

The Israeli Digital Diplomacy Directed at the Arabs: An Analysis of the “Israel Speaks Arabic” Facebook Page

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Abstract

Due to advances in technology, foreign countries and their diplomats have resorted to social media to reach a wider and more global audience. Israel, like many others, has taken advantage of the digital world to improve its image in the Middle East. In fact, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs started a special department for digital diplomacy, which manages dozens of digital pages in multiple languages. This paper investigates the strategies that Israel has employed in its digital diplomacy in recent years to improve its image with its Arab neighbors by analyzing approximately 600 posts published on the Israeli Facebook page “Israel Speaks Arabic.” Results of the analysis reveal that the page employs many propaganda strategies to attract Arabs and earn their recognition and acceptance of Israel, such as positing digital publications in frameworks related to conflict, responsibility, and morality in a way that shows Israel as a rational, democratic, peace-loving state that cooperates with its Arab neighbors. “Israel Speaks Arabic” also employs persuasive means that address passion and desires using religion and the humanization of the occupation and its army. Other strategies include the manipulation of terminology, repetition, the amplification of events, and the employment of eminent Arabic voices against the Palestinians that serve Israel’s narrative at the expense of the Palestinian one. The article rests on framing theory.

Keywords: Public diplomacy, digital diplomacy, social media, Israel, Arabs, propaganda, framing theory

Introduction

Recent years have witnessed the emergence of digital diplomacy, whereby many developed states have realized its potential to win the hearts and minds of foreign publics and rebrand the states’ images. Digital diplomacy refers to the overall impact information and communication technologies (ICTs) have had on the practice of diplomacy, ranging from emails to smartphones and social networking sites.¹ Social media platforms have enabled Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) to communicate and influence audiences’ perceptions directly, easily, and without major costs.² Social media, as one of digital diplomacy’s main tools, facilitates the two-way engagement and dialogue with foreign publics. The latter is the fundamental difference between digital diplomacy and public diplomacy, also known as twentieth-century diplomacy in which states practice diplomacy through traditional media. Overall, digital diplomacy can lead to the creation of online relationships that can have a positive impact on a state’s foreign policy.³

Israel has been one of the most active countries in utilizing digital diplomacy in its foreign affairs in the Middle East since 2016.⁴ Despite signing peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, in 1987 and 1994, respectively, Israel could not directly communicate with these two nations whose populations viewed Israel as an oppressive and racist occupying power.⁵ However, during the last decade, Israel realized the importance of digital media in communicating with Arabs, especially in countries with which it does not have official and diplomatic relations. In fact, Israel took advantage of the changes in the Arab region that accompanied the Arab uprisings to communicate with the Arab peoples for the first time in its history through social media platforms, and to portray itself as a developed democratic country that

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¹ Ilan Manor (2016), “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*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 1-110.

² Corneliu Bjola and Marcus Holmes (2015), *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, New York: Routledge, pp. 71-88.

³ Bruce Gregory (2011), “American Public Diplomacy: Enduring Characteristics, Elusive Transformation,” *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, Vol. 6, No. 3-4, pp. 351-372.

⁴ Muath Al Amoudi (2018), “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, No. 4, pp. 134-135.

⁵ Maram Humaid (2021), “Israeli Arabic-Language Digital Diplomacy: An Analysis of the ‘Israel speaks in Arabic’ Facebook page,” Doha Institute for Graduate Studies.

loves peace, culture, and diversity. At the same time, it avoids talking about its occupation and policies against the Palestinians. In fact, the Israeli digital platforms in Arabic have a massive following as the number of followers of certain pages exceeds one million. Gradually, Israel, through its digital diplomacy, has been able to penetrate Arab digital space and communicate with millions through social networking sites.⁶

This article explores the online strategies, media frameworks, and propaganda methods used by Israel's digital diplomacy directed towards the Arabs, through analyzing the content of 600 posts published on the "Israel Speaks Arabic" Facebook page. "Israel Speaks Arabic" is one of the most popular social network sites run by the Israeli MFA and expresses the country's official policy towards the Arabs, attracting millions of Arab followers. As of October 10, 2022, it is followed by more than 3 million accounts. The page, which was created on January 10, 2011, is managed by the Arabic Division of the Israeli Diplomatic Department.⁷

Theoretical Framework

The article rests on framing theory, one of the modern tributaries of communication studies that helps researchers measure the implicit content of media and systemically explain the role of media in shaping ideas and attitudes towards prominent issues.⁸ Framing theory focuses on how media draws the public to specific topics, i.e., setting the agenda, and then how it takes a step further to create a frame through which the audience will comprehend such information. Creating frames for stories is a common and deliberate choice made by reporters, journalists, and/or editors. This, in a way, justifies the media as gatekeepers who mindfully collect, select, "organize and present the ideas, events, and topics they cover."⁹

