> In addition, content analysis is an important technique because it allows researchers to examine messages in terms of their meanings, symbolic qualities, and expressive content in specific contexts. Compared to other forms of quantitative research, content analysis is more concerned with validity and reliability. Researchers use content analysis methodology to study texts, images and expressions that are designed to be seen, read, interpreted, and acted upon for their meanings.<sup>338</sup>

However, the content analysis approach can be influenced by researchers' biases. Therefore, Harold Kassarian (1977) suggests that specific measures should be provided as procedures throughout the research and analysis process. He also

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<sup>333</sup> Winter, pp. 1-14. See: Brief, A. I. “Qualitative and quantitative research techniques for humanitarian needs assessment”, **Phys Rev**, 47, 2012, pp. 777-80.

<sup>334</sup> Abdul Hamid Mohamed, **Press Research**, first edition, Cairo: Dar Alam Al-Kutub, 1997, p.132.

<sup>335</sup> Mazahra, 2014, p. 370.

<sup>336</sup> Ole R. Holsti, “Content analysis for the social sciences and humanities”, **Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley**, 196, p.14.

<sup>337</sup> Bernard Berelson, “Content analysis in communication research”, in P. Marris and S. Thornham (Eds.), **Media studies: A reader**, NY: New York University Press, 2000, pp. 200-209. See: Klaus Krippendorff. “Reliability in content analysis: Some common misconceptions and recommendations”, **Human Communication Research**, 30, 2004, p. 18.

<sup>338</sup> Krippendorff, p. 13.

suggests that the possibility of repeating the analysis process by other researchers is the criterion of reliability.<sup>339</sup>

#### **4.2. The Analysis Form and the Operational Definitions of the Variables**

The researcher prepared a content analysis form as a tool to analyze Israel's goals and strategies in its digital media platforms in Arabic. The form included the categories that would answer the questions of the study, namely Content Analysis Categories and Format Analysis Categories.

First: Content analysis categories (what is being said?): These categories represent a set of classifications prepared by the researcher according to the objective of the analysis. The categories are based on describing the content, classifying it with the highest possible percentage of objectivity and extracting the results in a simple and affordable way.<sup>340</sup> Content analysis categories include (timing of the published articles, dominant themes of the articles, strategies used, tools of persuasion, propaganda method, types of frameworks, strategies of frameworks, language used, words and terms used, tools of proof, sources of information, category of dealing with Palestinian issues, geographical scope, and category of content orientation).

Second: Format analysis categories (How was it said?): These categories include (interactive element, multimedia types, video format category and user engagement category).

The researcher provides clear definitions for all categories of analysis to avoid conflict between them and to achieve accurate results. Defining the categories of analysis in this way is one of the requirements of content analysis methodology to achieve validity and reliability procedures.

Time of contributions: This category aims to examine the extent to which the publication is related to current events and is consistent with the latest

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<sup>339</sup> Harold H. Kassarian, "Content analysis in consumer research", **The Journal of Consumer Research**, 4 (1), 1977, pp. 8-18.

<sup>340</sup> Sameer Hussein, **Media Research**, Cairo: The world of books, 2006, p. 265.

developments, whether it is related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict or other events of interest to the Arab world.

The dominant theme: This variable examines the dominant theme used in the published post. Eight topics were used to determine the type of page topic: Political and coexistence topic, military topic, economic and coexistence topic, social topic, entertainment, tourism, cultural and sports topic, religious topic, scientific/technological/medical topic, and humanitarian topic.

Strategies used to address Arabs: The variable sought to explore the strategies used by Israel's digital diplomacy in addressing Arabs, such as: Religious sympathy strategy, Promotion and marketing strategy, Demonstrating democracy and peaceful dialogue strategy, Human-ethical concerns strategy, and Common interests' strategy.

Persuasion techniques: This variable sought to explore the persuasive tools used by Israel in its approach to the Arabs. It includes the emotional style, the rational method, the simulated religion style, the intimidation style, and the simulated needs and wants style.

Propaganda methods: This variable sought to explore the methods Israel uses to promote itself and improve its image. The proposed propaganda methods include repeating and following the event, shifting attention, embellishing, and using positive terms that attract the audience, substituting nouns and terms with words that have negative connotations in describing something, lying, misrepresenting, and falsifying facts, and using the words and messages of notable people with a certain idea or concept.

Type of frame: This variable tended to monitor the different frameworks used in Israeli digital diplomacy discourse. It includes a general framework and a specific framework.

Framework strategy category: This variable sought to explore the types of strategies used, including strategic framework, human interest framework, economic outcomes framework, responsibility framework, conflict framework and ethical framework.

Evidence tools category: This category explores the quantitative repetition of arguments, proofs and evidence used to prove or disprove the arguments presented, and includes laws, statistics and numbers, facts and events, research, historical events, and points of view.

Language: Based on the pre-reading of the posts, this variable aimed to measure certain terms and words that appeared frequently in the posts to determine the tone and goal of the post, such as peace, normalizations, cooperation, terrorism, etc. It includes informational language, suggestive language, interrogative language, demonstrative/accusatory language, offensive/aggressive language and the language of request, command, and prohibition.

The used terms and words: Israeli digital diplomacy focuses on its Arabic-speaking pages on several terms that are used frequently and carry certain connotations in specific contexts. Among the most

important of these terms that should be remembered before identifying the percentages of recurrence: Terrorism / counterterrorism / terrorist organization, Hamas/Iran/Hezbollah/Terror. Palestinian population - Palestinians (instead of using the term people), Hebrew terms such as: Jerusalem / Judea and Samer / Shabbat Shalom / Mahsom (barrier), etc.

Type of used terms and words: This variable is intended to measure the nature and tone of the post, such as: Objective/neutral terms, biased and directed terms according to the Israeli narrative, terms related to peace/normalization/diplomatic relations with the Arabs, terms related to coexistence, cooperation, and rapprochement with the Arabs, terms about terrorism and terrorist organizations and terms related to normalizing countries.

Type of quotes: This variable explored the quoted texts that the posts used to support an idea or opinion. It includes religious texts, literature, folklore, traditional songs, and screenshots or share posts taken from opinion leaders in the Arab world, sheikhs, and others.

Sources of information: This variable examined the source of the posts, whether the post relied on an Israeli MFA source, an Israeli source, social media, or an Arab source.



Dealing with Palestinians category: This category sought to explore how Israeli diplomacy dealt with the Palestinians, linking them to terrorism, considering them as a source of unrest in the region, reporting bad news and posts about them from Arab websites, or ignoring them.

Category of target area: This variable explores the target area to which the contributions are directed. It includes local, regional, and international sources.

Content orientation/direction category: This variable focuses on the orientation of the posts, whether it is negative or positive.

Types of multimedia: It is the interactive and supportive heritage that helps to highlight the posts and increase interaction with them, such as the use of images, videos, hashtags, infographic maps and cartoons.

The video format category: This category includes TV interview video, recorded video, press release video, promotional video/promo, and live video.

User engagement category: This category sought to measure audience interaction using three variables: The number of comments, the number of likes on a post, and the number of shares of the posts.

These indicators give us a broad assessment of users' interaction with the 'Israel speaks in Arabic' posts during the study period. The number of comments measures how many users interacted in the discussion of the page's posts, while both 'shares' and 'likes' are indicators of the popularity of the page. The number of 'shares' also contributes to a broad understanding of the willingness of users to post the page's messages on their Facebook accounts.

### **4.3. Research Design**

This is a case study research design, taking a specific issue at a specific time as a case study. The researcher analyzed 764 posts from the 'Israel speaks Arabic' Facebook page as a case study to explore the strategies and tools used by Israeli digital diplomacy to engage with Arabs.

#### 4.3.1. Study's Population and Sample

The study population is represented in the Arabic-Israeli pages on the various social networking sites, where Israel has created many Arabic-language pages to reach out to Arab peoples, the most important of which are 'Israel speaks Arabic', the 'Coordinator' page, the 'Avichay Adraee' page, the 'Ofar Gendelman' page, the 'Israel is in the Gulf' Twitter page, 'Israel is in Dubai' and The Times of Israel.

The researcher chose the 'Israel Speaks Arabic' page as a case study for the following reasons:

First, it is one of the largest Arabic-speaking Israeli pages on social networking sites, attracting more than three million followers on Facebook from all Arab countries. Second, it follows events and news around the clock and has a staff that follows events quickly and immediately. Thirdly, the page is a government organization that speaks for the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Fourth: The site discusses issues of Arab affairs in all Arab and regional countries, whether positive or negative, and it allows space for discussion, freedom of dialogue and other opinions.

Israel speaks Arabic page:<sup>341</sup> 'The 'Israel speaks Arabic Facebook page' is an Arabic-language platform of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (IMFA) that has attracted more than three million followers (so far), with extensive interaction among Arabs through comments, likes and shares. The page also has a Twitter account with some 427,500 followers. The Israel Speaks Arabic Facebook page was launched in January 2011 with the aim of communicating with Israel's neighbors, according to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The page contains a variety of messages that show Arab followers Israel's values, culture, and modernity. The page presents Israel's foreign policy towards the Arabs.

The thesis analyses two samples of (764) Facebook posts published on the study page. The first sample includes a general study of the page (including information about the number of followers) over a period of six months, from the beginning of May to the end of October 2021. This sample was chosen because it witnessed many important events at the level of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Arab-Israeli

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<sup>341</sup> Israel speaks Arabic Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/IsraelArabic/about/>

relations, such as the events in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem and the Israeli attempts to evict many Palestinian families from the neighborhood in favor of the settlers, a major Israeli attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque during the month of Ramadan, the subsequent Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip,<sup>342</sup> the first anniversary of the signing of peace agreements with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, and the conclusion of economic agreements with a number of Arab governments. The second sample of the analysis includes 120 posts published on the study page during the fifth Israeli war (11-23 May 2021) and the sixth war (9-13 May 2023) over Gaza.

The researcher argues that the two samples are sufficient and could serve as an important case study to explore the strategies of Israeli digital diplomacy towards Arabs on social media. The selected time periods are also expected to provide a general overview of the engagement of the Arab audience and their reactions to the presented posts and messages. The samples include the analysis of 764 posts (n=764), which were manually collected by date.

#### **4.3.2. Data Collection Instrument**

The thesis used the content analysis coding scheme (checklist) as a tool to analyze the data according to the categories designed by the researcher. It is the best way in content analysis to make a checklist that includes the questions that the researcher is interested in and then to answer these questions from the published posts. A technique that allows a researcher to quantify data in a form that is suitable for quantitative analysis. This technique is often used when verbal data needs to be analysed.<sup>343</sup>

The coding scheme includes variables based on theory and a general pre-examination of the site, which indicated that common themes would be expected to appear frequently in 'Israel Speaks in Arabic' publications: Promoting peace, Israeli culture, and technology, promoting normalization and coexistence among the population, Incitement against Palestinians, Humanizing the state and its army. The

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<sup>342</sup> Izzeddin Khaled ALRANTISI, et al, pp.736-753.

<sup>343</sup> Richard E. Ferdig, ed, **Handbook of research on effective electronic gaming in education**, IGI global, 2008, pp. 2-16.

scheme was designed to examine several variables: The dominant themes published on the site, the general objectives of the posts, the targeted area, the types of quotes, the types of multimedia, the media sources, the use of certain words, the types of frameworks and strategies, the engagement of users, and others. In order to achieve the objectives of the study and to explore the Israeli strategies and tools in addressing Arabs, 764 posts were followed and analyzed during the study period.

#### **4.3.3. Validity and Reliability Procedures**

Reliability is related to the procedures used in the analysis, such as the selection of the sample, the establishment of the categories and their clear and precise definition, as well as the degree of stability in the analysis.<sup>344</sup>

To achieve validity, the researcher designed a content analysis form and defined its categories accurately and clearly to ensure that there was no overlap between them. Then, a preliminary test of the content analysis form was conducted on some publications on the study site to ensure its accuracy and validity. The content analysis form was then submitted to several media and digital diplomacy experts, where the researcher benefited from their observations and made modifications to the form in line with the study's objectives and questions.<sup>345</sup>

As mentioned above, reliability is one of the distinguishing features of content analysis methodology compared to other communication techniques. Reliability means the degree of replicability that aims to obtain the same results through repeated measurement procedures.<sup>346</sup> In the case of content analysis, reliability is the degree of agreement between coders' findings. Intercoder reliability is defined

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<sup>344</sup> Roger D. Wimmer and Joseph R. Dominick, **Mass media research**, Cengage learning, 2013, p.154.

<sup>345</sup> \* In October 2021, the researcher sent the content analysis form to four professors specializing in media studies and digital diplomacy for evaluation. After a while, the researcher received some comments from the residents and modified the form based on their observations. Evaluation committee:

Prof. Khaled AL-Hroub, professor of Middle Eastern Studies and Arab Media Studies, Northwestern University/Qatar.

Dr. Nawaf Al-Tamimi, Assistant Professor/Journalism Program at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies.

Dr. Omar Abu Arqoub, a Professor and Supervisor of Graduate Studies in Media at the American University/Palestine.

Dr. Hanadi Dwaikat, a Professor and Supervisor of Graduate Studies in Mass Communication at the American University of Palestine.

<sup>346</sup> Kimberly A. Nueuendorf, "The content analysis guidebook", **Sage**, 2007, pp.33-36.

as the extent to which independent coders assess a characteristic of a message or artefact and reach the same conclusion.<sup>347</sup>

Intercoder reliability is considered the "standard measure of research quality".<sup>348</sup> In other words, it aims to ensure a high degree of consistency of the information, which makes it possible to measure the phenomena we are studying with a high degree of accuracy and to obtain similar results when it is used more than once to collect the same information or to measure phenomena or variables, whether by the same researcher or by different researchers at different times and in different circumstances.<sup>349</sup> To establish inter-coder reliability, two human coders independently coded the items. The coders were provided with instructions and trained for one week to understand the whole process and the topic. The coding training focused mainly on content-related variables, coding procedures and precise rules to ensure coding reliability and reduce coders' personal biases. However, the researcher re-analyzed the content for a sub-sample of the original sample, consisting of 30 days (month) of the study site, at a rate of 10% of the original sample.<sup>350</sup>

#### **4.4. Collecting Data From the 'Israel Speaks Arabic Facebook' Page**

This part contains the collected data from the study sample to explore the tools and strategies that Israel employs in its digital media platforms to attract Arabs and communicate with them. This process was applied to (764) publications of the 'Israel Speaks Arabic' page. The analysis includes two sections: Analyzing the features of the content of 'Israel Speaks Arabic' page and the analysis of the format of the page.

Below, the researcher reviews the results of the analysis of the first sample of 644 publications of the study page.

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<sup>347</sup> Hussein, pp. 310-309.

<sup>348</sup> Hussein, pp. 310-309.

<sup>349</sup> Hussein, pp. 310-309.

<sup>350</sup> The data for May 2021 has been re-examined by the researcher.

#### 4.4.1. The Results of the Contents' Features of 'Israel Speaks Arabic' Page

This part analyzes the content of the study page, by focusing on many issues, such as: Analyzing the used strategies and tools, the language discourse, the most used terms and words, types of quotes, the used propaganda methods and tactics, the most dominant topics, the sources of information, the way of dealing with the Palestinian cause, the geographical scope, content direction and the applied frameworks.

**Table 1**  
**Posts Linkage to Events on the 'Israel Speaks Arabic' Facebook Page**

Posts linkage to events	Israel speaks Arabic page on Facebook	
	Frequency	Percentage
Instant publications	420	65.2
Non-spontaneous publications	129	20
Both	95	14.8
Total	644	100

According to the results of the analysis, the instant publications ranked first with a percent of 65.2, followed by non-spontaneous publications with a percent of 20, and finally both came together with 14.8 percent. This means that the Israeli digital diplomacy relies mainly on broadcasting news and events in their real time as they occur, to attract the Arab followers to the page's publications. This is commensurate with the nature of digital media, which relies on speed in reporting events, regardless of their accuracy or credibility.

**Table 2**  
**The Most Dominant Themes and Topics on the Study Page**

Topics of the posts	Israel speaks Arabic page on Facebook	
	Frequency	Percentage
Politics and coexistence	250	38.8
Tourism, culture, sport	86	13.4
Humanitarian issues	75	11.6
Religious topics	71	11
Social topics	66	10.2
Scientific, technological, and medical topics	50	7.8
Economic and coexistence	19	3
Military	17	2.6
Others	10	1.6
Total	644	100

Table (2) shows that political and coexistence issues ranked first with a percentage of 38.8, followed by entertainment, tourism, cultural and sports issues with a percentage of 13.4. Humanitarian issues ranked third with a percentage of 11.6, religious issues ranked fourth with a rate of 11, social issues ranked fifth with a rate of 10.2 percent, scientific, technological, and medical issues ranked sixth with a rate of 7.8 percent. However, the economic issues and coexistence ranked seventh with a percentage of 3. Military came in eighth place with a percentage of 2.6, and other cases ranked last with a percentage of 1.6.

The researcher believes that the result is logical since the political issues outweigh others during the study period, due to the occurrence of many political events regarding the Palestinian- Israeli conflict, including the events of Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem, the Israeli war over the Gaza Strip and celebrating the first year of the Israeli normalization with some Arab governments.

**Table 3**  
**The Used Strategies in Addressing the Arabs**

Used strategies	Israel speaks Arabic	
	Frequency	Percentage
Closeness strategy	311	29.1
Promoting strategy	226	21.2
Humanitarian and religious strategy	153	14.3
Warning, incitement, and accusation	145	13.6
Exaggeration strategy	110	10.3
Highlighting the commonalities with the Arabs	71	6.6
Lying and falsifying	52	4.9
Total	1068*	100

According to the results of table (3), the closeness strategy ranked first with a rate of 29.1 percent, followed by the promotion strategy with a rate of 1.2 percent. The strategy of humanitarian and religious sympathy ranked third with a rate of 14.3 percent, while the strategy of warning, incitement, and accusation, ranked fourth with a rate of 13.6 percent. However, the exaggeration strategy ranked fifth with a rate of 10.3 percent, and the strategy of highlighting commonalities with the Arabs

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\* The number of used strategies exceeds the number of publications, because one publication contains more than one strategy on the study page, so it should be noted.

ranked sixth with a rate of 6.6 percent, where the strategy of lying ranked last with a rate of 4.9 percent.

**Table 4**  
**The Used Persuasion Tactics on the Study Page**

Persuasion tools	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
A style that simulates needs and desires	408	60.8
Emotional style	135	20.1
A style that simulates religion	81	12.1
Rational style	33	4.9
Intimidation style	14	2.1
Total	671*	100

‘Simulating the needs and desires’ strategy ranked first with a rate of 60.8 percent, followed by the ‘emotional strategy’ with a rate of 20.1 percent. The ‘strategy of simulating religious feelings’ ranked third with a rate of 12.1 percent, where the ‘rational strategy; ranked fourth with a rate of 4.9 percent, and the ‘method of intimidation’ ranked last with a rate of 2.1 percent.

**Table 5**  
**The Directions of the Study Page’s Posts**

content direction	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	510	79.2
Negative	134	20.8
Total	644	100

The positive direction ranked first followed by the negative direction.

**Table 6**  
**The Used Propaganda Methods**

Propaganda methods	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Repetition	368	39.4
Notable Persons	163	17.4
Beautifying method	145	15.5
Attention shifting	111	11.9
Substitution of nouns and terms	79	8.5
Lying and misrepresentation	68	7.3
Total	934*	100

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\* The number of emotional persuasion styles exceeds the number of publications, because one publication contains more than one strategy on the study page, so it should be noted.  
\* It should be noted that the number of advertising methods exceeds the number of publications, because one post contains more than one advertising method on the study page.



The ‘repetition and stalking’ method ranked first with a percentage of (39.4%), ‘prominent personalities’ ranked second with a percentage of (17.4%), ‘Beautifying method’ ranked third with a percentage of (15.5%), ‘Attention shifting method’ ranked fourth with a percentage of (11.9 %), ‘substituting names and terms’ ranked fifth with a percentage of (8.5%), where ‘lying, deception and falsification of facts’ method ranked last with a percentage of (7.3%).

**Table 7**  
**Types of Used Frameworks**

Framework type	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
A general framework	348	54
A case specific framework	296	46
Total	644	100

The general framework ranked first with a percentage of (54%), followed in the second position by the specified framework with a percentage of (46%).

**Table 8**  
**The Framework Strategy**

Framework strategy	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Strategic framework	215	30.2
Conflict framework	130	18.3
Economic result framework	107	15
Framework of Responsibility	103	14.5
Ethical framework	94	13.2
Humanitarian interest’s framework	63	8.8
Total	712*	100

According to the results of the previous table, it appears that the ‘strategic framework’ ranked first with a rate of 30.2.7 percent, followed by the ‘conflict framework’ with a rate of 18.3 percent, and the ‘economic results framework’ ranked third with a rate of 15 percent. The ‘responsibility framework’ ranked fourth with a rate of 14.5 percent, the ‘ethical framework’ ranked fifth with a rate of 13.2 percent, the ‘humanitarian concerns framework’ ranked sixth with a rate of 8.8 percent.

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\* The framework strategies came up with a greater number of publications, because the post contains more than one framework strategy on the study page.

**Table 9**  
**The Used Proof Means on the Study Page:**

Proof means	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Facts and Events	314	37.6
Points of view	272	32.6
Numbers and stats	132	15.8
Historical events	93	11.2
Research	19	2.3
Other	4	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>834*</b>	<b>100</b>

The ‘Facts and events’ tool ranked first with a percentage of 37.6, followed by ‘representing points of views’ in the second rank with a percentage of 32.6. However, ‘statistics and figures’ ranked third with a percentage of 15.8, ‘historical events’ ranked fourth with a percentage of 11.2, ‘research tool’ ranked fifth with a percentage of 2.3, and finally ‘others’ ranked last with a percentage of 0.5.

**Table 10**  
**The Used Media Discourse on the Study Page**

Discourse language	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Suggestive	284	44.1
Informative	190	29.5
offensive/provocative	95	14.8
Interrogative	40	6.2
denunciation / accusatory	25	3.9
Request, order	10	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>644</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the findings above, the ‘suggestive language’ topped the used discourse on the ‘Israel speaks Arabic’ Facebook page with a percentage of 44.1, followed by the ‘news language’ with a percentage of 29.5. The ‘offensive language’ ranked third with a percentage of 14.8, the ‘interrogative language’ ranked fourth with a percentage of 6.2, the ‘accusatory language’ ranked fifth with a percentage of 3.9, where the language of ‘request, forbidding, or ordering’ ranked last with a percentage of 1.5.

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\* The proof tools came up with a greater number of publications, because the publication contains more than one proof path on the study page.

**Table 11**  
**The Geographical Scope of the Publications**

Geographical Scope	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Local	459	71.3
Reginal	158	24.5
International	27	4.2
Total	644	100

According to the finding of table (11), the ‘local scope’ topped the results with a percentage of 71.3, followed by the ‘regional domain’ with a percentage of 24.5, while the ‘international domain’ ranked last with a rate of 4.2 percent.

**Table 12**  
**The Most Prominent Terms on the Study Page**

The used terms and words	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Brotherhood, peace, normalization, coexistence, Abraham accords, Arabs	778	47.4
Hebrew terms, Israel’s state, defense forces	589	35.9
Hamas, Iran, Hezbollah, terror	213	13
Others	60	3.7
Total	1640*	100

The table (12) shows that the terms related to ‘brotherhood, rapprochement, peace and normalization’ ranked first with a rate of 47.4. ‘Hebrew terms’ ranked second with a percentage of 35.9, and ‘Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran and terrorism’ ranked third with a rate of 13 percent. While ‘other terms’ ranked last with a rate of 3.7 percent.

**Table 13**  
**The Used Quotes on the ‘Israel Speaks Arabic’ Facebook Page**

Used quotes	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Without quotes	464	72
Screen shots	110	17.1
Religious	43	6.7
Tradition	17	2.6
Literature	10	1.6
Total	644	100

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\* The terms and words outweighed the number of publications number of publications, because the one publication contains more than one term and word on the study sample.

The results of table (13) showed that ‘posts without citations’ ranked first with a percentage of 72, followed by the ‘posts that contain screenshots with a percentage of 17.1, and ‘religious citation’ ranked third with a rate of 6.7 percent, where ‘folklore and heritage songs’ ranked fourth with a rate of 2.6 percent, and finally ‘literary citation’ ranked last with a rate of 1.6 percent.

**Table 14**  
**The Information Sources of the ‘Israel Speaks Arabic’ Page**

Media sources	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Unofficial Israeli sources	257	39.9
Social media sources	199	30.9
Official Israeli sources	85	13.2
Without source	68	10.6
Arab media sources	31	4.8
Palestinian sources	4	0.6
International media sources	0	0
Total	644	100

The results showed that the ‘unofficial Israeli sources’ ranked first with a percentage of 39.9, ‘social media sources’ ranked second with a percentage of 30.9, ‘official Israeli sources’ ranked third with a percentage of 13.2, ‘without source’ ranked fourth with a rate of 10.6 percent, ‘the Arab media sources’ ranked fifth with a percentage of 4.8, where the ‘Palestinian sources’ ranked last with a percentage of 0.6. The ‘international media sources’ did not receive any significant percentage.

**Table 15**  
**The Way of Addressing Palestinians and Their Cause**

Talking about the Palestinians	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Posts not related to the Palestinians	312	48.4
Ignoring them	202	31.4
Linking them to terrorism	86	13.4
They are a source of unrest in the region	29	4.5
Offensive posts about them	15	2.3
Total	644	100

According to the results of table (15), ‘Posts not related to the Palestinians’ ranked first with a percentage of 48.4, followed by ‘neglecting and not talking about Palestine’ with a percentage of 31.4. This means that 79.8% of the posts are

deliberately marginalize the Palestinian cause, even though the study period is full of events related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Such a result is evidence that the Israeli digital diplomacy directed at the Arabs is deliberately marginalizing the Palestinian issue and eliminating it from the Arab consciousness.

However, ‘linking the Palestinian resistance to terrorism’ ranked third with a rate of 13.4 percent, and ‘the Palestinians are a source of unrest’ ranked fourth with a rate of 4.5 percent, where ‘offensive posts about Palestine’ ranked last with a rate of 2.3 percent.

If we combined the results of the last 3 mechanisms, we would find that more than 20 percentage of the publications mention the Palestinians in a negative way, which is a relatively high percentage.

#### **4.4.2. Collected data on the content format of the 'Israel speaks Arabic' page:**

This section analyzes the features of the format of digital content published on the study page, to identify the strategies and tools used by Israeli diplomacy. It includes three main categories: The elements of support and interaction, the format of the used videos, and audience interaction with publications including ‘the number of likes, comments, and shares.

**Table 16**  
**The Elements of Support and Interaction on the Study Page**

Elements of support and interaction	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Text with image	440	68.3
Text with video	121	18.8
Drawings, maps, and infographics	41	6.4
Cartoons	32	5
Text without pictures	10	1.5
Links	0	0
Total	644	100

The ‘text with image’ ranked first with a percentage of 68.3, followed by ‘text with video’ category with a percentage of 18.8%, while ‘graphics, maps, and infographics’ category ranked third with a rate of 6.4 percent, the ‘caricatures’ ranked fourth and the ‘text without images’ item ranked last with a rate of 1.5 and the ‘electronic link’ did not receive any significant percentage.

**Table 17**  
**The Format of Used Videos**

The format of used videos	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Recorded video	82	67.8
TV interview	14	11.5
Promotional video or promo	10	8.3
Educational video	10	8.3
Live broadcasting	3	2.5
Press statement	2	1.6
Total	121	100

According to the above findings, the ‘recording video’ topped the video formats used by the Israeli digital diplomacy with a percentage of 67.8%, and ‘the television interview’ ranked second with a rate of 11.5 percent. However, the ‘promotional video or promo, and educational video’ were equal with a rate of 8.3 percent, and the ‘live broadcast’ ranked fourth with a rate of 2.5 percent, while ‘the press release’ ranked last with a rate of 1.6 percent.

**Table 18**  
**Publics Interactions with the Study Page’s Post: Number of Likes**

Number of likes	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
More than 5000	316	49.1
2999-1001	156	24.2
5000-3000	149	23.1
Less than 1000	23	3.6
Total	644	100

According to the results above, ‘more than 5000 likes’ ranked first with a percentage of 49.1, and ‘from 1001-2999 likes’ ranked second with a percentage of 24.2. Where ‘from 3000-5000 likes’ ranked third with a percentage of 23.1%, and ‘less than 1000 likes’ ranked last with a percentage of 3.6.

**Table 19**  
**Shares’ Number of the Page’s Publications**

Shares numbers	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 100	301	46.7
100-499	297	46.1
More than 500	46	7.2
Total	644	100

The results show that "less than 100 shares" ranked first with a percentage of 46.7, followed by "from 101-499 shares" with a percentage of 46.1, and "more than 500 shares" ranked last with a percentage of 7.2.

**Table 20**  
**Number of Comments on the Study Page**

Number of comments	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
1000-4999	356	55.3
5000-10000	143	22.2
100-999	132	20.5
More than 10000	13	2
Total	644	100

According to the results above, ‘from (1000-4999) comments’ ranked first with a percentage of 55.3, followed by ‘from 5000-10000 comments’ in the second place with a percentage of 22.2, and ‘from 100-999’ ranked third with a percentage 20.5, where ‘more than 10,000 comments’ ranked last with a percentage of 2.

#### **4.4.3. The Collected Date During Times of Conflicts**

To obtain more accurate results regarding the strategies and tools that the Israeli digital diplomacy employs in addressing the Arabs, the researcher collected the data of 120 posts published by the study page during the last two wars on the Gaza Strip (the fifth and sixth in May 2021 and 2023, respectively), and analyzed them according to 7 units of analysis, which the researcher believes that they ate the most suitable categories to reach the desired results.

**Table 21**  
**The Digital Enhancers During Conflict Time**

The Digital enhancers	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Text with image	50	42
Infographics, drawings, and cartoon	40	33
Text with video	25	21
Links and Hashtag	5	4
Total	120	100

‘Text with image’ ranked first with a rate of 42 percent (50 posts). The study page relied remarkably on the images; given the importance of the mechanism in supporting the published news material, as well as influencing the masses and pushing them to interact with the published information.

‘Cartoon and infographics’ ranked second with a rate of 33 percent. The researcher noticed that the page relied on this technique, especially during the sixth war over Gaza, where the cartoon was used extensively, especially to ridicule the Palestinian resistance movements, and accuse them of disturbing the lives of people in Gaza. (Fig: 1).

However, the ‘text with video’ tactic ranked third with a rate of 21 percent (25 posts). While ‘publications that contain links or hashtags’ ranked last with a rate of 4 percent. Supporting digital publications with interactive elements primarily aims to grab the attention of followers and attract them to read and interact with those publications.



**Figure 1.** A satirical cartoon of the Islamic Jihad movement in Gaza, accusing it of harming the lives of Palestinian and Israeli civilians alike, in service of Iran.

**Source:** “Israel speaks Arabic”, Facebook, 9 May 2023.



**Table 22**  
**The Used Media Frameworks**

The Used Media Frameworks	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Conflict and responsibility framework	80	55.2
Humanitarian framework	40	27.6
Ethical Framework	15	10.4
Strategic Framework	5	3.4
Economic result Framework	5	3.4
Total	145	100

The ‘Conflict and Responsibility Framework’ ranked first with a percentage of 55.2. The results revealed that the Israeli digital diplomacy during periods of conflict and wars relies mainly on framing the publications in terms of conflict and responsibility, especially by accusing the Palestinian resistance of terrorism and responsibility for causing the military wars on Gaza, thus endangering the Palestinian and Israeli civilians alike. (Fig:2).



**Figure 2.** Post by “Israel speaks Arabic” utilizing Responsibility framework. The post is holding the Islamic Jihad the responsibility for firing rockets at Israeli cities and endangering the lives of civilians.

**Source:** “Israel speaks Arabic”, Facebook, 13 May 2021

The results also indicate interest in framing the publications with a humanitarian framework that shows Israel and its army well in front of public opinion, in exchange for demonizing the other (Palestinian). In this regard, 40 posts were framed in a humanitarian way.

The ‘Ethical Framework’ ranked third with a rate of 10.4 percent (15 posts). The ‘Strategic framework’ and the ‘Economic result framework’ ranked last with 3.4 percent (5 posts) for each.

**Table 23**  
**Proof Methods During Conflict Time**

Framing Tools and proof methods	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Events	70	58
Statistics and figures	30	25
Point of views	10	8
Historical events	8	7
Others	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the results above, the Israeli digital diplomacy depends mainly on showing events to convince followers of what is being posted on the page. Here, ‘Using evidence’, ranked first with a rate of 58 percent. The researcher noticed that the ‘Israel speaks Arabic’ page was very interested in showing evidence of what is happening on the ground during the war over Gaza, such as focusing on the effects of the Islamic Al jihad movement missiles on Israeli towns.

However, the ‘Statistics and figures’ tactic ranked second with a rate of 25 percent, where ‘views’ ranked third with a rate of 8 percent (10 posts).

‘Historical events’ ranked fourth with a rate of 7 percent, and ‘Other frameworks’ ranked last with a percent of 2.