One of framing theory's assumptions is that events do not have a specific meaning without being placed in frames that organize and give the events a consistency by focusing on some of their aspects and neglecting others. It also assumes that frames affect public opinions, attitudes, and decisions.¹⁰ The sociologist Erving Goffman was the first to coin the concept of "framing analysis" in his 1974 article, where the term is used to represent social issues and individuals' abilities to understand and interpret what is going on around them based on their primary framework.¹¹ According to Goffman, the term "frame" can be replaced with "script," or labels such as representation, argument, or genre.¹² Framing theory is a useful tool to explore the role of Israeli digital diplomacy in systematically communicating with Arab publics, and to examine the propaganda methods and strategies used in the construction of frame packages that are embedded in discourse and media texts.

Digital Diplomacy: Overcoming the Limitations of Traditional Diplomacy

Diplomacy in its traditional form is one of the soft power elements that states use to promote their values and ideas peacefully. It includes international rules, procedures, and norms that regulate relations between states and international organizations through diplomatic representatives with the aim of serving the security, economic, and political interests of states, and is achieved through negotiations, international agreements, and treaties.¹³ The revolution in information and communication technologies and globalization have changed the political, social, and economic landscape around the world by addressing millions of people directly and without geographical constraints.¹⁴ This has given rise to what is referred to as "digital diplomacy" which became an essential tool in international foreign policy by helping states reach huge sections of publics and affect their attitudes. Adesina Olubukola notes that

⁶ Linda Shalash (2023), "Israeli Digital Diplomacy: A Reading in Propaganda Strategies," in: *Israeli Propaganda: A Reading in Soft Power*, Istanbul: Vision Center for Political Development. Pp: 77-88.

⁷ Izzeddin Alrantisi et al. (2022), "Utilizing Digital Diplomacy in the Israeli Discourse to Influence Arab Public Opinion during the Israeli Aggression on Gaza 2021," *Baltic Journal of Law & Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 1, p. 744.

⁸ Abdul Razik Dulaimi (2017), *Communication Theories in the Twenty-First Century*, Amman: Yazori Scientific House for Publication and Distribution.

⁹ Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman (2007), "Framing Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 10, pp. 105-107.

¹⁰ David Tewksbury and Dietram A. Scheufele (2019), "News Framing Theory and Research," in Mary Beth Oliver, Arthur A. Raney and Jennings Bryant (eds.), *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*, London & New York: Routledge, pp. 51-68.

¹¹ Tewksbury and Scheufele (2019), "News Framing Theory and Research," pp. 51-68.

¹² Robert Entman (1993), "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 43, No. 4, pp. 51-58.

¹³ Tamer Muhammad (2000), *Contemporary Diplomacy and Negotiation Management Strategy*, Amman, Dar Al Masirah for Publishing and Distribution, p. 21.

¹⁴ Ellen Hallams (2010), "Digital diplomacy: The Internet, the Battle for Ideas & US Foreign Policy," Paperwork, Political Studies Association Annual Conference.

The Israeli Digital Diplomacy Directed at the Arabs: An Analysis of the "Israel Speaks Arabic" Facebook Page information and communication technology have changed the way people communicate and exchange information, as well as changing political, social, and economic life worldwide.¹⁵

Digital diplomacy is defined as a form of public diplomacy, which includes the use of digital technologies and social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, among others, to communicate with foreign audiences in an inexpensive way.¹⁶ Ronit Kampf, Ilan Manor, and Elad Segev define digital diplomacy as the increased use of social media platforms by the state to achieve its foreign policy objectives and manage its reputation and image.¹⁷ Digital diplomacy is also known by other terms such as e-diplomacy and diplomacy 2.0. The diplomacy of Twitter is also known as "Twiplomacy."¹⁸

Information and communication technology have fundamentally influenced diplomacy and brought about an important change in the way people communicate and exchange information. Digital diplomacy provides individuals with several channels of communication to express their opinions; provides means for interactive communication between different parties; and creates interactive environments across borders. MFAs' and diplomats' migration to the online realm has coincided with many factors.¹⁹ First, the need to counter Al Qaeda's narratives and the efforts to wage jihad against Western imperialism. Second, the need to counter the Arab revolutions that heavily relied on social media as a tool for organizing political events, and third, the emergence of citizen journalists who achieved wide fame through social media by reporting events immediately on a global scale, in addition to their role in effecting change through communication. Moreover, some argue that diplomats simply migrated online to overcome the limitations of traditional spatial-temporal diplomacy.²⁰

Digital diplomacy has provided countries an opportunity to communicate with foreigners easily, build positive mental images, promote their policies abroad, and launch virtual embassies in countries with which they do not have official political relations. Moreover, digital diplomacy eased the flow of information to the public rather than information being monopolized and facilitated by official consulates in cases of emergencies. Digital diplomacy allowed communicating quickly with states' nationals abroad and contributed to the prediction of social and political movements.²¹ However, digital diplomacy also has shortcomings,²² such as the possibility of leaking sensitive national information, hacking the accounts of officials, and publishing offensive and alarming content. The algorithms of social networking sites represent another challenge whereby the algorithm can detect one's political affiliation and accordingly provide content that matches one's views and beliefs.

Digitalizing Diplomacy: Israel's Experience

Despite Israel's role in developing information technology as a "start-up nation" and its global position as a leader in the cyberwarfare industry, its reputation and image have not been immune to criticism during the last two decades as a result of its aggressive military operations against the Palestinians, namely the second Palestinian Intifada; attacks on Gaza in 2008-2009, 2012, and 2014; the attack on the *Mavi Marmara* ship aimed at breaking the siege on the Gaza Strip in 2010; and Israel's continuous military violations in the West Bank.²³ Such aggressive actions constituted a turning point in international dealings with Israel, where the latter was forced to adopt a more assertive diplomacy by escalating its efforts in cyberspace to confront Palestinians and gain international support of its cause. The Israeli government established a specialized office to revamp Israel's diplomacy, also known as "hasbara," whereby the public diplomacy service has been transferred to the Prime Minister's Office, also known as "Hasbara National Headquarters."²⁴ The headquarters adopted advanced communication strategies that combine traditional and new media; leads various programs and educational courses in

¹⁵ Olubukola S. Adesina (2016), "Foreign Policy in an Era of Digital Diplomacy," *African Journal for the Psychological Study of Social Issues*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 169-189.

¹⁶ Bjola and Holmes (2015), *Digital Diplomacy*, pp. 71-88.

¹⁷ Ronit Kampf, Ilan Manor and Elad Segev (2015), "Digital Diplomacy 2.0? A Cross-National Comparison of Public Engagement in Facebook and Twitter," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 331-362.

¹⁸ Huang Q. Elyse (2020), "Facebook Not State Book: Defining SNS Diplomacy with Four Modes of Online Diplomatic Participation," *International Journal of Communication*, No.14, pp. 1-18.

¹⁹ Ilan Manor and Marcus Holmes (2018), "Palestine in Hebrew: Overcoming the Limitations of Traditional Diplomacy," *Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior*, No.113, pp. 1-17.

²⁰ Ellen Hallams (2010), "Digital Diplomacy: The Internet, the Battle for Ideas & US Foreign Policy," *CEU Political Science Journal*, Vol. 4, pp. 538-574.

²¹ Manor (2016), "Are We There Yet," pp. 1-110.

²² Manor (2016), "Are We There Yet," pp. 1-110.

²³ Miriyam Aouragh (2016), "Hasbara 2.0: Israel's Public Diplomacy in the Digital Age," *Middle East Critique*, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 271-297.

²⁴ Aouragh (2016), "Hasbara 2.0."

many Israeli universities; and has provided scholarships to generate competencies capable of promoting Israel on the internet.²⁵

Israel's efforts with digital diplomacy increased with the Arab uprisings which broke out in 2010. The Israeli MFA launched the Digital Diplomacy Department as part of its effort to create more favorable international public opinion and improve Israel's image globally. The department is managing about 800 platforms on social media in 50 languages, including, among others, official platforms for embassies and consulates, pages of Israeli diplomats and officials, and websites on major social media platforms.²⁶ In this context, the MFA established a section dedicated to the Arabic language to interact with the Arab publics on numerous social networks for the first time in Israel's history. The focus of this section is on audiences in countries that do not have any official relations with Israel.