**Table 24**  
**Propaganda Tactics in Conflict Time**

Propaganda tactics	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Lying and falsification of facts	50	42
Repetition	40	33
Shifting attention	15	12
Eminent personalities	8	7
Substituting names	7	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

The results showed that the Israeli digital efforts during wars depend mainly on strategies of lying and falsifying facts to support the Israeli military, security, and political narrative in return for marginalizing the Palestinian narratives. In this regard, the tactic of ‘lying and falsification of facts’ ranked first with a percent of 42. In the second place came the tactic of ‘repetition’ with a rate of 33 percent. Where the ‘attention shifting method’ ranked third with a percent of 12 and the tactic of ‘employing eminent personalities’ ranked fourth with a rate of 7 percent where the tactic of ‘Substituting names’ ranked last with a rate of 6 percent.

**Table 25**  
**The Used Language During Conflict Times**

The used language	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Offensive language	80	53.3
Suggestive language	40	26.7
News language	20	13.3
Interrogative language	10	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

The results of the analytical study showed that the ‘offensive, inflammatory and accusatory language’ ranked first with a percent of 53.3 (80 posts). During the collecting and analyzing the study sample, the researcher noticed that a high percentage of the Israeli publications discourse based on attacking the Palestinians and their resistance in the first place, while humanizing the occupation and portraying it as peaceful and a victim of Palestinian terrorism. (See fig: 3).



**Figure 3.** A post that employs an offensive and accusatory language by accusing the resistance movements in Gaza and describing them as terrorist organizations that take children as human shields during the war instead of giving them the opportunity to learn and develop.

**Source:** “Israel speaks Arabic”, Facebook, 12 May 2023.

The ‘suggestive discourse language’ ranked second with a rate of 26.7 percent. The ‘news language’ came in third place with a rate of 13.3 percent (20). This language was adopted in presenting news related to the activities of the Israeli government, Arab-Israeli normalization meetings and official diplomatic visits. The ‘interrogative language’ ranked last with a rate of 6.7 percent.

**Table 26**  
**The Most Prominent Terms**

The Most Prominent Terms	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Hamas, Islamic Jihad, terrorism, terrorist	100	62
Iran, Hezbollah, and terrorism	40	25
Peace, pluralism, coexistence	20	13
Total	160	100

According to the results of the table above, 89.8 of the most prominent terms during the war are related to the Palestinian resistance movements and linking them to Hezbollah, Iran, and terrorism, and framing of the Palestinian resistance in a way that offends it in the Arab conscience. However, terms related to ‘coexistence and peace’ ranked last, with a rate of 10.2 percent. This means that Israeli digital diplomacy tends to use soft power to appeal to Arabs by appealing to them emotionally and portraying Israel as a country that loves Arabs and wants peace and communication with them.

**Table 27**  
**Dealing with the Palestinians and Their Cause**

Talking about the Palestinian and their resistance	Israel speaks Arabic page	
	Frequency	Percentage
Linking the Palestinian resistance to terrorism, Iran, and Hezbollah	100	83%
The Palestinian resistance endangers the Palestinians	15	13%
Ignoring the civilians	5	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

The results of the analysis showed that most of the Israeli publications during the war period focused on attacking the Palestinian resistance and deliberately linking it to Iran and Hezbollah, presenting them all as a major cause of violence and political turmoil in the Middle East, where 83 percent of the publications focused on these issues. In addition, 13 percent of the articles focused on accusing the Palestinian resistance of endangering the lives of Gaza residents, meaning that 96 per cent of the articles had negative intentions towards the resistance movements.

## **CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

This chapter discusses the results of the analytical study of the strategies and tools used by Israeli digital diplomacy on the 'Israel speaks Arabic' Facebook page to improve Israel's image among Arabs. The chapter is divided into two main sections: The first analyses the 'content' of the study page, while the second analyses the 'form' of the published posts.

The researcher collected the data for the study over a period of three months, with two human coders independently involved in the data collection process to achieve more accurate and credible results. The analysis revealed that Israeli digital diplomacy uses many propaganda strategies and tools to address the Arab masses through the study site, with the aim of improving Israel's image in the Arab world using the Arabic language. In addition, the results showed that the page uses soft power tools as a basic strategy to attract Arab supporters by promoting a good image of Israel.

### **5.1. Analyzing the Content of the 'Israel Speaks Arabic' Page on Facebook**

This section discusses the results of analyzing the content of the study page in order to understand the strategies and tools used by Israeli diplomacy to improve Israel's image among Arabs. This section includes the analysis of several categories, which are: (relevance of the publication to current events, topics of the publications, strategies used, elements of grooming, propaganda methods, types of frames and strategies, methods of proof, language of discourse of the content, the most prominent terms and words, types of quotations, sources of information, the way of dealing with the Palestinian issue, the geographical scope and the direction of the content).

#### **1. Analyzing the Publication's Connection to the Event on the Study Page:**

The analytical study showed that 'instantaneous simultaneous publication' ranked first with a rate of 65.2 per cent. The high percentage reflects the interest of the 'Israel Speaks Arabic' page in keeping up with events and updates, especially those involving Israel, to confirm its presence on social networks, support its narrative and

attract Arab attention. The researcher argues that the immediacy of the transmission of events corresponds to the nature of social networks, which are characterized by global interaction between the communicator and the audience, the immediacy of action and reaction, and the participation of more than one person in transmitting and commenting on news.<sup>351</sup>

However, 'non-simultaneous publications' ranked second with a share of 20 per cent. This was demonstrated by the focus on topics related to tourism, technology, and culture. The researcher attributes the use of non-simultaneous posts to the aim of repetition to consolidate ideas and information in the mind of the follower. Combined posts (simultaneous and non-simultaneous posts) came last with a rate of 14.8%.

## **2. Analyzing the Dominant Topics of the Study Page:**

According to the results, 'political issues' came first with a share of 38.8 per cent. This was observed by focusing on issues related to Israeli political affairs, mainly normalization, peace, confronting the parties and factions of the Palestinian resistance and Islamic groups, and issues related to Arab and international political diplomacy. This result is in line with the assumptions of the Agenda Setting Theory, which states that the communicator cannot present all the issues and problems that occur in a society, but rather chooses some of the issues that serve his goals. Therefore, the study site focused on the issues that achieve Israel's political goals in the region.

The second most popular topic was 'tourism, culture and sport', with a share of 13.4 per cent. This was demonstrated by the promotion of tourist sites in Israel that the site felt were worth visiting, such as the city of Tel Aviv, the political capital of Israel. In this regard, the researcher suggests that the main goal of promoting Israel in terms of tourism, culture and sport is to emphasize its uniqueness as a natural (not occupying) country in the Middle East. For example, on 12 June 2021, the page study published an image of a young man carrying the Egyptian flag at an Israeli

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<sup>351</sup> Abdul Karim Tafraqnet, "Social networking sites, pros, and cons: a descriptive study that monitors the most important features in the Arab countries", *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, No. 11, 2015, pp. 129-130.

airport, accompanied by the caption: 'Welcome to Israel, tourists from all over the world visit Israel after its victory over the Corona virus'. (Fig.4)



**Figure 4.** A Publication on promoting tourism in Israel.

**Source:** "Israel speaks Arabic", Facebook, 12 June 2021.

'Humanitarian issues' ranked third with a share of 11.6 per cent. This percentage reflects the interest of the study page in publishing what claims the humanity of the occupying state and its army, misleading the reality of the occupation and its punitive measures against the Palestinians. Our result differs in rank from the results of Muhammad Kharabsheh's study (analyzing the official page of the Israeli army spokesman on Facebook), which showed that 'humanitarian issues' came in eighth place, with a rate of 3.8 per cent. For example, while the media was reporting on the effects of the Israeli war on Gaza and the killing of many civilians and children by Israeli military air strikes, the study page published a humanitarian post showing the Israeli embassy in Turkey providing food and aid to the needy, with the caption: 'Without human values, humanity would have drowned in darkness. The Israeli Embassy takes the initiative to provide food aid to orphans and the needy'. (Fig. 5).





**Figure 5.** A post showing humanity of the Israeli occupation

**Source:** “Israel speaks Arabic”, Facebook, 24 May 2021.

The researcher noted that the study page focused on showing the humanitarian aspects of the State of Israel and its army in May, while avoiding talking about Israeli crimes against humanity in the same month, when Israel launched its fourth war on Gaza in the last 15 years.

The ‘Religious issues’ ranked fourth, with a rate of 11 percent. The study page was keen to publish religious publications by employing Quranic verses and hadiths to influence Arab followers and push them to interact with the page’s publications. This result agrees, in terms of rank, with the findings of Safa’ Saeed’s study (2020), in which the ‘Religious topics’ ranked fourth, with a rate of 3.3 percent.<sup>352</sup> However, our result differs with Mustafa Alwan’s study (2020) finding, in which the ‘Religious issues’ ranked second with a rate of 17.9 percent.<sup>353</sup>

The ‘Social issues’ ranked fifth, with a rate of (10.2%). Interest in social issues was noted by focusing on publications that call for the Israeli coexistence with the Arabs and reviewing images that bring together Israelis with Arabs. The researcher noticed

<sup>352</sup> Saeed, p. 17.

<sup>353</sup> Alwan, p. 824.

linking social topics with terms about ‘brotherhood, family, and loved ones’, as well as interacting with Arabs during their religious and social occasions. This result differs in rank with Mustafa’s study (2021): ‘Social issues ranked second with a rate of 23.7 percent; and Saeed’s study where ‘Most of the published posts on the ‘Israeli coordinator page’ were of a social nature, at a rate of 43.8 percent.’<sup>354</sup>

The ‘Scientific, technological, and medical issues’ ranked sixth with a rate of 7.8 percent. This was demonstrated through publishing posts that show Israel’s innovations in fields of industry, medicine, and technology. This result is consistent with the findings of Kiush and Muhammad’s study (2021), which found that ‘the study page used a strategy based on the Israeli civilizational, scientific, and technological superiority and focusing on the cultural and historical ties between the Israelis and the Iraqis’.<sup>355</sup>

The ‘Economic issues’ ranked seventh, with a rate of 3 percent. The researcher argues that the low percentage is due to the Israeli digital diplomacy’s focus on issues related to peace and political normalization as the gateway to concluding economic agreements with the countries of normalization. This result differs in rank (respectively) with Mustafa’s study (2021) and Saeed’s study (2020), where the topics of trade and economics ranked fifteenth with a rate of 0.5 percent, and in the second place with a rate of 16.6 percent.<sup>356</sup>

The ‘Military issues’ ranked eighth with a rate of 2.6 percent, which is a very weak percentage. This means that Israel tends to talk about the occupying state as a peaceful state. Although the study period coincided with the war on Gaza, but no reference was made to the military force used against the Palestinian civilians. Instead, the page focused on showing Israel’s military development. In sum, the Israeli media discourse in Arabic relies on employing the soft power of ‘propaganda and media’ and highlighting the human, moral and social values of the Israeli army. This finding differs in rank with the findings of Saied Abu Mualla’s study (2017),<sup>357</sup> which found that the ‘Military and security issues topped at a rate of 32 percent.

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<sup>354</sup> Kiush and Muhammad, pp. 87-110.

<sup>355</sup> Kiush and Muhammad, pp. 87-110.

<sup>356</sup> Mustafa, Heba, pp. 10-200.

<sup>357</sup> Abu Mualla, pp.52-75

This can be interpreted as that in that year there was no normalization with the Arabs, as is the case with our study period. For example, on May 16, 2021, the 'Israel speaks Arabic' page published a post reviewing the force of the Israeli Iron Dome on the Gaza border, and its role in intercepting the rockets fired by the Palestinian resistance at Israel. (fig. 6)



**Figure 6.** A publication on military strength.

**Source:** "Israel speaks Arabic", Facebook, 16 May 2021.

The 'other issues' ranked last at a rate of 1.6 percent. Here we mean health and educational issues related to local affairs in Israel.

From the foregoing, the researcher noticed that the 'Israel speaks Arabic' page varied in dealing with issues. However, diversity in presenting topics is important to reach the largest segment of the Arab publics which is the main goal of the study page, which was created by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2010.

#### **4. Analyzing the Grooming Elements that Israel Uses in Addressing Arabs:**

The 'simulating needs and wants' method was the most common of the grooming elements used on the study site, with a high rate of 60.9 per cent. This approach was clearly evident on the page, as it is the easiest way to reach the audience by addressing their needs, satisfying their desires and exploiting their emotions through the publication of themes of sympathy, coexistence and rapprochement.

The result is consistent with the findings of Saeed's study (2020), where the same method ranked first with a rate of 79 per cent. An example of the use of this tactic on the study site is a publication posted on 19 August 2021. The post includes a picture of a child drawing the Syrian and Israeli flags, claiming that the girl is Syrian and is being treated in Israel as part of an Israeli initiative to treat war wounded in southern Syria. (fig.7).

The purpose of publishing such issues is to win over Arabs emotionally by presenting Israel as a humanitarian country that helps others.



**Figure 7.** A post on simulating the needs and emotions.

**Source:** "Israel speaks Arabic", Facebook, 19 Aug 2021.

The 'emotional style' ranked second with a rate of (20.1%). This result is consistent with the findings of Alwan's study (2020) in which 'The use of emotional method ranked second with a rate of 28.3%, followed by rational methods with a rate of 9%.' However, our result differs in rank from the findings of Huda Naeem's study (2017), which revealed that 'Emotional grooming ranked third with a rate of 17.8 percent.'<sup>358</sup>

<sup>358</sup>Naim, pp. 150-200.

If we combine the results of the two previous methods (simulation of needs and emotional grooming), we find that 88.9 percent of the publications in the study addressed the emotions and desires of the masses, and this percentage is very high. This is particularly noticeable in publications that talk about sympathy, coexistence and rapprochement between Israel and the Arab countries, and the humanization of the occupying state. The use of emotional appeals in the Israeli digital media in Arabic is one of the Israeli propaganda tools to influence supporters in general.

"Simulating religion" ranked third with 12.1 per cent. Several studies indicate that the Israeli digital media in general is very interested in promoting the idea of religious tolerance in Israel and emphasizing the religious rapprochement between Judaism and Islam by offering greetings to Arabs and Muslims on their religious occasions such as Ramadan and holidays, using verses from the Qur'an or prophetic hadiths, and hosting Israeli religious figures who provide information on religious rapprochement with Muslims. For example, on 29 August 2021, the page published a photo of two soldiers, one Jewish and the other Muslim, performing their own prayers. Figure 5 is a screenshot of this image, which was captioned 'One faith in God, one homeland and one space that brings together two soldiers in the IDF, a Muslim and a Jew. This is Israel, which believes in pluralism. (fig.8)

ايمان واحد بالله تعالى ووطن واحد ومساحة واحدة  
تجمع بين جنديين في جيش الدفاع مسلم ويهودي.  
هذه إسرائيل السواسية والتعددية

افيخاي أدرعى - Avichay Adraee



**Figure 8.** A post claiming pluralism in Israel.

**Source:** “Israel speaks Arabic”, Facebook, 29 Aug 2021.

The 'rational method' ranked fourth with a rate of 4.9 per cent, which is a low percentage compared to the rest of the grooming methods. This method was demonstrated by reminding Arab peoples of important dates and events for the Jewish people, such as the Holocaust, or the political and economic agreements between Israel and Arab countries.

The 'intimidation method' came last, with a low rate of 2.1 per cent. This method was demonstrated by intimidating Palestinian civilians with indiscriminate shelling. This result differs in ranking from Naim's study (2017), which found that the threat and intimidation method ranked fifth with a rate of 7.9 percent. In fact, the use of threats and intimidation is one of the most common propaganda tactics used by the Israeli media, especially during times of conflict with the Palestinians and Arabs. This was evident during the 1967 war, which led to the occupation of Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza, when the Voice of Israel radio station, which

broadcasts in Arabic, reported that Israeli jets had destroyed most of the Arab air force and claimed that Arab radio stations were lying to the Arab public.<sup>359</sup>

The same tactic was used during the tripartite aggression against Egypt in 1973 and the invasion of Beirut in 1982, as Israel deliberately mentioned in its traditional media aimed at the Arabs the Arab losses, defeats, and the weakness of their armies in order to shake their confidence in their leaders, in return for maximizing Israel's military strength and the capabilities of its army to achieve victories. The researcher noted that Israel intends to repeat the same content of the propaganda message in its digital media by intimidating the Arabs from Iran, the Lebanese Palestinian resistance represented by the Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements.

On 2 August 2021, the site posted a picture of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, calling him an extremist and a butcher personally responsible for the deaths of thousands. (Fig. 9)

Another post was published on 6 August 2021, accusing the Lebanese Hezbollah and Hamas of using civilian homes to bomb Israeli cities and describing both as terrorist organizations.

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<sup>359</sup> Oren, pp. 34-36.