In time, Israel became one of the leading countries in using social media platforms to promote its narratives and policies, especially during conflict times with Palestinians with digital diplomacy levels during military attacks being especially intense.²⁷ The Australian Defense Force's director general of public affairs, Brigadier Alison Creagh, described Israel's use of social media during the Gaza campaigns as powerful, noting that "Israel has proven to be the most innovative and pioneering user of digital new media technologies among democratic states." She went on to add, "The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) has used them extensively in two recent conflicts in Gaza with Hamas to sell its war narrative directly to its citizens."²⁸

The Israeli army's participation in digital diplomacy activities has been remarkable as well. The army launched its own blog, Twitter account, and YouTube channel in the wake of the *Marmara* incident in 2010 and became the second most subscribed to channel on YouTube during the Gaza War (2008-2009), also known as Operation Cast Lead.²⁹ In 2016 and 2017, the Israeli MFA hosted two international conferences about digital diplomacy with the participation of international experts from prominent universities such as Oxford University and Harvard University.³⁰ More importantly, since 2016, Israel has an advanced position among countries that use digital diplomacy and is celebrated as the fourth country to make use of digital diplomacy on a global level.³¹

Many pro-Israel civil society organizations and initiatives from within and outside the state of Israel have participated in digital diplomacy efforts. Notable examples include StandWithUs, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP).³² The participation of both official and non-official levels, and civil society organizations in the efforts of digital diplomacy is evidence of the great interest that Israel attaches to digital diplomacy to market its narrative and improve its image among Arabs and on the international level. It also demonstrates the ability of digital diplomacy to achieve the foreign policy goals of countries quickly and easily.

Diplomacy Efforts Directed towards Israel's Arab Neighbors

Israel has traditionally tried to connect with the Arab public both in Palestine and in surrounding Arabic-speaking countries. In fact, the Israeli public diplomacy efforts in addressing Arabs started shortly after establishing the state of Israel on Palestine in 1948. Several Israeli Arabic-speaking media outlets were established as part of its psychological warfare to weaken the Palestinians' and Arabs' trust in their leaders and their local media.³³ For instance, during the first days of the war of 1967, the radio station

²⁵ Al Amoudi (2018), "Official Digital Diplomacy," pp. 134-135.

²⁶ Felice Friedson and Uri Cohen (2020), "Israel's Secret Weapon: 800 Channels on Social Media," *The Jerusalem Post*, retrieved January 30, 2023, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/israels-secret-diplomatic-weapon-800-channels-on-social-media-646689>.

²⁷ Ben Makuch (2014), "Israel is Outgunning Hamas on Social Media, Too," *Motherboard Vice*, retrieved July 20, 2022, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/4x3n5g/israel-is-outgunning-hamas-on-social-media-too>.

²⁸ Cynthia Bahnam (2013), "Legitimizing War in A Changing Media Landscape," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 67, No. 5, pp. 615-617.

²⁹ Jonathan Cook (2009), "Internet Users Paid to Spread Israeli Propaganda," *The Electronic Intifada*, retrieved July 7, 2022, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/internet-users-paid-spread-israeli-propaganda/8355>.

³⁰ Al Amoudi (2018), "Official Digital Diplomacy," pp. 125-149.

³¹ Mohamed Abdul-Hassan (2021), "Employing Digital Diplomacy in Foreign Policy: Israel as a Model," *University of Baghdad*, retrieved July 20, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351287851_Employing_digital_diplomacy_in_foreign_policy_israel_as_a_model.

³² Shai Nachman (2018), *Hearts and Minds: Israel and the Battle for Public Opinion*, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 125-126.

³³ Samuel-Azran and Moran Yarchi (2018), "Military Public Diplomacy 2.0: The Arabic Facebook Page of the Israeli Defense Forces' Spokesperson," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 323-344.

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"Voice of Israel," which broadcasts in Arabic, reported that the Israeli air jets had destroyed most of the Arab air forces and claimed that Arab radio stations were lying to Arab publics.³⁴ Following the war, which resulted in the occupation of Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza, the Israeli media efforts expanded to affirm Israel's military excellence, as well as airing soft power messages aiming to attract the Arab residents within its borders.³⁵

Despite such media initiatives' relative success in attracting audiences, the emergence of Arab satellite channels in the 1990s such as Al Jazeera Arabic channel, shifted the scales in favor of the latter, and Palestinian and Arab audiences became more attracted to those channels and thus, decreased the influence of Israeli media.³⁶ During the last two decades, Israel resorted to the internet and social media networks to interact with Arabs, taking advantage of the Arabs' interest in the internet during the Arab Spring uprisings where social media platforms represented an alternative space for them to express themselves away from traditional media outlets which conventionally represented the regimes. Approximately 280 million Arabs live in the Middle East, 145 million of them use the internet, and 100 million use Facebook and other social media sites.³⁷ Hence, Israel realized the importance of digital media in influencing and effecting change, and took advantage of these developments to communicate with the Arab peoples for the first time in its history through many social media platforms.

In 2010, the Israeli MFA launched a special channel for Arabs within its Digital Diplomacy Department, responsible for several Arabic-speaking pages on social media platforms, such as "Israel speaks Arabic," "Israel in the Gulf," and "Israel in the Iraqi dialect." The Facebook page "Israel speaks in Arabic" has attracted more than 3 million followers to date.³⁸ The team members of these channels are fluent in the Arabic language, since some of them come from families that immigrated to Israel from Arab countries such as Yemen, Iraq, and Syria.³⁹ Hence, the Arabic digital diplomacy team is fully aware of the customs and traditions of Arab peoples, their preferences, their likes, and dislikes. Yonatan Gonen, the head of Israel's Arabic Digital Diplomacy Department, stated that the goal was to establish a dialogue with Arabs, and present the policies of Israel to the publics in the Arab world, especially in countries with which Israel has not signed peace agreements, such as Iraq.⁴⁰

Parallel to the Israeli MFA's role in managing public diplomacy tasks in Arabic, the Israeli Defense Forces Spokespersons' Unit is remarkably involved in implementing the objectives of this diplomacy, especially in times of conflict. For instance, Avichay Adraee, the head of the Arab Media Department of the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) Spokespersons' Unit, uses his official Facebook page to advocate for activities of the Israeli army and to promote its so-called commitment to the values of humanity. The page also strategically employs religion and Qur'anic verses or hadith, especially on religious occasions such as the month of Ramadan and holidays.⁴¹ In this context, several Israeli institutions and official figures followed suit and are active in interacting with Arabs and conveying positive messages about Israel.

All official and unofficial Arabic-speaking Israeli pages share positive images of Israel, highlighting claims such as Israel being the only democratic country in the Middle East, Israel's love of peace with its neighbors and its commitment to moral and human values, and the promotion of Israel as a state with a diverse population of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. These pages also focus on showing Israel's scientific, technological, and medical superiority and capabilities. On the other hand, the pages deliberately attack and slander the Palestinians, especially in times of conflicts and wars, and describe Palestinian and Arab political parties such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Lebanese Hezbollah, not to

³⁴ Michael B. Oren (2002), "[Book Review] Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East," *New Statesman*, Vol. 131, pp. 34-36.

³⁵ Humaid (2021), "Israeli Arabic-Language Digital Diplomacy," p. 13.

³⁶ Tal Samuel-Azran and Moran Yarchi (2018), "Military Public Diplomacy 2.0: The Arabic Facebook Page of the Israeli Defense Forces' Spokesperson," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 323-344.

³⁷ "Digital Diplomacy and Its Impact on the Arab Israeli Conflict," *Gulf Center for Strategic Studies*, retrieved August 15, 2022, <http://www.akhbar-alkhaleej.com/news/article/1183560>.

³⁸ Shalash (2023), "Israeli Digital Diplomacy: A Reading in Propaganda Strategies", pp:77-88.

³⁹ Linda Shalash (2021), "Israeli digital diplomacy to polish the image of the occupation in the region," *TRT*, retrieved July 10, 2022, <https://cutt.us/cOr07>.

⁴⁰ Wael Abdel-Aal (2018), *Palestinian Digital Diplomacy and Its Position in Palestinian Foreign Policy*, Birzeit University: Media Development Center.

⁴¹ Moran Yarith, Tal Samuel-Azran and Lidor Bar-David (2017), "Facebook Users' Engagement with Israel's Public Diplomacy Messages During the 2012 and 2014 Military Operations in Gaza," *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 360-375.

mention Iran, as terrorist and wreaking havoc in the region.⁴² The digital attacks go even further: the pages attack any international movement that may support the Palestinian cause and oppose the Israeli occupation, such as the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement which Israel describes as “anti-Semitic.” Felice Friedson and Uri Cohen describe the Israeli Arabic speaking social media outlets as a “secret diplomatic weapon in fostering relations with Arab world.”⁴³

Indeed, Arabic-speaking Israeli digital platforms have a high number of followers. That said, a large percentage of the comments contains negative sentiments towards Israel, especially after the recent wave of normalization with several Arab governments. The Israeli MFA is working tirelessly to enhance the Israeli narrative covertly and strategically in the Arab space while marginalizing the Palestinian narrative.

Research Methodology

This article sets out to study the strategies that Israeli digital diplomacy employs in its platforms that reach out to Arab audiences. The article uses the descriptive approach and the method of content analysis, which is common in communication, media research, and popular culture studies that fall under the survey methodology. Content analysis is a systematic and quantitative method of analyzing the content or meaning of communicative messages.⁴⁴ Ole R Holsti defines content analysis as “any technique for making inferences objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages.”⁴⁵ Content analysis helps researchers examine large amounts of data with relative ease and in a systematic manner.