لماذا يلقبه الشعب الإيراني بالسفاح؟

رئيس إيران الجديد وملفاته الارهابية



**Figure 9.** Attacking the Iranian President.

**Source:** “Israel speaks Arabic”, Facebook, 2 Aug 2 2021.

#### **4. Analyzing the Propaganda Methods Used by Israel to Address the Arabs through the Israel Speaks Arabic Page:**

The tactic of 'repetition and stalking' ranked first with a percentage of 39.4 per cent. This method is one of the basic propaganda tools used to persuade the masses and influence their attitudes on issues and was used in Nazi propaganda during the Second World War. According to Joseph Goebbels, the German Minister of Propaganda, effective propaganda lies in focusing on certain facts and repeatedly directing people's ears and eyes to them. This method relies on the 'repetition of effective arguments', which must be clear and appeal to emotions and instincts, not the intellect.<sup>360</sup>

The Israeli digital sites generally focus their propaganda discourse on the method of repetition in order to anchor a certain idea in the minds of the audience. For example, the site under study repeatedly talks about the impact of Palestinian resistance

<sup>360</sup> “Fact check: Joseph Goebbels misquote on “converting intellectuals” resurfaces”, **Reuters**, 8 July 2020 [https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-joseph-goebbels-misquote-co-idUSKBN2492TD\\_15](https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-joseph-goebbels-misquote-co-idUSKBN2492TD_15) April 2022.



rockets on Israel and their killing of children and women. On the religious level, the page focuses on the idea that Israel believes in religious pluralism and freedom of worship for all. In this regard, while Israel was waging a military war on the Gaza Strip in May 2021, the "Israel Speaks Arabic" page published several posts claiming that Israel believes in pluralism, equality, coexistence, and love among its citizens, regardless of their religion.<sup>361</sup>(Fig. 10)



**Figure 10.** A post claiming Israel’s belief in Pluralism and coexistence.

**Source:** “Israel speaks Arabic”, Facebook, 15 May 2021.

The use of 'eminent personalities' came second with a rate of 17.4 per cent. This method involves the use of statements by prominent figures against the Palestinians, their resistance, Iran, and Hezbollah. Several statements by well-known Arab personalities were quoted and recontextualized by the moderators of the study page in order to support Israeli propaganda and further its agenda. For example, the page cites several tweets by Waseem Youssef, an Emirati sheikh known for his negative

<sup>361</sup> The post published on “Israel Speaks Arabic”, Facebook, 15 May 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=970820403662636> 11 Feb 2023.

attitudes towards Palestinians. The page also quotes several tweets in support of the State of Israel. Figure 11 is an example.



**Figure 11.** A post on employing the tactic of eminent personalities.

**Source:** “Israel speaks Arabic”, Facebook, 6 June 2021.

Here we see a post containing an image and a quote from the late Egyptian President Anwar Al Sadat, who was known for his support of peace with Israel. The post includes one of his quotes in which he said: 'Those who cannot change their way of thinking will not be able to change their reality, nor will they be able to make any progress'. The post is captioned: 'A lesson for those who don't learn... the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, the first Egyptian Arab leader who chose peace for his people and the Arab people in the confrontation countries'.

In summary, the page calls for normalization with Israel and encourages the Arab masses to join the convoy of peace with Israel, which is one of the messages that the Arabic-speaking Israeli pages have focused on recently, especially after several Arab governments (UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco) normalized their relations with Israel in recent years. The use of this method represents direct support for the

Israeli narrative, relying on statements that are offensive to Palestinians and support the Israeli propaganda discourse, making it more convincing and influencing Arab public opinion. The 'embellishment' (i.e., the use of flowery, beautifying terms and attractive lucrative words and vocabulary) came in third place with a percentage of 15.5.

It is a propaganda tactic that has been widely used by the Israeli media in recent years, as it is an effective propaganda method based on persuasion and influence using beautiful and attractive words and vocabulary. On 17 May 2021, the study site published a video from one of the Israeli cafes in the city of Tel Aviv with the following caption: 'With equanimity and high spirits, the people of Israel face the aggression of Hamas and wish the people of Gaza well'.

The fourth most popular method was 'diverting attention', with a percentage of 11.9. This tactic involves focusing on issues other than those that were happening at the time. Studying the posts of the above-mentioned site shows that several non-political, non-religious issues are celebrated, such as social and recreational issues that take place in 'Israel', in order to divert attention from the number of martyrs and the destruction caused by its planes in the Gaza Strip during the war of May 2021. This is a clear contradiction in Israeli policy towards the Palestinians.

The researcher noted that the study page used this method to divert the attention of the Arab and international public from the events in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, the attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Israeli war on Gaza in May 2021 by focusing on issues of tourism, culture, and normalization with the Arabs. On 13 May 2021, in the midst of the Israeli war on the Strip, the study page published an image of Palestinian girls by the sea with the following caption: 'On the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr and at the end of the blessed month of Ramadan, we send our best wishes to all Muslims and our friends who sent us messages of support in confronting the forces of evil, we pray for peace...'. (Fig.12).

١٣ مايو •

بمناسبة حلول عيد الفطر السعيد وفي ختام شهر رمضان المبارك، نتقدم بأجمل التبريكات لعموم المسلمين وخاصة لكل اصدقائنا في الدول العربية القريبة والبعيدة الذين بعثوا لنا بوابل من رسائل الدعم في تصدينا لقوى الشر. نصلي من اجل السلام والسلامة لكل محبي الإنسانية



**Figure 12.** A post on Claiming humanity, diversity, and pluralism in Israeli-Arab relations.

**Source:** “Israel speaks Arabic”, Facebook, 13 May 2021.

On the same day, the page published another post bringing together Palestinian girls and Israelis, with the caption: "Our Lord is one and loves us all. Jews and Arabs in Israel support love and coexistence between all citizens, despite the challenges we face'. Creating a state of mind is one of the main tactics of Israeli propaganda through social networks, as this tactic contributes to creating a state of conflict and contradiction in Arab minds through the published posts.

The tactic of 'substituting names and terms' ranked fifth with a percentage of 8.5. This method involves manipulating terminology and choosing names that fit Israeli policy and narrative. For example, terms such as 'terrorist' and 'saboteur' are often used to refer to the Palestinian and Arab resistance. In addition, the names of Arab cities are changed and replaced with Hebrew names, such as 'Judea and Samaria' instead of the occupied West Bank. These findings support Muhammad Ezzat's

(2022) study, which found that "the method of substituting names was one of the propaganda methods and tactics used in Adraee's page."<sup>362</sup>

The tactic of 'lying, deception and falsification of facts' came last with a percentage of 7.3. This result agrees in rank with the results of Ezzat's study, which analyzed the content of the page of Israeli army spokesman Avichay Adraee (2022): 'The lying and deception style in Adraee's speech ranked sixth.'<sup>363</sup> This method involves misleading public opinion and obfuscating information on their pages. This tactic is used extensively to justify Israeli attacks on and killing of hundreds of Palestinian children, women, and elderly people under the pretext of self-defense. However, this strategy was found to be the most used and ranked first in Naim's (2017) study a few years ago, with a percentage of 34.5.<sup>364</sup>

On 10 June 2021, the page published a photo showing the impact of a rocket on a school in Gaza, accusing Hamas of sabotage. The image is captioned: 'Hamas tunnels turned school into human shield! The photo shows a Hamas terror tunnel under a UNRWA school in the Zeitoun neighborhood. This is one of the tunnels that Hamas is investing to serve Iran in its terrorist project at the expense of Gaza's children). (Fig. 13).

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<sup>362</sup>Muhammad Mustafa Ezzat, "The Zionist propaganda discourse on Twitter during the fourth war on Gaza in 2021: Analytical study", **The Egyptian Journal of Media Research**, 2002, Issue (78), p. 520.

<sup>363</sup> Ezzat, pp. 500-520.

<sup>364</sup>Naim, p.157.



**Figure 13.** A post on lying and falsification strategy.

**Source:** “Israel speaks Arabic”, Facebook, 10 June 2021.

### **5. Analyzing the Strategies that Israel Uses to Address Arabs through the Study Page:**

The strategy of "getting closer to the Arabs and winning their affection" topped the list of strategies used by the surveyed side in addressing the Arabs with a percentage of 35.7. The researcher noticed that after the recent normalization agreements with some Arab governments, Israel increased its emotional rhetoric towards the Arabs and getting closer to them to attract more masses towards peace with Tel Aviv. On 21 June 2021, the page published several images showing Arab youth arriving in Israel from countries that recently normalized diplomatic relations with Israel. (Figure 14) below is a case in point. Here, Israeli posters strategically use images and captions to win the affection of Arabs. The image is captioned in Arabic: 'Brotherly meetings between nations of peace'. 'Israeli citizens are delighted to see tourists from Morocco, the Emirates and Bahrain, and welcome them with open arms. Such moments will remain in the memory'.



**Figure 14.** Posts showing images of ‘nations peace’.

**Source:** “Israel speaks Arabic”, Facebook, 21 June 2021.

Kiush and Muhammad's study confirms this result, as the category of Jewish-Arab rapprochement ranked first with a rate of 29 percent. However, our result differs from Abu Mualla's study (2017), in which ‘rapprochement and establishment of friendly relations’ ranked second with a rate of 40 percent. The researcher believes that this is natural, especially since the latter study was conducted in 2017, when no peace agreements had been signed between Israel and Arab governments.

In another example of the application of the strategy of rapprochement with the Arabs, what was published on 22 June 2021, where the study page published an image of a group of young people carrying the Moroccan flag, accompanied by the following comment in Arabic: "A warm welcome to Moroccan tourists in the State of Israel. An image that expresses the friendship and brotherhood between the two nations. Israel and Morocco will soon open direct flights between the two countries. In Israel, we always welcome Moroccan tourists". (Fig. 15).

إسرائيل تتكلم بالعربية • ٢٣ يونيو •

إستقبال حار لسياح وزوار من المغرب في دولة إسرائيل.  
صورة تعكس الصداقة وعلاقة الأخوة بين الشعبين

إسرائيل والمغرب ستطلقان رحلات جوية مباشرة قريباً. نرحب  
بجميع السياح المغاربة الراغبين في القدوم إلى إسرائيل.

ISRAELis إسرائيل



**Figure 15.** Post on the strategy of getting closer to the Arabs.

**Source:** “Israel speaks Arabic”, Facebook, 23 July 2021.

The second most common strategy was 'glorifying and promoting the occupation strategy' with a percentage of 21.2. This strategy was characterized by portraying Israel as a peace-loving and developed state. Through this strategy, Israel is intelligently aiming to promote its ideas and policies, improve Israel's relations with neighboring countries, penetrate the Arab consciousness and change it towards accepting Israel as a normal state after being seen as an occupying state for many decades.

The 'human and religious sympathy' strategy ranked third with a percentage of 14.3. This strategy means that Israeli digital diplomacy pays attention to humanizing the occupying army, describing the occupying soldiers as ordinary people who have their dreams and are not enemies of the Palestinians or the Arabs.

On 29 May 2021, the page published a photo of an Israeli soldier repairing a bicycle tire with the caption: 'God bless a hand that has reached out to draw happiness on a child's face. The image is of an Israeli soldier helping a Palestinian child to repair his bicycle. (fig. 16).





**Figure 16.** "Publication on the Humanization of the Occupation and its Army".

**Source:** "Israel speaks Arabic", Facebook, 29 May 2021.

This clearly shows that by framing its publications in a way that evokes human feelings and emotions, Israel does indeed focus on certain issues and chooses what is published to the masses within specific and studied frameworks in order to influence the masses and force them to see events from the angle and frame drawn by those in charge of communication, without giving the audience the opportunity to think outside this frame and what framing theory suggests.

The irony is that the researcher found that the same image was published several times on the study page and other pages in 2010, 2020 and 2021. This could mean two things: First, there are no other images that support the Israeli claim about the humanity of the occupying army, which means that the image itself is a representation, not a real one. The second is that the aim of repeating the same image is an Israeli attempt to reinforce it in the minds of the recipients with what serves the Israeli narrative.

The strategy of 'warning, incitement and accusation' ranked fourth with a percentage of 13.6. This strategy was evident during the military attack on Gaza in May 2021, where publications on the site sought to incite against Iran, Hezbollah, and the

Palestinian resistance, describing these parties as bringing devastation and poverty to the people. In this context, the page deliberately drew comparisons between the countries that support the resistance and the countries that normalize relations with Israel, associating the latter with terms like "peace, love and economic and tourist prosperity", while associating the others with terms like "destruction, terrorism and devastation".

On 22 May 2021, the 'Israel speaks Arabic page' published several incitement publications against the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas in the Gaza Strip, including a post stating that 'Hamas's illusory victory is far from the tragedies the movement is causing the residents of Gaza'. The post (fig. 17) was accompanied by a cartoon showing a Hamas leader on holiday in Qatar enjoying his time while talking on the phone about the Resistance's victory in Gaza, but the Gazan person, who looks devastated and broken, replies by saying, 'We've won internally, but we've lost in reality'.



**Figure 17.** Publication of incitement and warning.

**Source:** "Israel speaks Arabic", Facebook, 22 May 2021.

The results of the warning strategy are in line with the findings of Hamza Abu Shanab's study (2017), which found that "the Avkhai Adraee page focused on publishing incitement photos against Hamas, while demonstrating the Israeli army's

ability to target the Palestinian resistance".<sup>365</sup> However, our result differs in rank from the study by Firas Al-Saifi and others (2022), in which the 'attack strategy' came first with a rate of 55 per cent.<sup>366</sup>

The strategy of 'intimidation and reinforcement' ranked fifth with 10.3 per cent. This strategy aims to convey the message to the Arab public that Israel and its army are advanced and have enormous capabilities to face any military conflict that Israel is exposed to, in addition to creating a state of fear and intimidation among the Arabs in order to confirm the permanent saying that the Israeli army is "the indomitable army".

The strategy of 'disinformation and opacity' ranked sixth with a rate of 4.9 per cent. This strategy emerged during the Gaza war, where the study site deliberately concealed the reality of what was happening on the ground and replaced it with daily stories from inside Israel.

Framing theory holds that 'events do not have meaning in themselves, but are given meaning by being placed in a frame that focuses on some aspects of the issue and neglects others'.<sup>367</sup> This policy was clear on the study site, especially during times of conflict and tension between the Palestinians and the Israelis, where the researcher noticed that the "Israel Speaks Arabic" page followed a strategy of shifting attention by ignoring the Israeli crimes and attacks against the Palestinians, especially during the war on Gaza in the month of Ramadan on the one hand. On the other hand, the site increased the number of publications about Israel's scientific and medical achievements, tourism in Israel and other non-political issues.

## **6. Analysis of the User Proof Methods on the Study Page:**

Proving events with evidence' ranked first with 37.6 per cent. This reflects the level of interest on the study site in proving the information published by showing evidence of what is happening on the ground, such as showing the effects of

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<sup>365</sup> Hamza Abu Shanab, "The Israeli propaganda on Social Media during the aggression on Gaza in 2014: An analytical study", (**Master Thesis**): Gaza, The Islamic University, 2017, p. 225.

<sup>366</sup> Al-Saifi, Issa and Ku`a, "The propaganda techniques used on the IDF Spokesperson's page on TikTok during the Gaza war in 2021, **The Arab Journal for Scientific Publishing**, Issue 40, 2022, p. 754.

<sup>367</sup> Hassan Makkawi and Laila El-Sayed, **Communication, and its contemporary theories**, Cairo: The Egyptian Lebanese House, 1998, p. 34.

resistance rockets on Israeli cities and justifying the killing of Palestinian citizens in the West Bank and Gaza. This method is considered one of the basic methods used to prove the Israeli narrative, according to the Israeli military and security mentality, which depends on presenting lies as evidence. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have shown the Israeli digital media's dependence on presenting evidence, regardless of its accuracy, to prove the Israeli narrative.<sup>368</sup>

It was followed by 'views' with a close second at 32.6%, where the study page focused on presenting the official and unofficial Israeli viewpoints to comment on political events. It also used Arab and international viewpoints to criminalize the Palestinians and blame them for developments on the ground, especially during the Israeli war on Gaza by reposting quotes from opponents of the resistance, Hezbollah, and Iran. For example, in June 2021, the site used an interview with an anti-Palestinian Lebanese politician from the National Liberal Party, who said on a local Lebanese channel that 'Israel does not want wars. This is an accusation that the Palestinian resistance, Hezbollah, and Iran fabricate political crises and wars with the Israeli occupation. Such statements find an echo in the Israeli digital media, which exploits every Arab attack on the Palestinians and Iran and uses it on social platforms as a testimony of Arabs against Arabs. Such a thing would have a great ability to influence the Arab masses.

'Statistics and figures' came third with a percentage of 15.8. This is one of the most effective methods of persuading the public and spreading propaganda. The study page presents the propaganda narrative in a statistical framework that lends credibility to the published articles. This type of evidence was used by mentioning the number of rockets that fell on Israel during the aggression on Gaza and the number of Jews killed during the Israeli-Arab conflict.