An analysis form is a set of methodological steps that seek to discover meaning through the objective and organized quantitative research of the characteristics of a phenomenon.⁴⁶ For this study, a content analysis form was prepared to collect data and draw equations for recurrence relations in order to classify the data objectively and comprehensively. The form was divided into six subcategories: grooming elements; propaganda tactics and strategies; strategies of communication; proof methods; content discourse language, which includes suggestive discourse language, news language, offensive, inflammatory language, interrogative language, and request or commanding language; and media frameworks. To ensure transparency, the form went to arbitration and was reviewed by several media specialists and academics.

The article analyzes the content of 600 posts published on the “Israel speaks Arabic” Facebook page over a period of five months from May 1 to Oct 30, 2021. This specific period was chosen as it witnessed many important events on the level of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Arab-Israeli relations, such as the events of the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem and the Israeli attempts to expel many Palestinian families from the neighborhood in favor of the settlers, a major Israeli attack on Al-Aqsa Mosque during the month of Ramadan, the subsequent Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip,⁴⁷ the first anniversary of the signing of the peace agreements with Bahrain and the UAE, and the signing of economic agreements with a number of Arab countries. The sample was collected manually according to date. The unit of analysis is the “Israel speaks Arabic” publication, and the article relies on counting and repetition as a measurement method.

Findings and Discussion

Content analysis of the study sample revealed that Israel uses many strategies and tactics to communicate with Arabs via the Facebook page “Israel speaks Arabic.”

Media Frameworks

The results of the analytical study showed that Israeli digital diplomacy utilizes several frameworks for its publications to influence and attract its target audiences. The “conflict and responsibility framework”

⁴² Shalash (2021), “Israeli Digital Diplomacy to Polish the Image of the Occupation in the Region.”

⁴³ Friedson and Cohen (2020), *Israel’s Secret Weapon*.

⁴⁴ Klaus Krippendorff (2004), “Reliability in Content Analysis: Some Common Misconceptions and Recommendations,” *Human Communication Research*, Vol. 30, p. 44.

⁴⁵ Ole R. Holsti (1969), *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities*, MA: Addison-Wesley (content analysis), p. 4.

⁴⁶ Abdul Hamid Mohamed (1997), *Press Research*, 1st edition, Cairo: Dar Alam Al-Kutub, p. 132.

⁴⁷ Alrantisi et al. (2022), “Utilizing Digital Diplomacy in the Israeli Discourse,” pp. 740-741.

The Israeli Digital Diplomacy Directed at the Arabs: An Analysis of the “Israel Speaks Arabic” Facebook Page ranked first with a percentage of 32.8 (233 posts). This was demonstrated by showing the intensity of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, holding Islamic movements such as Hamas fully responsible for the Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip, viewing those who are hostile toward Israel as the losing parties, and always presenting Israel as victorious. In this context, the page deliberately framed Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran as the “axis of evil” in the Middle East. For example, on May 13, 2021, the page in question published a post linking Israel to goodness, progress, and innovation, while linking Hamas, Iran, and Hezbollah to the “axis of evil” which brings destruction to Gaza, Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon (Figure 1).⁴⁸

Figure 1: Linking Hamas, Iran, and Hezbollah to the “axis of evil”



Source: “Israel speaks Arabic,” Facebook, May 13, 2021

The above finding agrees with the study by Izzedin Alrantis, Norhayati Abdul Rahim, Ihab Awais, and Wesam Almahallawi, which found that the language of the “Israel speaks Arabic” page relied primarily on framing its publications within the framework of responsibility, followed by the moral framework during the last war on Gaza in 2021.⁴⁹ The “strategic framework” ranked second with a rate of 25.7 percent (183 posts). This can be attributed to the nature of the Israeli propaganda discourse, which aims to make the Arab audiences see, interpret, and judge the events from a security/military perspective. The “economic results framework” ranked third with 15 percent (107 posts), as the page presented the results of the recent economic agreements signed with Arab countries, such as Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt, and highlighted the positive results of these agreements on the prosperity and development of the economy of those countries. The “Ethical Framework” ranked fourth with 13.2 percent (94 posts) and used Arab religious and cultural slogans to gain the sympathy of Muslims and Arabs and influence them. The “humanitarian concerns framework” ranked last with 8.8 percent (63 posts). This was demonstrated by framing the posts in a humanitarian context with the aim of affecting the emotions of followers. The remaining posts amounted to 4.5 percent of the 600 posts analyzed.

Grooming Elements

The analytical study found that Israel employs many grooming elements to attract its targeted publics. The “simulating needs, desires, and emotions method” was the most prevalent with the high rate of 80.9 percent. This approach was clear in the “Israel speaks Arabic” page, as it is the easiest way to reach out to Arabs by addressing their needs and desires, and exploiting their feelings through publications about sympathy, coexistence, and rapprochement between Israel and the Arab countries. Focusing on such emotions aims to gain the attention of the public.⁵⁰ For example, on August 19, 2021, the page published

⁴⁸ “Israel Speaks Arabic,” *Facebook*, retrieved February 11, 2023, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0AXvKwwwxxg4aywJkXVp6UFYBtAWK2E4nVPNcncEnLKgsevDaSUBnQycYKFoALRCvZI&id=173441069359976&sfnsn=scwspmo&mibextid=6aamW6.

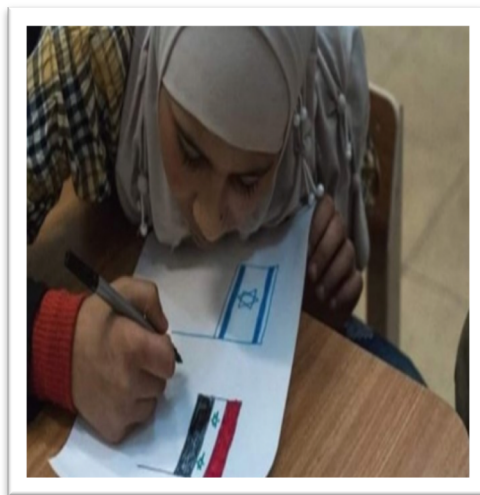
⁴⁹ Alrantisi et al. (2022), “Utilizing Digital Diplomacy in the Israeli Discourse,” p. 246.

* The total sums of the posts in the discussion that follows do not equal the number of analyzed posts as some included more than one analytical category (media framework, propaganda tactic, strategy, etc.). This holds true for all subsequent sections of the article.

⁵⁰ Holli A Semetko and Patti M. Valkenburg. (2000), “Framing European Politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News,” *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 50, No. 2, pp. 93-109.

a post of a Syrian girl drawing the Syrian and Israeli flags while she was receiving treatment in an Israeli hospital. The post was captioned, “This girl was treated in Israel after being injured in Syria...This is what made the girl acknowledge her gratitude to Israel, which she expresses in this image” (Figure 2).⁵¹ Such a post aims to tap into the feelings of the Arabs, and make them see Israel as a humanitarian country that aids others.

Figure 2: Simulating needs and emotions method



Source: “Israel speaks Arabic” Facebook, August 19, 2021

In September, the page published a post showing the importance of peace with Israel and its role in achieving prosperity for the Arab world. The post featured a cartoon of four youths wearing T-shirts with the flags of Arab countries, namely Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Qatar. They look up at the sky, where planes from Bahrain and the Emirates are heading to Israel. The accompanying text reads, “Dozens of agreements in one year... More than a trillion dollars in a decade... Millions of young people in the region will benefit from peace outcomes in various fields.” Publications such as these aim to influence the Arab youth and push them towards accepting Israel and achieving peace with it on the premise that this will lead to the advancement of the Arab peoples and prosperity for their youth (Figure 3).⁵²

Figure 3: Publication employing “simulating needs” method



Source: “Israel speaks Arabic,” Facebook, September 26, 2021

⁵¹ “Israel Speaks Arabic,” Facebook, retrieved February 11, 2023, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid034UooHvhD75HnaWyaqU3i5uaHydPqY9Bp1WGYBVvLVGwtcpVuBdvM3JPpMTU8fKT1l&id=100064604443012&sfn=scwspmo&mibextid=6aamW6.

⁵² “Israel speaks Arabic,” Facebook, retrieved February 11, 2023, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0mBH3c4yRb5AzSYsjkRt1FnKJYnx6yUxi6eTb4iMJEHcU9FQ7mJUqDvUTg4A4sl&id=100064604443012&sfn=scwspmo&mibextid=6aamW6

The Israeli Digital Diplomacy Directed at the Arabs: An Analysis of the “Israel Speaks Arabic” Facebook Page “Simulating religion” ranked second with a rate of 12.1 percent. In her study, Maram Humaid found 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 holiday greetings to Arabs on their religious occasions such as Ramadan and using verses from the Qur’an or hadith.⁵³ On August 29, 2021, the page published a photo of two soldiers, one Jewish and the other Muslim, performing their prayers. Figure 4 is a screenshot of this picture 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 that believes in pluralism.”⁵⁴ The “rational method” ranked third with 4.9 percent, and last came the “Intimidation method” with 2.1 percent.