'Historical events' ranked fourth with a share of 11.2 per cent. This was demonstrated by reminding Arab peoples of important Israeli dates such as the Holocaust or the political and economic agreements that Israel concluded with Arab countries. At the bottom of the list was research, at 2.3 per cent, and others, at 0.5

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<sup>368</sup> Alwan, "The image of the self and the other in the content of Israeli social networking sites in Arabic. The Facebook Model: An analytical study", p. 894. See: Naim, p. 192.

per cent. The importance of using the argument lies in the fact that it helps to analyze the ideology of the discourse producer, which represents his orientations.<sup>369</sup>

#### **8. Analysis of the Used Language by the Study Page:**

The suggestive language ranked first with a rate of 44.1 per cent, and the researcher attributes this to the fact that the language of propaganda in general, and Israeli propaganda in particular, is indirect and tends to be suggestive with the function of influencing the minds of the Arab public. The use of this language in Israeli digital media is aimed at winning the minds and emotions of the masses. This result differs from the study of Saleh Al-Masry (2020), which found that the communicators on the study site relied on colloquial language, which is dominated by sarcasm.<sup>370</sup>

The 'news language' followed in second place with 29.5 per cent and was used in the presentation of news related to the activities of the Israeli government, Arab-Israeli normalizations meetings and official diplomatic visits.

'Offensive, inflammatory, and accusatory language' came in third place with 18.7 per cent. Israeli propaganda excels in using this method, especially against the Palestinian resistance, Hezbollah, and Iran, where these parties were described in an offensive and vitriolic manner, in addition to accusing those who oppose Israel of terrorism, sabotage and anti-Semitism, as well as denouncing Arab and Islamic positions that call for confronting Israel and boycotting it politically, economically, and intellectually. In this regard, a report conducted by the Arab Center for the Development of social media (Hamleh) in 2020, found that violent discourse against Arabs increased by 16% recently, as 574,000 online conversations included violent discourse against Arabs.<sup>371</sup>

'Interrogative language' came fourth with a percentage of 6.2. The aim of this language is to keep followers engaged with digital platforms by exploring and reflecting on the questions posed. For example, the study page posed the question:

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<sup>369</sup> Hisham Abdel Maqsood, "The impact of the state's foreign policy on the journalistic treatment of international affairs: a comparative analytical study of the Egyptian press 1990-1992", (**Master Thesis**): Cairo University, 1995.

<sup>370</sup> Al-Masry, "The Nature of the Israeli Discourse Directed towards the Return Marches through the New Media", pp. 5-200.

<sup>371</sup> "Campaign (Hamla): Increase in Israeli incitement against Palestinians and Arabs on social media in 2020", **The New Arab**, 2021, [https://www.alaraby.co.uk/entertainment\\_media/](https://www.alaraby.co.uk/entertainment_media/) 15 May 2022.

What is the Torah and how does it differ from the Bible? It asks the Arabic audience to search and stay in touch with these platforms. The language of 'request, prohibition or command' came last with a percentage of 1.5.

The low percentage reflects the lack of interest of the study site in this language, as its aim is to improve the image of Israel among Arab countries as a peace-loving and democratic country. Therefore, the site avoided words that carry an order, request, or prohibition, in order to give a good impression to the Arab public that it is a democratic country and calls for love and brotherhood.'



Figure 18. Publication on promoting peace.

Source: "Israel speaks Arabic", Facebook, 16 Sep 2021.

#### 9. Analysis of the most prominent words on the study page:

'Terms related to rapprochement, peace and normalization' ranked first with a rate of 47.4 percent.

This result is consistent in rank with Abdel Latif's (2015) study: "Israeli public diplomacy was keen to highlight the manifestations of love and brotherhood between

Arab and Jewish citizens, respect for religious rituals, and the convergence of Arab and Israeli popular tastes”.<sup>372</sup>

The researcher noted that during the study period, the page published many posts calling on all Arabs to normalize relations with Israel, as the governments of the Emirates and Bahrain have done, claiming that peace will develop the economy of Arab countries, etc. The page also deliberately published pictures of Israeli citizens meeting with citizens of normalization countries. For example, on 17 October 2021, the study page published a post related to normalization with the following caption: "The fruits of peace: A research cooperation agreement between two universities, Moroccan and Israeli. This partnership focuses on key topics to face the challenges of the future, such as food security, smart agriculture, water, and climate change ....”.

In the same context, the study page presented examples of Jordanian trade, economic agreements, Israeli-Egyptian diplomatic meetings, and discussion of Iraqi relations. In seventh place was the term 'peace and coexistence' with a percentage of (6.3%). The study site cited many examples of Arab-Israeli coexistence in daily life.

This result is consistent with the findings of Abdel-Khaleq's (2014) study: "Israel adopted the establishment of a sympathetic relationship with the Arab public by congratulating Islamic holidays and events with the publication of reports accompanied by pictures showing the extent of cohesion between Jews and Muslims in Israel in the field of study and work".<sup>373</sup> However, our result differs in rank from Al-Kharabsheh's (2018) study, which found that 'conditions for showing peace' ranked sixth with a rate of 7.6 per cent.<sup>374</sup> In fact, this is a logical outcome, as there was no normalization with the UAE and Bahrain in 2018.

On 21 October 2021, the page posted an image of two girls with the following caption: 'Human values unite us, a Muslim, and a Jew, together in providing first

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<sup>372</sup> Abdul Latif, pp. 12-200.

<sup>373</sup> Yousra Abdel-Khaleq, "Israeli popular diplomacy directed at the Arab peoples on Facebook: an analytical study", **Egyptian Journal of Media Research**, No. 49, 2014, pp. 317-353.

<sup>374</sup> Kharabsheh, Muhammad, p. 65.

aid. This is Israel... Both Anta, a Jew, and Maryam, a Muslim, provide first aid in Israel to all citizens, regardless of their beliefs'. (fig. 19).

'Hebrew terms' ranked second with a percentage of (11.3%). This occurred by changing the Arabic names of some Palestinian villages and mosques to Hebrew names in a way that serves the narrative of the occupation and violates the rights of Palestinians. Examples of such terms include referring to the West Bank as "Judea and Samaria" and Jerusalem as "Yershalim-أورشاليم". Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran and terrorism" ranked third with (7.6%). Other terms came last.



**Figure 19.** Claiming belief in equality and pluralism.

**Source:** "Israel speaks Arabic", Facebook, 21 Oct 2021.

The researcher noticed that the site increased these terms during the war on Gaza and the events in Jerusalem in May, when those stationed in Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Palestinian resistance were described as saboteurs. During the analysis, the researcher found that the site overused these terms during the Israeli war on Gaza, describing the Palestinian resistance organizations as terrorism and blaming them for the casualties in Gaza due to the Israeli bombing. It was clear that the aim was



to create doubts in the minds of Palestinians and Arabs about the resistance and, in turn, to promote Israel's claim that it is trying to provide a comfortable life for the Palestinians and that its war is not with them but against "terrorists".

For example, on 22 October 2021, the page posted an image of the Israeli and Sudanese flags, superimposed a symbol of love and strength on it, and wrote a comment claiming that the page was receiving messages of Sudanese solidarity and support for Israel against the terrorist 'Hamas'. (Figure



20).

**Figure 20.** claiming receiving supportive letters from Sudanese people.

**Source:** “Israel speaks Arabic”, Facebook, 22 May 2021.

The propaganda goal of broadcasting such publications is to shake Arab public opinion's confidence in the Palestinian resistance and marginalize its cause, which is one of the main goals Israel is trying to achieve through its digital diplomacy directed at the Arabs.

In another example of this case, the study site published a picture of the Sudanese Minister of Finance, Jibril Ibrahim, along with a statement he made to the Al-Jazeera news channel in which he says that "normalizations with Israel has contributed to improving Sudan's economic conditions" (Fig. 21).



**Figure 21.** A publication on promoting peace and normalization with Israel.

**Source:** “Israel speaks Arabic”, Facebook, 20 June 2021.

Such publications aim to manipulate Arab consciousness and convince Arabs of the importance of normalization with Israel. The researcher found many similar Israeli publications and believes that the repeated publication of such articles aims to manipulate Arab consciousness and convince the Arab peoples of the importance of normalization with Israel, which they have always seen as an enemy for them and the Palestinians.

In addition, the research found that the study site deliberately refers to the Palestinians using the term 'population' instead of 'nation', because the latter term implies that these people have an origin, a history and belong to a state. In short, using the term "people" confirms what was stated in the Balfour Declaration: "a land without a people for a people without a land". The use of the term "population", on the other hand, gives the Palestinians the status of a minority that doesn't own the land of Palestine.

## 10. The Used Frameworks by the Study Page:

The 'strategic framework' ranked first with 25.7 per cent. The researcher attributes this to the fact that this framework fits the political and military objectives of the Israeli propaganda discourse in explaining the events to the Arabs from an Israeli strategic perspective. This finding is consistent with the study of Kharabsheh's (2018) findings, where the strategic framework ranked first in Adraei's publications with a rate of 36.9 percent.<sup>375</sup>

Ethical framework' came second with 22 percent. This was demonstrated using Arab religious and cultural slogans to sympathize with and influence Muslims and Arabs. However, the 'humanitarian framework' came last with a rate of 8.8 per cent. This was demonstrated by framing the page's publications with emotional templates, such as publishing posts about the treatment of some Palestinians in Israeli hospitals. This result differs in rank from what Mustafa's study (2021) found, which found that 'Humanitarian frameworks came second with a rate of (26%)'.<sup>376</sup>

In July, the Israel speaks Arabic page published a picture taken in an Israeli hospital of a girl lying on a bed with a young Jew standing next to her, with the caption: 'A Jew donates his kidney to an Arab girl'. This sentence was followed by a message about the importance of humanity in achieving rapprochement and coexistence between people of different ideas and religious beliefs (Figure 22).

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<sup>375</sup> Kharabsheh, p. 62.

<sup>376</sup> Mostafa, p. 77.

٤ يوليو •  
عيدو اليهودي تبرع بكليته إلى حنان وهي مواطنة عربية  
وأنقذها. قالت حنان بعد العملية إنه "من أنقذ حياة شخص  
واحد، كأنه أنقذ العالم بأسره".  
تقرب الإنسانية القلوب وتمكن الحياة معا إذا تخلى البشر أثناء  
تعاملهم مع بعض على أفكارهم واختلافاتهم الفكرية والدينية  
من أجل التعايش.  
تصوير: مستشفى رمبام الإسرائيلي



**Figure 22.** Showing Humanity of the Israelis.

**Source:** "Israel speaks Arabic", Facebook, 4 July 2021.

In fact, the researcher found that the site deliberately publishes many images that refer to Israeli human attitudes towards Palestinians and Arabs, and the aim of the repetition seems to be to reinforce the idea of "the humanity of the state, its people and its army". This is the exact opposite of what is happening.

The 'framework of the conflict' came third with a percentage of 21.3. This was demonstrated by focusing on showing the intensity of the conflict between the Israeli occupation and the Palestinians, showing those who are hostile to Israel as the losers in the battle, and that Israel is always victorious in the battle, military, and technological superiority. This was also made clear by holding Islamic movements such as Hamas fully responsible for the Israeli attacks on the Palestinians.

The 'framework of economic results' ranked fourth with a rate of 15 per cent. This framework was demonstrated by showing the results of economic agreements and treaties signed with some Arab countries, claiming that such agreements bring benefits and development to countries that normalize their relations with Israel. During the study period, Israel signed several economic agreements with Jordan,

Morocco, and Egypt.<sup>377</sup> The use of this framework was accompanied by a presentation of the importance of the economic agreement and its future impact on the prosperity and development of these countries.

The 'responsibility' framework came last, with a percentage of 14.5. The researcher found that the use of this framework was aimed at holding Islamic movements such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad fully responsible for the actions of the Palestinian people and justifying the Israeli attacks on the Palestinians as mentioned above. This result is in line with Al Kharabsheh's study, in which the responsibility framework came sixth with a rate of 6.7 percent.

#### **11. Sources of Information on the Study Page:**

Unofficial Israeli sources" ranked first with a rate of 39.9 percent, as the study site relied on Israeli activists, content creators, photographers, social networking influencers, NGOs, and doctors, etc. The researcher attributes this to the importance of the role these people play in disseminating information and events that support the Israeli narrative and enhance the image of the state as a political, cultural and tourist ally. On the other hand, the journalistic role played by these groups, within the framework of so-called citizen journalism, contributes significantly to persuading and influencing public opinion in line with the goals of Israeli propaganda.

This result is in line with the findings of Abu Amer's study (2018): 'The military correspondents, Arab affairs analysts and army and government spokespersons were the stars of the Israeli media, who mastered the presentation of the official Israeli view of what was happening to the Palestinians'. This is also in line with the findings of the study by Kiush and Muhammad (2021): "Israel informalizes most of its publications and its communication with the masses, relying on the gradual expansion of building its relations, continuously and without interruption, which is a feature that we lack in our Arab world"<sup>378</sup>.

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<sup>377</sup> Kiush and Muhammad, pp. 87-110.

<sup>378</sup> Kiush and Muhammad, pp. 78-110.

Social media sources" ranked second with a percentage of 30.9%. The researcher noted that the study site republishes what is posted on other Israeli social platforms to confirm the narrative of those sites. In this way, it becomes more firmly established in the minds of Arabs. Here we see another result, which is the harmony between the Arabic-speaking Israeli platforms in terms of ideas and themes published to achieve the same goal. This indicates that the state has created an electronic army specialized in monitoring and broadcasting events that could affect the Arabs. Official Israeli sources ranked third with a percentage of (13.2%). These sources are represented by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Prime Minister's Office, army ministers and official spokespersons who use social networking sites to achieve political goals and engage in dialogue with the Arab public to promote their state.

This result is in line with the study of Rantawi (2002), which showed that most of the news reports get information from the security forces or the Israeli government with a rate of 62%. However, our result differs in rank with the findings of Naim's study (2017), in which Israeli official sources came first with a rate of (98.7%). Researcher Adnan Abu Amer points out that "the Israeli media used the same descriptions and phrases issued by military sources, and some of them deliberately conveyed false information to meet certain needs of the Israeli army, and when the military and media institutions meet for a specific goal, it seems that there is no disagreement between them".

The fourth most popular category was 'without source' with a rate of (10.6%). This reflects the low reliance on anonymous news. Relying on news and information without a source weakens the strength of the media message and reduces its reliability and credibility in front of the public, and the use of anonymous sources opens the way for bias and media leaks for specific purposes away from professional values.

The "Arab media sources" ranked fifth with a rate of (4.8%), which is a weak percentage indicating that the Israeli digital media relies on its private and public sources without referring to Arab or international sources for media purposes that are in its favor, as mentioned earlier. This result is different from what was found in

Kharabsheh's (2018) study: "Afkhai Adraee's page relies on Arab media sources with the aim of showing itself as an interested follower of everything that is published in the Arab media, exploiting everything that comes with it and framing it to serve its goals".

'Palestinian sources' ranked last with a percentage of 0.6, reflecting the lack of interest of the study site in obtaining information from official and unofficial Palestinian sources, which is normal for a country that works to exclude the other side's narrative from the conflict equation.

## **12. The Way the Palestinians are Mentioned on the Study Page:**

Palestine's lack of connection with the event' came first with a rate of (48.4%), followed by 'neglecting and not talking about Palestine' with a rate of (31.4%). This means that 79.8% of the site's publications deliberately neglected the Palestinian issue during the study period, which was full of events related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The researcher believes that this result is natural and in line with the goals of Israeli digital diplomacy towards the Arabs, especially since the study period witnessed the signing of Arab normalization agreements between the UAE, Morocco and Bahrain, and the accompanying Israeli effort to expand the circle of countries normalizing with it, using flowery words and vocabulary.

In addition, the study page focused on showing the relations that Israel has with Arab and foreign countries in exchange for marginalizing the Palestinian cause, and this is one of the most important reasons for creating digital pages in Arabic. The absence of the Palestinian narrative in the Israeli digital media, and its limitation to the narrative of the military spokesperson, the Israeli government spokesperson, or official or unofficial Israeli sources, is an Israeli media policy that stems from a general policy of not recognizing the Palestinian people.

Linking the resistance to terrorism' came third with a rate of (13.4%). This was evident when talking about the role of the Palestinian resistance in the aggression on Gaza in 2021, as it was described as terrorism and sabotage in order to make it an Arab and international pariah. In short, it's an attempt to distort the image of the Palestinian resistance. In fourth place was 'Palestinians are a source of unrest' with

a rate of (4.5%). And in the last place came 'distributing publications that are offensive to the Palestinians', with a low rate of (2.3%).

### 13. Types of Used citations on the Study Page:

According to the results of the analysis, 'without citation' came first with a high rate (72%). The researcher attributes this to the fact that most of the publications on the Israeli Arabic site are news publications that convey events through text and images. By a wide margin, 'Screenshot' came second with a rate of (17.1%). The study site used quotes from reports by prominent Arab figures supporting Israel's position in its war with the Palestinian and Arab resistance.

The researcher found that those responsible for the site deliberately copied such quotes and republished them on the site to support what was being promoted in terms of Arab support for Israel and its policies in the region. For example, the page quoted what a Saudi journalist wrote against Hezbollah and rejected any attempt to reproduce its experience in the Arab region. Our message must be clear, and it is 'no to Hezbollah, no to attempts to copy it in our region'. This must be clear in any negotiations with Iran' (Figure 23).



Figure 23. A post applying the screenshot tactic.

Source: "Israel speaks Arabic", Facebook, 17 October 2021.



'Religious quotations' ranked third with a percentage of (6.7%). The use of religion on the study page aims to influence the Arab citizen from the perspective of the preacher and the religious leader. As mentioned above, many verses from the Holy Qur'an were mentioned on the study site. As for the citation of 'popular heritage', it ranked fourth with a low rate of (2.6%), followed in last place by literary citation with a rate of (1.6%). The study site uses these literary and heritage quotations from Arab culture to penetrate Arab consciousness, trying to confirm that Israeli culture is close to Arab culture and that Israelis are part of the region.

#### **14. Geographical Coverage of Publications:**

With a high percentage (71.3%), 'The local domain' ranked first. This high rate reflects the page's focus on local Israeli achievements at the cultural, technological, political, and economic levels, with the aim of highlighting Israel as an advanced and developing country in the Middle East. This result is consistent with Al-Kharabsheh's study (2018), in which the local scope ranked first with a high percentage (65.5%).

The regional domain came in second place with a rate of (24.5%). The regional scope was notable when talking about the Arab-Israeli normalization agreements, reviewing positive Arab attitudes towards Israel, such as talking about the Moroccan and Emirati people's support for normalization, talking about the visits of Israeli delegations to Arab countries, such as visiting the tomb of King Hassan II in Morocco, and signing economic and trade agreements with Egypt and Jordan.

The third most important issue was 'international scope' with a rate of (4.2%). The researcher argues that this result is normal, especially since Israel has dozens of sites that speak many foreign languages, including English, Latin, French, Chinese, etc. As for the site under study, it is aimed at the Arab world and their mother tongue, so there is no need to convey international news to them, except what is related to the State of Israel, such as talking about the Israeli government's visit to the United States of America and France to discuss some issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and to obtain statements supporting its policy against the Palestinian resistance.

#### **15. Directions and Trends of Publications on the Study Page:**

The positive trend resulted in a high rate (79.2%). This indicates the site's interest in spreading positive messages about Israel and being optimistic about a bright future for Israel and its Arab neighbors who have normalized relations with it. This result is consistent with Alwan's (2020) study, where "positive content came first with a percentage of (97.6%)", and Abdel-Latif's (2015) study "The analysis of visual materials highlighted positive values associated with the context of Israeli culture". The negative trend reached (20.8%). This is a weak percentage that indicates the page's interest in not conveying negative feelings, except when talking about the resistance, Iran and Hezbollah, as mentioned before.

## **5.2. Analyzing the results of the form of the 'Israel Speaks in Arabic' page:**

### **16. Interaction Elements on the Study Page:**

'Text with images' ranked first, with a high rate of (68.3%). This means that Israeli digital diplomacy realizes the importance of employing images as an influential and attractive element to emphasize a certain idea. The media in general "uses its (formal) and (influential) capabilities, such as the "journalistic template" to emphasize a specific idea in dealing with conflict issues and its parties.<sup>379</sup>

The researcher argues that the Israeli digital media seeks to enhance its content on social networking sites by keeping up with technological developments, to improve the image of the occupation. This result agrees with the study of Abdel Latif (2015), in which "the image is the most used artistic template in the formulation of Israeli discourses, especially the one attached to text or video". The result is also consistent with Khaidawi and Daoudi's (2021) study: "All texts in the study sample were attached to an image." However, our result differs in the ranking with the study of Alwan (2020): "Photos and graphics came second with a rate of (37%), and videos came third with a rate of (11%)."

'Text with video' was in second place (18.8%). While collecting the data for the study, the researcher noticed the diversity in the video clips used on the page between 'documentary, promotional and educational' videos. The use of video is one

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<sup>379</sup> Rania Haider, "The perceptual map of Egyptian public opinion towards the American-Iraqi conflict from 1990 to March 2003", (**Master Thesis**): Cairo University, 2006, p. 269.

of the most effective elements of influence and ability to communicate the desired ideas, as the video contains visual elements such as moving images, sound effects and music.

‘Drawings, maps, and infographics’ ranked third with a rate of 6.4%. This method was used to explain numbers and complex issues in a simple way, such as the number of Jews in the world or technological developments in Israel.

The infographic is an important means of promoting the idea and communicating information with simplicity and dynamism at the same time and is the most appropriate technical method for presenting the idea with proofs and evidence to add credibility and support the idea carried by the content."<sup>380</sup> This result is in line with Alwan's study (2020): 'The infographic came third with a rate of (4.3%).

‘The caricature’ is in fourth place with a rate of (5%). The cartoon is a fundamental journalistic art because of its aesthetic and humorous effects on news and issues that can exceed thousands of words due to its brevity and the accompanying drawing of the sarcastic word. Example: Publishing a satirical cartoon about Hezbollah and its achievements in Lebanon, represented by the destruction of houses and the poverty of the people. (Figure 24)

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<sup>380</sup> “The Techniques of Propaganda”, CSUN, 22 Feb 2019 <https://digital-library.csun.edu/in-our-own-backyard/techniques-propaganda> 12 April 2023.



**Figure 24.** A satirical cartoon from Hezbollah.

**Source:** "Israel speaks Arabic", Facebook, 24 Oct 2021.

The element "text without images" came last with a very low rate (1.5%). The researcher noticed the lack of publications with sufficient text without the use of pictures or videos because the managers of the study page were convinced of the importance of the publication documented with pictures and videos in order to attract attention. The study site used this type of text when presenting historical events.

### **17. The Video Format on the Study Page:**

The 'recoded video' topped the list with a high rate (67.8%). The researcher noted that the study site used this type of video when talking about diplomatic meetings and monitoring the opinions of the Israeli population on the various issues raised by the site.

The 'TV interview' ranked second with (11.5%). 'Promotional or promotional and educational video' ranked third with (8.3%). Examples of promotional videos include the broadcasting of videos for Arab restaurants in Israel, such as 'Moroccan and Yemenite restaurants'. I argue that the aim is to confirm the idea of rapprochement and support normalization with Arab countries. However, 'live

broadcasting' came fourth with a rate of (2.5%) and 'press statement' came last with a rate of (1.6%). The researcher noticed that the study site used the last type of video when publishing statements about political and economic events, such as the Israeli Prime Minister's statements about the diplomatic visits he made to some Arab countries to strengthen relations and normalization.

### **18. The Audience's Interaction with the Page's Publications:**

The high rate of interaction by the Arab public with the "Israel Speaks Arabic" page would serve the goals of the page in achieving greater accessibility to more individuals.

#### **a. The Number of Likes:**

More than 5,000 likes; ranked first with a rate of (49.1%). The second most popular category was '1001-2999 likes' with a share of (24.2%). The third most popular category was '3000-5000 likes' with a percentage of (23.1%). Finally, 'less than 1000 likes' received a small percentage (3.6%).

Regardless of the nature of the comments on the publications and the negativity they bear towards Israel, Israeli digital diplomacy is not as concerned with the nature of the comments as it is with achieving Arab interaction with what is published on social media. The most prominent principle of Zionist propaganda is: "All I care about is that you speak, even if you speak against Israel".<sup>381</sup> The researcher noted that the rate of interaction with the page's publications was low at the time of the aggression on Gaza, the occupation's violations against the city of Jerusalem and the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque.

#### **b. Number of Shares:**

The results showed that the category 'less than 100 posts' was in first place with a percentage of (46.7%). This result is consistent with the findings of Alwan's (2020) study, where the 'less than 100 shares' category was in first place with a rate of (52.2%). It was followed by the category 'between 101 and 499 posts' with a very close rate of (46.1%). Israeli digital propaganda uses the shares of its publications

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<sup>381</sup> Harara, p. 66.

by Arab followers to communicate its message and consolidate ideas to the largest possible number of the target audience.

With a large difference, the last ranking came with "more than 500 shares", with a rate of (7.2%). The researcher attributes this to the fact that a high percentage of followers' comments were negative towards the Israeli publications, denying the misleading information they contained about the Israeli occupation's crimes against the Palestinian people. The researcher also found that many of the posts on the page were intended to expose and ridicule the lies contained in them.

### **c. Number of Comments:**

The researcher noticed that the managers of the study site avoid deleting negative comments about Israel, but rather make great efforts to respond to the commenters and deal with them in a positive way that may seem convincing at first glance. This method of dealing with the Arabs is intended to promote Israel as a democratic country that respects opinions and different opinions and discusses the opinions of others in a professional manner, which encourages followers to continue commenting as long as their comments - whatever they may be - do not exclude or restrict anyone's freedom of expression. For example, in July 2021, the study page published a video clip talking about "Jewish refugees after they immigrated to Israel from Arab and Islamic countries", which prompted many Arab commentators to attack Israel and demand that it talks about the Palestinian refugees who were displaced due to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands during the Nakba in 1948.

In addition to the demand for a comparison between the Jewish refugees who chose to move from the Arab countries where they lived in safety to the State of Israel in order to support the project of establishing the State on the ruins of Palestine, and the Palestinian refugees who were subjected to violence and military force by the Jewish gangs, which forced them to leave their lands, fearing for their lives and the lives of their children.

The category 'between 1000 and 4999 comments' ranked first with a rate of (55.3%). It was followed by the category 'from 5,000-10,000 comments' with (22.2%). The category 'from 100-999' came third with (20.5%). By a wide margin, the category 'more than 10,000 comments' came last with a rate of (2%), which is a very low

percentage. A study published by the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs found that 90% of social media posts in the Arab world attacked the agreements between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain. According to the study, 45% of the posts claim that the agreements are a betrayal of the Palestinian cause.<sup>382</sup>

While collecting data from the "Israel Speaks Arabic" page, the researcher was struck by the fact that the people in charge of the page refuse to respond negatively to the bad comments made by followers, in addition to refusing to delete them and keep them in front of everyone. The aims of this propaganda tactic are multiple: firstly, to reinforce the idea in Arab minds that Israel is a civilized country that does not exclude the other's opinion, unlike the dictatorial Arab regimes that restrict people's freedoms and arrest them just for expressing their opinions on social platforms. Secondly, the preservation of Arab comments, regardless of their direction/negative or positive, would encourage more Arab people to follow the Arabic-speaking Israeli pages and express their opinions freely, as no one would confront them in a hostile manner. In this way, Israeli digital diplomacy would achieve another goal, which is to gain more Arab followers.

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<sup>382</sup> "An Israeli study: 90% of Arab discourse on social media is against normalization", **Al Mayadeen**, 12 November 2020 <https://www.almayadeen.net/news/politics/1428912> 15 May 2022.

## REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The importance of this dissertation is to understand the strategies that states use to represent themselves and potentially improve their image using social media platforms. Specifically, this dissertation focuses on an in-depth study of how Israel manages its digital diplomacy platforms to address the Arab population during conflict and non-conflict times. The content of (764) Facebook posts on the 'Israel speaks Arabic' Facebook page are analyzed. The researcher argues that the analysis would help to examine how institutions such as the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs use social media networks as a means of communicating with Arabs, improving Israel's image, and promoting the Israeli narrative. Before summarizing the findings, it is necessary to summarize the rationale behind this study.

Some have argued that Israel is well aware that its reputation has been tarnished in recent years by its military aggression against the Palestinians. Some therefore believe that Israel, as a state, understands the need to rebrand itself in the Arab world. As a result, Israel has resorted to using social media not in Hebrew - its official language - but in Arabic, a minority language within the state's borders. In this context, Tel Aviv's efforts in digital diplomacy coincided with the outbreak of the Arab revolutions in surrounding Arab countries in 2010, where Israel saw these new political developments as an opportunity to penetrate Arab public opinion, having perhaps realized the potential of digital media and its role in bringing about political and social change and overthrowing dictatorial regimes.

Thus, the Israeli Foreign Ministry used these events to achieve what it had failed to do for decades, namely, to communicate with the Arab public for the first time in the history of the Israeli state and to influence its positions and attitudes towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. Despite Israel's success over the past decades in signing peace treaties with some Arab governments, such as Egypt and Jordan, and in holding secret and not-so-secret meetings with some Arab regimes, it has failed miserably to penetrate the Arab peoples, who until recently viewed Israel as a state of terrorism and occupation.

However, Israel's interest and efforts in digital media can be described as a historical extension of the Zionist movement's recognition of the importance of media and



political propaganda, both of which were essential pillars for the realization of the Zionist project of establishing a national home for the Jews on Palestinian land. Supporters of the Zionist movement understood and supported the role of the media in this. For example, David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, noted that "the media and the press helped put Israel on the map and gave it international legitimacy before it became a reality on the ground".<sup>383</sup> Over time, the goals of media and propaganda have evolved to include efforts to beautify Israel's global image, with the digital media revolution paving the way for Israel to practice propaganda in a more accessible way, until it was able to overcome its isolation in the Arab world by establishing Arabic-language digital diplomatic channels.

It is noteworthy that the Facebook page 'Israel speaks Arabic', which represents Israel's official foreign policy towards the Arabs, has a wide Arab following, with more than 3 million followers, allegedly all from Arab countries (at the time of writing). People follow and interact with it on an almost daily basis. Although a large percentage of the comments on the page's posts are negative towards Israel, Israeli digital diplomacy is counting on time to bring about a change in Arab mentality towards the conflict with Israel. This raises questions about the effectiveness of Israeli digital diplomacy platforms in reaching Arabs through direct social media channels. Time will tell.

The existing literature focuses on Israel's use of digital diplomacy in times of conflict to shrink time and space for global audiences. However, the focus of this dissertation is on the use of soft power (Nye, 2004), both in times of conflict and non-conflict, to promote Israeli identity and influence over Arab audiences through the use of digital media that attract minds (Nye, 2004). With the increasing use of social media tools to build the image of the nation-state, Israeli digital diplomacy was reviewed using Nye's soft power perspective. From Nye's perspective, the three applicable resources that lie in a country's soft power were applied to the study for framework: its culture (place and heritage that attracts others), its political values (how it lives up to them whether abroad or at home), and its foreign policy (how

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<sup>383</sup> Said, "Propaganda methods in the Israeli discourse directed to the Palestinians through interactive media", p 20.

others view it as legitimate and possessing moral authority). Each of these resources was examined and discussed by the study sample.

Nye's concepts helped to explain the ways in which a country reshapes its image over time. With the power play of international and diplomatic relations, the development of communication tools could have applicable implications if nation-states were willing to reset the components of the image they wanted to rebuild, the importance of their motives and their communicative tools.

The dissertation drew on two main communication theories: framing theory and agenda setting theory, to aid the analysis of the data concerning the strategies and propaganda tactics used on the study site to serve Israeli goals and narratives. Both conceptual theories focus on how the media deals with events, arranges and shapes them in a way that serves the interests of the communicator.

Most of the study's questions and hypotheses are supported by data. The findings are consistent with the existing literature on the challenges of Israeli identity in the global society and the persuasive means used by the state to convince foreign audiences through access to their digital space.<sup>384</sup> In addition, the study reveals new propaganda mechanisms and strategies of digital diplomacy aimed at non-citizen Arabs.

Additionally, the dissertation employs a descriptive approach in addition to content analysis method which helps researchers examine large numbers of data with relative ease and in a systematic manner. An analysis form was prepared to collect data and draw equations for recurrence relations to classify the data objectively and comprehensively. To ensure transparency, the form went to arbitration and was reviewed by several media specialists and academics, and two human coders participated in the process of collecting the data. Thus, the researcher argues that the results of the study are mostly valid, accurate, and objective, with the analysis mechanism being subject to scrutiny and review by specialists, as well as the participation of other human coders in data collection.

Nevertheless, the analysis of the study page can be summarized as follows:

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<sup>384</sup> Humaid, pp. 20-30.

Firstly: The 'Israel speaks Arabic' Facebook page focused on posting about current events as soon as they occurred, with a percentage of 65.2. This result is consistent with the nature of social networking sites, which rely on the speed of the transmission of events, regardless of their accuracy or credibility, especially with the emergence of the phenomenon of citizen journalism, whereby any ordinary citizen can transmit or cover the event from their presence on social networking sites. In this regard, it should be noted that the spread of the phenomenon of citizen journalism during the Arab revolutions and the role of digital media in helping Arab youth to express themselves freely, led to the strengthening of the role of digital media in bringing about political change, which led Israel to focus its efforts on social networking sites, considering them important mechanisms for communicating with Arab youth and changing their beliefs and ideas about Israel.

Secondly, in terms of the most recurrent themes, the political theme was dominant, especially in relation to the issues of peace and normalization of relations with the Arabs and the attack on the Palestinian resistance movements. This finding is supported by another result of the analysis, which shows that about 50% of the prominent terms on the study page were related to peace, normalization, and cooperation, followed by terms related to Hamas, Iran, Hezbollah and linking them all to terrorism. Following the recent normalization of relations with several Arab countries through American mediation, Israeli digital diplomacy is setting its sights on the Middle East region, hoping to normalize relations with the rest of the Arab countries and gain Arab popular acceptance for a Jewish state on the land of occupied Palestine.

Although the task is difficult after years of hostility, Israel is counting on time and the strength of its diplomatic activism to change public opinion in the region. Today, Israel is taking advantage of the normalization agreements to escalate its media discourse in Arabic on social media, focusing on Arab voices in favor of normalization and peace with the occupation. This is evidenced by the deliberate and constant release of images and videos showing some Arab youth accompanied by Israelis in different places supporting peace and encouraging others to engage in normalization. Simply put, the period of the UAE-Israel normalization agreement

has in some ways shown how digital diplomacy works online during a political peace agreement with an entity that has long been considered an 'enemy'.

In fact, Arab-Israeli digital pages are keen to glorify the occupation within what can be described as 'electronic normalization', which means that these pages are an Israeli trap to mislead Arab youth and falsify their awareness, as statistics show that the youth category is the most familiar with these Israeli platforms.

That is, Israeli digital diplomacy applies Nye's three soft power pillars in its media discourse through the 'Israel speaks Arabis' Facebook page, namely: culture, political values, and foreign policy. This is consistent with previous literature that suggests that Israel uses soft power messages to communicate with Israeli Arabs through non-political topics such as culture, sports, education, and on mutual interests and commonalities between Arabs and Jews in Israel. In addition, the result is also consistent with the assumption of agenda setting theory, which suggests that the communicator chooses some issues that serve his goals and political agendas by making a selective process for the issues that are highlighted to the public and hiding what he does not want to show, and this is exactly what the study page has done; focusing on issues that achieve Israel's political goals in the region. It is important to note here that the study page avoided mentioning violence and deaths associated with Israel's image as an occupying power in order to rebuild a peaceful image for world society.

As global society becomes more interconnected, Israeli diplomacy has found it increasingly important to use everyday topics from culture, business, religion, sports, and social life as a soft way of disseminating its image and position to the public. Here the communicators on the side act as gatekeepers, not only telling the audience what to think, but also giving them what to think about. The interest in highlighting some issues over others.<sup>385</sup>

In this regard, the researcher found that the study site avoids and overlooks Israel's racist policies and the crimes of the occupation against Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem in a way that shifts responsibility away from the Israeli

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<sup>385</sup> Musa Talib, **Public Opinion and Psychological Warfare**, 2nd edition, Gaza: Talib Library and Press, 2012, p. 97.

occupation and onto others. In this context, the hypothesis that the site would focus on promoting peace - normalization, cultural and religious commonalities between Arabs and Jews was supported. However, the 'cultural theme' followed in second place and the 'economic theme' ranked third among the most prominent themes on the study page.

Surprisingly, some Israeli opinion polls, including one conducted by the Direction Institute in Jerusalem in November 2020, showed weak Arab public support for normalization.<sup>386</sup> The survey included more than 4,000 people from nine foreign and Arab countries, including the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Palestine. According to the results (65% in Saudi Arabia, 48% in Bahrain, 84% in Morocco, 72% in Qatar), their negative view of Israel has not changed, while 46% of Emiratis expressed a positive view of the occupation. Another report, conducted by the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs, found that 90% of Arab comments on Israeli social media between mid-August and mid-September 2020 were negative towards Israeli normalization with the UAE and Bahrain.<sup>387</sup>

In addition, an opinion poll conducted by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy in 2022 showed a significant decline in the percentage of supporters of normalization agreements with Israel in Bahrain and the UAE. According to the survey conducted by the American Institute, which was founded by the American-Israel Relations Committee (AIPAC) in 1985, more than two-thirds of the citizens of the three countries view the 'Abraham Accords' in an unfavorable light. This is less than two years after they were signed.<sup>388</sup>

These results may indicate that achieving peace with the millions of Arabs living in the Middle East is not an easy task. That is to say, the belief that influencing people through a series of tweets and publications that glorify the image of the occupation on social media and attempting to falsify the collective Arab consciousness through it, is an illusion and not an easy diplomatic policy, as described by the Israeli researchers themselves. It is difficult to change the image of the occupation in the

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<sup>386</sup> Shalash, “the Israeli digital diplomacy to polish the image of the occupation in the region”.

<sup>387</sup> Shalash, “the Israeli digital diplomacy to polish the image of the occupation in the region”.

<sup>388</sup> “A Washington Institute poll: Support for normalization declined in 3 Gulf countries”, **Al Jazeera**, 22 July 2022, <https://2u.pw/gSC9Aa> 15 May 2022.

minds of the Arabs after more than 70 years of continuing the occupation of Palestinian land and committing crimes against its defenseless people. Nevertheless, we must not underestimate the long-term danger of Israeli digital diplomacy, especially if Arabs and Palestinians neglect the role of digital diplomacy and its importance in the battle for hearts and minds.

However, the results of the dominant themes also say something about news values - Israel values countries with which it has normalized relations more than countries with which it has not. This was supported by many publications on the study page, which argued that normalizing countries will achieve progress, economic development, and social welfare for their people thanks to peace with Israel, unlike countries that have not yet normalized their relations. Here, a strategy of propaganda discourse based on intimidation and pressure on others seems to achieve the goals of Israeli foreign policy.

Third, the results of the analysis show that the digital media discourse of the study site is not random, but rather an organized and studied media discourse according to several strategies and tactics, most notably the following:

The strategy of 'incitement against the Palestinians' and 'turning the executioner into the victim and vice versa'. This was evident in accusing the Palestinian resistance in Gaza of prolonging the conflict and threatening the security of the occupation, while portraying the Israelis as victims of what the site called "Palestinian terrorism" and linking them to terrorism. The page also focused on viewing and mentioning Iran and Hezbollah negatively several times, which is consistent with previous literature suggesting that Israeli platforms share content on common regional issues regarding Iran's growing role in the Middle East.

Promoting Israel as a peace-loving, civilized and scientifically, technologically, and medically advanced state. Not content with promoting its imaginary relationship with the citizens of the Arab world, the study page promotes Israeli scientific and technological development as part of Tel Aviv's political propaganda. This is in line with Nye's view of soft power, which he sees as an essential tool for any country to exert attraction on others by spreading its culture and values.

The third clause of the Israeli Radio and Television Law, approved by the Israeli Knesset, states that the aim of the Israeli media in all fields (politics, economics, social sciences... etc.) is to deepen Jewish and Zionist affiliation, to promote Jewish cultural life throughout the world, to broadcast programs in Arabic in order to tame the Arabs living in Israel, to promote propaganda for the Palestinians and Arabs in accordance with the goals of Zionist policy, in addition to broadcasting programs outside Israel in order to achieve the goals of Zionism and to defend Israeli policies, especially the aggressiveness related to settlements, Judaization and the violent acts of war waged by Israel.<sup>389</sup>

Misinformation, distortion of perception and exaggeration of certain issues in order to marginalize other issues in a way that supports the Israeli narrative. Perhaps the best statement in this regard was made by Thomas Friedman, an American writer close to Jewish circles in the United States, where he mentioned that Israeli journalists work according to the ideological motives of their media organizations. For example, the press reporter combines the truth with political analyses instead of simply reporting it as it is.<sup>390</sup> This is an explicit admission of the Israeli media's lack of objectivity and its reliance on propaganda tools. It is important to note that the Israeli media in its various forms is subject to security and military censorship in Israel, which means that the military censor is the gatekeeper who determines what is published to the public in these media, which means that there are strict restrictions on the free flow of information and complete security authority over everything that is published in the media.<sup>391</sup>

'Humanizing the occupation' is one of the basic strategies used by the study site. This was demonstrated by using Israel's scientific and medical progress to gain legitimacy in the Arab world as a natural state, not an occupying one. In addition to humanizing the Israeli occupation army, when the truth is that it is a terrorist, occupying, criminal army that kills Palestinians in cold blood. A prominent example of this

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<sup>389</sup> Bossi Jamal El-Din Ibrahim, "Framing Egyptian Affairs on Arab Israeli Platforms and Elite Attitudes Towards Them (2014/2015), *Journal of the Orient Message*, Volume 44, Issue 91, 2019, pp. 335-386.", *Journal of the Orient Message*, pp. 274-300.

<sup>390</sup> Jamal El-Din, p.272.

<sup>391</sup> Mai Al-Khajah, "Arab Media and the Challenges of Zionist Propaganda", *The Egyptian Journal for Media Research*, (20), 1997, p. 105.

strategy is the publication of images of Palestinian and Syrian children being treated in Israeli hospitals, and their use in a political context that seeks to whitewash the occupation's massacres of hundreds of children in Gaza during the ongoing military wars since 2008.

'Addressing the emotions and needs of Arabs' strategy in order to attract the attention of Arab supporters. This tactic topped the list of strategies used with a rate of more than 88 percent of the page's publications, a very high percentage that reflects the extent to which Israeli digital diplomacy understands the Arab mentality and the ability to win over Arabs by simply manipulating their feelings and needs. However, 'simulating religion' in the page's publications and 'rational tactics' are among the strategies of influence used. These strategies parallel Nye's perspective on the use of soft power to attract the attention of others.

Nye argues that "seduction is more effective than coercion, and many values such as democracy and human rights are seductive".<sup>392</sup> According to Nye, soft power is not just influence or persuasion. It is a greater force than that, the power of attraction. In the case of Israeli digital diplomacy, publishing about Israel's culture and claims about its belief in peace, cooperation, coexistence, equality, tourism, science, and medical development, as mentioned above, are the sources that produce soft power and generate the power of attraction.

The use of the 'repetition tactic' of events and themes that support the Israeli narrative. This propaganda tactic was used in Nazi propaganda during the Second World War, from which Israeli/Zionist propaganda has benefited greatly. The effectiveness of this tactic lies in focusing on certain issues and repeatedly directing people towards them by appealing to their emotions.

The use of "manipulation and substitution of names" strategy. This propaganda strategy is one of the basic tactics used by the Israeli media against the Arabs. For example, describing the Palestinians who bear the Israeli identity as 'Israeli Arabs' instead of 'Palestinians of Israel' or 'Palestinians of the occupied interior', since they are the original inhabitants of the occupying state. Here, the Israeli media tries to

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<sup>392</sup> Nye, **Power in the global information age: From realism to globalization**, pp.5-6.



silence them without using their real names in order to convince the younger generations of Arabs that Palestine is the ancient land of the Jews.

The tactic also involves using words with negative connotations to describe something, with the aim of creating prejudice in the audience against it, without giving them the opportunity to examine and question it. A notable example is describing the Palestinian resistance as terrorists, linking them to Iran and Hezbollah, and considering them all as a source of destruction and sedition in the Arab region. Here we can see that this strategy is based on the use of lies in different ways and formats to persuade others. In this context, the various Israeli media (visual, audio, newspapers, and websites) are subject to security, military, and political constraints.<sup>393</sup>

'Priority-shifting and attention-shifting strategy'. This tactic is based on highlighting secondary issues while marginalizing the main ones, especially those related to the conflict with the Palestinians. For example, at a time when Israeli forces were killing Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, attacking Jerusalemites, and demolishing their homes, the study page was concerned to publish many publications about daily life in Israel, culture, tourism, and other issues. This strategy is consistent with agenda-setting theory, which suggests that the communicator is interested in highlighting the issues that serve his agenda in the first place, as mentioned above.

The use of Arab 'celebrities' strategy against the Palestinian resistance, Hezbollah, and Iran. This tactic was used as an Arab proof to confirm the validity of the information provided by the Israeli study site and to support the Israeli propaganda discourse.

In addition to the above strategies, the framing of publications on the Israel Speaks Arabic site is very clearly designed to serve the Israeli agenda. This involves placing the publications in a specific context in a way that influences the public's perception and interaction with the issues at hand. In this regard, the 'strategic framework' was the most used on the site, by which we mean framing articles with strategic issues

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<sup>393</sup> Hassanen Shafiq, **Disinformation, Coma, Hegemony**, Cairo: Dar Fikr, 2011, p. 287.

for Israel, such as security, peace, normalization, sovereignty, etc. The 'ethical framework' followed in second place. This result is consistent with the political and military objectives of Israeli diplomatic efforts towards the Arabs. Other frameworks were used; the 'economic outcomes framework' through intense discussion of the importance of peace with Israel in improving the economic and security life of the Arabs, the 'responsibility framework' and the 'conflict framework'.

The prioritization of the strategic, ethical, and economic frameworks reflects the extent to which Israeli digital media focuses on soft power first when addressing the Arab mind, framing publications in a way that influences followers and leads them to interpret events according to the communicator's vision. However, it was notable that the page did not ignore the conflict with the Palestinians, as it was framed in line with Israeli claims related to the marginalization of the Palestinians and the demonization of the resistance and its supporters in the Middle East.

The framing of the site's publications is in line with the framing theory, one of whose central assumptions is based on the deliberate selection of some aspects of the event, making them more prominent in the media text - (the publications of the study site in our paper) - and using a specific method in describing the problem, identifying its causes, evaluating its dimensions and proposing solutions in this regard.<sup>394</sup> Here, framing theory helps us to explain how Israeli digital diplomacy presents events through a process of selectivity, and places the selected events in a specific field of meaning in order to encourage and influence Arab interpretations. This means that the selection of publications is a deliberate and selective process that does not necessarily reflect reality.

In terms of the orientation of the publications, the vast majority (79.2%) were positive. This was evidenced by positive posts about peace, democracy, pluralism, cooperation, and the humanity of the occupation. Simply put, the positive nature of the posts indicates the page's interest in gaining influence and appeal by spreading

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<sup>394</sup> Makkawi and Al-Sayed, p. 348.

positivity and optimism. It fits with Nye's theory of diplomacy as well as framing theory by focusing on certain publications and highlighting them more than others.

In terms of the geopolitical scope of the publications, the analysis showed that the 'local scope' was dominant with a high rate of 71.3 per cent, followed by the 'regional scope'. This was evident in the focus on daily life in Israel, while avoiding reference to Israeli policy towards the Palestinians. This leads us to another finding about the way the Palestinian cause is presented on the study page. It is noteworthy that more than 70 per cent of the articles deliberately marginalized the Palestinians. This means that Tel Aviv does not recognize their existence and tends to erase the Palestinian presence from the Arab consciousness. The researcher noticed that the Palestinians were only mentioned in publications that carry meanings of abuse and demonization, such as blaming the Palestinian resistance in Gaza for the conflict and linking it to the terrorist movements in the Middle East. This is aimed at ending Arab sympathy for the Palestinians.

Regarding the language of the study site, the analysis revealed that many discourse languages were used, including the suggestive language, the informational language, the self-defensive language, and the offensive language against the 'perceived enemy'. Diversity in media discourse is important for any media outlet to avoid falling into monotony in the presentation of information, which alienates the masses. This means that the study site has a talented team that is aware of the nature of digital media and media discourse in general. However, the media diversity here is related in one way or another to the selective process that those in charge of the site carry out in terms of what they present to the masses and how they present it. This brings us back to agenda and framing theories and their key assumptions.

As for the sources of the information published on the study site, the 'Unofficial Israeli sources' were the most prominent, containing diverse content supported by multimedia tools. Social media sources' and 'official Israeli sources' (MFA, Gov) followed in second and third place respectively. The researcher argues that the study site's reliance mainly on unofficial sources (activists, doctors, citizens, etc.) is a wise act on the part of those in charge of the site, since the masses usually prefer to listen to those who are like them (citizen-to-citizen communication), moving away from

the traditional news issued by official sources for lack of trust in them. Therefore, the "unofficial sources" would increase the confidence and acceptance of the publications of the site more than if they were issued by official sources. However, using Israeli Voices as a primary source of information is not necessarily an accurate or reliable source, as they do not have conclusive proof of the authenticity of what is published. The danger of this tactic is that the large flow of information on the site using this mechanism reduces the ability of followers to verify the validity of the data themselves. The 'Arab and Palestinian sources' were very rare. The researcher argues that this is normal for a page that seeks to improve the image and identity of the occupation at the Arab level. However, the marginalization of Palestinian sources can serve as further evidence of the efforts of Israeli digital diplomacy aimed at diminishing and eliminating the Palestinian cause in the Arab world.

The use of multimedia was clear in the articles with a strong focus on photos, followed by videos, cartoons, infographics and websites. This suggests that the Israel Speaks in Arabic site uses multimedia sources regardless of time. It is logical that the media in general and social networking sites use all possibilities, interactive forms, and different elements of influence such as headlines, pictures, videos, and press templates to emphasize a certain idea. This again supports the idea that the Israeli digital diplomacy department has a large and trained staff.

Various types of evidence were also used, particularly the use of arguments and events at a rate of 37.6 per cent. This result is consistent with previous studies that have shown the reliance of Israeli digital media on the use of evidence, regardless of its accuracy. The 'interview and opinions', 'numbers and statistics', historical events and other evidentiary methods were also used. The main purpose of framing publications with evidentiary tools - regardless of their credibility - is to convince the masses of the validity and credibility of the publication.

Although the number of likes, comments and shares, regardless of content, does not necessarily provide clear explanations of the impact of Israeli digital diplomacy on the public, the increasing number of people interacting with the 'Israel speaks Arabic Facebook' posts can provide important insights and invite in-depth studies to analyze

the content of the comments and to study the accounts through which the public interacts to check whether they are real or fake accounts. The large number of interactions - even if they carry negative meanings - gives the Israeli pages a wide reach to more users according to Facebook's algorithms. Here, the researcher noticed that a good percentage of the comments that carry positive meanings and support the Israeli publications belong to unclear names, which raises the suspicion that they are fake accounts, perhaps created by the Israeli digital diplomacy department to support what is published to the Arabs.

The researcher is inclined to believe this assertion, as the analysis of the study site proves that Israel is using political propaganda strategies and framing publications in order to influence Arab attitudes towards Israel. Therefore, the researcher recommends conducting a comprehensive survey and in-depth studies of the accounts that follow the Arabic-speaking Israeli pages. In addition, the research suggests that users engage differently with peaceful shared values posts and hardline posts, but this could not be translated as two-way communication. According to previous literature, social media platforms that allow and encourage two-way interactions do not necessarily mean that this automatically leads to dialogic communication in online public diplomacy efforts.<sup>395</sup> Thus, the findings on user engagement are in line with Nicholas Cull's argument that "the main limitation of public diplomacy studies is that they primarily count the number of followers but fail to analyze the essence of the interactions".<sup>396</sup>

Nevertheless, it is not certain that Israel's digital diplomacy efforts directed at the Arabs will have no effect on the consciousness of the Arab peoples. Given the weakness of Arab digital media in general and Palestinian digital media in particular, on the one hand, and Israel's continuation of its war against Palestinian digital media content in collusion with giant communication companies such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, on the other, Israeli Arab pages remain one of the most dangerous forms of controlling consciousness by creating images that are contrary to reality, just as Photoshop plays a role not only in beautifying faces, but in

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<sup>395</sup> Samuel and Yarchi, pp. 323-344.

<sup>396</sup> Cull, **Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past**, p4.

completely changing their features. This is exactly what the 'Israel Speaks in Arabic' site does, using religion, emotional appeals, and other propaganda tools, as explained above.

The results of this study show that states can use digital diplomacy to enhance their soft power, that foreign policy issues can be easily accessed regardless of time and place, and that official state institutions use mass media and social media to disseminate their political and military agendas. In their book *Manufacturing Consent*, Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman pointed to the close relationship between the mass media and decision-making centers in democratic countries, where the latter use the means of communication to disseminate specific information to win the sympathy of the masses, or to create a specific enemy and convince public opinion of its seriousness. In other words, these means are used to create a different reality.<sup>397</sup> This means that political propaganda is also part of the political strategies of democratic and non-democratic countries.

In the Israeli case, the thesis revealed that it is not possible to separate the official and directed Israeli media from political propaganda, which is considered one of the pillars of the Israeli security and media information strategy, as it is used to reshape public opinion, promote the Israeli media discourse, define standards for its discourse, delegitimize and incite those who oppose it, and publish biased content to promote a narrative and influence local and global consciousness. It is clear that 'Israel Speaks Arabic' is an arm of Israeli propaganda directed at Arabs, where its digital efforts represent a restoration of the political propaganda strategies that the Zionist movement relied on decades ago to gain international sympathy and legitimacy for the establishment of the Israeli state.

However, Israeli propaganda tools, strategies and goals have been improved to promote a positive image of the occupation and to gain Arab sympathy and normalization of relations with Israel after seven decades of failure. In this regard, just as the media can frame reality and fill people's consciousness with specific content determined by the communicators according to their ideology and policies,

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<sup>397</sup> Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, **Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media**, Random House, 2010, pp. 20-100.

it can also penetrate the minds of the masses and empty them of realistic political information and understanding. This is exactly what Israeli digital diplomacy against the Arabs is trying to do, as well as marginalizing the Palestinian cause and isolating the Palestinians by penetrating the consciousness of the Arab peoples and changing their view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In conclusion, Israeli digital diplomacy teams play a very critical role in the media battle of the occupation against the Palestinians, despite attempts to convince public opinion, especially Arabs, of the impartiality of their efforts and that Arabic-speaking Israeli sites are not the propaganda arm of the Israeli government. Thomas Friedman (the famous American writer) once said that part of the Israeli press is driven by ideological motives. Sometimes the reporter (whose job it is to report the news) integrates the news and follows it up with analysis. The result is a hodgepodge of facts, which means that objective traditions are not firmly rooted in the Israeli media.<sup>398</sup>

However, despite Israel's attempts to promote itself as a democratic and peace-loving state through social media platforms, it continues to be treated as an occupying power by most countries in the Arab world. This situation is likely to continue as long as Israel continues to use violence against the Palestinians and refuses to reach a final settlement and recognize the Palestinian state.

The main limitation of this study is that it did not study Arab users through in-depth interviews or ethnographic methods. Further research is needed to explore the impact of Israeli digital diplomacy platforms on Arab audiences through surveys and in-depth research on public interaction with these platforms. Allowing Arab users to speak about their experiences can provide important insights into attitudes and beliefs about Israeli digital diplomacy and its potential impact on Arab audiences. In addition, the study recommends the establishment of an Arab website to monitor what is published by Israeli digital platforms, to expose the reality of fabrication and media disinformation practiced by these sites to influence the beliefs of Arab peoples regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and to draw attention to the strategy of framing publications, which is widely used in Israeli digital diplomacy because of

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<sup>398</sup> Amal Jamal, "Press and Media in Israel", **Palestinian Center for Israeli Studies**, 2005.

its ability to draw attention to published issues. There is also a need to educate Arabs about the dangers of interacting with Israeli sites, regardless of the nature of the interaction.

On the Palestinian side, the MFA should activate its digital efforts to counter the Israeli narrative on social media platforms and help raise awareness among Arab audiences on how to interact with Israeli pages on the Internet, especially how to interact with likes, comments, and shares, which - as mentioned above - increase the reach of these pages, even when negative interactions occur. Palestinian digital diplomacy lacks strength and reach due to the weakness of Palestinian digital content on the one hand, and technology companies restricting Palestinian content in collusion with Tel Aviv on the other. It is important for Palestinians to engage the major technology and communications institutions at the official level and pressure them to stop their repressive policies against Palestinian content, to stop the policy of shutting down Palestinian digital sites in collusion with Israel, and to respect freedom of opinion and expression for all.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for an advanced Palestinian digital diplomacy in light of global changes and the trend towards globalization and digitalization. Reaching a wider audience and disseminating the Palestinian narrative can be an effective pressure tool on countries and international organizations to put an end to the Israeli aggression against the Palestinians and to refute the Israeli narrative, which is based on falsification and concealment of the truth.

The study also recommends that the Palestinian MFA develop its digital media discourse and build a comprehensive national strategy to counter the Israeli narrative by creating digital sites in multiple languages. This can benefit from foreign activists and supporters of the Palestinian cause around the world investing in digital media, supporting the Palestinian narrative, and countering the Israeli narrative. Finally, there is a need to train active cadres in Palestinian official institutions in the tools of the new diplomacy, and to prepare a Palestinian electronic army to support the Foreign Ministry, like the volunteer army in the Israeli hasbara program.



## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1

#### **Content Analysis Form**

Through this form, the researcher seeks to explore the strategies and tools used by the Israeli digital diplomacy, represented by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (IMF), to improve Israel's image among Arab publics. These strategies and tools will be reached by analyzing the content of the Arabic-speaking Israeli page: "Israel Speaks Arabic" page on Facebook. The analysis will include the two categories of media format and content published by those two pages. This form is essential for obtaining a doctorate degree from Middle Eastern Studies institute at SAU / Turkey for the academic year (2018-2023).

#### **Categories of the Content Analysis:**

**A Time of the posts:** Is the posts of the study page:

1. Timely, relates to the current events?
2. Not immediate/ unrelated to a temporal event?
3. Both: Timely and not immediate?

#### **A. What is the dominant topic of the published posts on the study page?**

1. Political issues and coexistence?
2. Military issues?
3. Economic issues and coexistence?
4. Social issues?
5. Entertainment, tourism, cultural and sports issues?
6. religious issues?
7. Issues of a scientific/technological/medical nature?
8. Humanitarian issues?

#### **B. What is the kind of the used strategies in addressing Arabs through the study page?**

1. religious sympathy strategy?
2. Victim strategy?
3. Promotion and Marketing Strategy?
4. show democracy, Peaceful dialogue strategy?
5. Human-Ethical Concern Strategy?
6. common interests' strategy, Shared risk strategy (e.g., Iran)?
7. Strategy of benefiting Arabs with technology and economy.

**C. What are the used persuasive techniques and tools via the study page?**

1. The emotional style.
2. The rational method.
3. Simulating religion.
4. Intimidation tactic.
5. Simulating the needs and desires of people.

**D. what are the used Propaganda methods in addressing Arabs through the study page?**

1. Repetition and tracking of the event.
2. Shifting attention
3. Stylization?
4. Substitution of nouns and terms?
5. Lying, misrepresentation and falsification of facts?
6. Using notable Persons.

**E. What are the used frameworks on the study page?**

1. A specific framework.
2. General framework.

**F. What are the Types of the used Frameworks?**

1. Strategic framework?
2. Human Interests Framework?
3. Economic Results Framework?
4. Responsibility framework?
5. Conflict framework?
6. Ethical framework?

**G. What are the used proof methods vis the study pages' publications?**

1. Laws.
2. Stats and numbers.
3. Facts and events.
4. Research.
5. Historical events.
6. Points of view and others.

**H. What is the used language in the posts of the study page?**

1. Informational/informational language.
2. Suggestive language.
3. Interrogative posts: include question marks or ask questions.
4. Demonstrative / accusatory means publications containing deplorable statements about a specific event.
5. offensive/inciting language.
6. request, order, prohibition language?

**I. What are the most prominent used terms and words?**

1. Terrorism / counterterrorism / terrorist organizations, Hamas/Iran/Hezbollah/Terror?
2. Population - Palestinian population - Palestinians (instead of using the term people)?

3. Hebrew terms such as: Jerusalem / Judea and Samer / Shabbat Shalom / Mahsom (barrier).
4. The State of Israel / The People of Israel.
5. The Israeli Defense Forces / Israeli Police Forces / Israeli Army Forces.
6. Happy Friday, Eid Mubarak.
7. Normalization / Abraham / Diplomatic relations.
8. Peace/ Peace Treaty/ What a beautiful peace. Brotherhood, closeness, and coexistence.
9. Talking about common danger/risk.
10. Talking about common interests/interests.
11. Mentioning states that normalized relation with Israel (Emirates/ Bahrain/ Sudan/ Morocco).
12. Mentioning other Arab countries (not yet normalizing with Israel).

**J. What is the nature of used terms and words on the study page?**

1. Objective/neutral terms. -
2. Biased and directed terms according to the Israel+++-- vision.
3. Terms related to peace/normalization/diplomatic relations with the Arabs.
4. Terms related to coexistence, cooperation, and rapprochement with the Arabs.
5. Terms about terrorism and terrorist organizations suggest common danger and threat.
6. Terms related to normalizing countries.

**K. What are the types of the Citation on the study page?**

1. Religious: Verses, hadiths, religious texts, Torah, Bible?
2. Literary: poetry, literature.?
3. folklore, traditional songs?

4. Screen shots or share posts taken from opinion leaders in the Arab world?
5. Without a quote.

**L. What are the sources of the published information of the study pages' publications?**

1. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself / official sources?
2. Unofficial Israeli sources/media?
3. International media sources?
4. Arab media sources?
5. Palestinian sources (official, media, etc. e. social media sources.
6. Other sources.

**M. How the study pages' publications deal with the Palestinians cause?**

1. **Neglecting** and not talking about them?
2. Linking them to terrorism?
3. Considering them as a source of unrest in the region?
4. Reporting bad news and posts about them from Arab websites, screenshots, etc.?
5. Or does it avoid transmitting news on time about them?

**N. What is the Geographical scope of the posts of the study page?**

1. Local: Israel, Occupied Jerusalem, Palestinian Territories/West Bank and Gaza Strip.
2. Regional: Middle East, Iran, Turkey?
3. International sources?

**O. What are the Orientation and trends of the content of the study page?**

1. Negative trend.
2. Positive trend.

**Second: Shape analysis categories (How was it said?):**

**P. What are the types of interactive and multimedia elements of the study pages' publications?**

1. Text with photos + hashtags: (news photos, personal photos).
2. Text without pictures or video.
3. Text with video + hashtag.
4. Drawings, maps, and interactive info-graphic maps.
5. Cartoons.
6. Links.

**Q. What is the format of the used videos on the study page?**

1. TV interview video?
2. A recording videos by someone delivering a message.
3. Press release video. D. Promotional video/promo.
4. Live video.
5. Educational video
6. Other

**R. The User's engagement category:**

a. The number of comments on the study pages' publications:

1. Less than 1000 comments
2. Between (1001-4999).
3. Between (5000-10000).
4. More than 10000 comments.

b. The number of 'likes' on the study pages' publications:

1. Less than 1000 likes.
2. Between 1000-2999 likes.

3. Between 3000-5000 likes.

4. More than 5000 likes.

**c. The number of 'shares' of the study pages' publications:**

1. Less than 100 shares.

2. Between 101-499 shares.

3. More than 500 shares.

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## CV

**Linda Shalash**

### **EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND**

**Sakarya University, Türkiye**

PhD in Middle Eastern Studies Institute- **(2018-2023)- GPA 4/4.**

(Thesis titled: How Israel Uses Digital Diplomacy to Improve its Image in Arabic).

**University of Birzeit, Palestine**

MA in International Relations- (2010-2013)- GPA85.3 %

(Thesis titled: The Mutual Interest Between Al Jazeera Channel and the Arab Spring)

**University of Birzeit, Palestine**

BA in Media and Television Broadcasting – (2004-2008). Honor List- GPA 87%.

**High School Certificate**

2006-2007- GPA 97%

### **PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES:**

**Input Editor at Media Vision. Nov 2021- to the present. (Full Time)**

Job requirements:

Setting the agenda for the correspondents.

Coordination with correspondents to prepare stories and reports.

Review digital stories and reports of the reporters.

Coordination with correspondents for Live coverage.

**Freelance Journalist at Al-Jazeera journalism review. Aug 2021 to the present.**

**TV reporter at Al QUDS Satellite channel for 9 years. (2009-2018). (Full Time)**

Work requirements at Al-Quds Tv:

Preparing and presenting news reports and stories in Palestine. I had outside missions in (US, Chile, Morocco, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Malta), where I reported news and stories about the Palestinians in these countries.

Preparing and producing Documentaries and investigations. The most important of these are: “The Fall of Al-moqata’a”, which talks about the Israeli siege over Yasser Arafat, PLO’s ex- leader, in Ramallah in 2001. And an investigation on security status of one of the most dangerous Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank.

Live coverage. I provided important coverage, notably coverage of prisoner exchange deals, clashes with the Israeli army, and Palestinian prisoners' hunger strike.

#### **PUBLICATIONS:**

**BOOK CHAPTER:** “Israeli Digital Diplomacy: A Reading in Propaganda Strategies,” in **Israeli Propaganda: A Reading in Soft Power**, Istanbul: Vision Center for Political Development, 2023, pp. 74-104.

**JOURNAL ARTICLE:** The Israeli digital diplomacy directed to the Arabs: An analysis of the “Israel speaks Arabic” Facebook Page." **Journal of Al-Tamaddun**, 18.1 2023, pp. 245-263.

#### **Press courses and other qualifications:**

Winning the “Bronze Award” for one of my reports. The Jordan Media Festival. 2016.

A certificate in comprehensive journalism - Reuters - London / 2014.

A certificate on reporting from BBC English- Amman- 2012.

#### **Languages:**

Arabic: Mother tongue.

English: Excellent.

Turkish: good.