Figure 4: Picture posted by “Israel speaks Arabic” showing a photo of two soldiers in the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), a Jew and Muslim, performing their prayers. The text reads, “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 that believes in pluralism.”



Source: “Israel speaks Arabic,” Facebook, August 29, 2021

Propaganda Tactics

The “repetition and stalking tactic” ranked first with 39.4 percent (368 posts). This method is one of the fundamental propaganda tools used to convince the masses and influence their attitudes on certain issues and was used in Nazi propaganda during World War II. Joseph Goebbels, the German minister of propaganda, claims that effective propaganda lies in focusing on certain facts and repeatedly directing people’s ears and eyes towards them. This method relies on the “repetition of effective arguments” that must be “clear and appeal to emotions and instincts, not to the intellect.”⁵⁵ The Israeli digital pages, in general, focus their propaganda discourse on the repetition method to entrench a certain idea in the mind of the audience. For example, the page under study repeatedly talks about the effects of the rockets of the Palestinian resistance 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 the freedom of worship for all.

While Israel was waging a military war on the Gaza Strip in May 2021, the “Israel speaks Arabic” page published several posts about Israel’s belief in pluralism, equality, coexistence, and love among its citizens regardless of their religion (Figure 5).⁵⁶

⁵³ Humaid (2021), “Israeli Arabic-Language Digital Diplomacy,” p. 2.

⁵⁴ “Israel speaks Arabic,” Facebook, retrieved February 11, 2023, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0xCV3AHSKHLH2WmNekrzDxtFXyN6S8x6R8sYfQuNvDwEiy5QpLeY9fmu8cqmqQFTrol&id=100064604443012&sfnsn=scwspmo&mibextid=6aamW6

⁵⁵ Reuters (2020), “Fact Check: Joseph Goebbels Misquote on “Converting Intellectuals” Resurfaces,” *Reuters*, retrieved February 11, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-joseph-goebbels-misquote-co-idUSKBN2492TD>.

⁵⁶ “Israel Speaks Arabic,” Facebook, retrieved February 11, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=970820403662636>.

Figure 5: A video posted on the “Israel speaks Arabic” page on May 15, 2021, in which an Israeli citizen speaks about Israel’s belief in equality, pluralism, and respect for all religions. The video was accompanied by the text, “In Israel all of us, form different religions, we have one homeland. Everyone’s privacy is respected. Look how beautiful this diversity and coexistence in Tel Aviv, for example.”



Source: “Israel Speaks Arabic,” Facebook, May 15, 2021

The employment of “eminent personalities” ranked second with 17.4 percent (163 posts). This method entails referencing the sayings of prominent figures against Palestinians, their resistance, Iran, and Hezbollah. This approach also makes use of citations by several Arab tweeters supporting the state of Israel (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Quoting the late Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, who was known for his support of peace with Israel



Source: “Israel speaks Arabic,” Facebook, June 6, 2021

Above in Figure 6, we see a post that includes an image and a quote from the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, who was known for his support of peace with Israel. The post includes one of his quotes where he states, “Those who cannot change their ways of thinking will not be able to change their realities nor will they be able to make any progress.” The post is captioned with “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.”⁵⁷ 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-language Israeli pages have focused on recently after several Arab governments (UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco) normalized their relations with Israel.

⁵⁷ “Israel Speaks Arabic,” Facebook, retrieved February 11, 2023, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid032TWtAG7G353FRSS59jVsH1qR4hzidNPRU9dPEUpNafLxP2MmfCPwFtEHb5CWUGtal&id=100065221773028&sfnsn=scwspmo&mibextid=6aamW6.

The “embellishment method,” i.e., the use of flowery, beautifying terms and attractive words and vocabulary, came in third place with a percentage of 15.5 (145 posts). This is an effective propaganda method based on persuasion and influence.

The “attention shifting method” ranked fourth with a percent of 11.9 (111 posts). This tactic entails focusing on issues other than those that are taking place at the time. Thus, it was observed that the page in question focused on non-political and social issues inside Israel 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. For example, several posts were published about what the page claims is Israel’s “humanity,” “diversity,” and “pluralism” (Figure 7).⁵⁸ It is clear here that the Israeli digital workers or diplomats involved in Arabic digital diplomacy carefully and strategically present and post a variety of topics to support their agenda further.

Figure 7: Images promoting claims of humanity, diversity, and pluralism in Israeli-Arab relations



Source: “Israel speaks Arabic,” Facebook, May 16, 2021

The tactic of “substituting names and terms” ranked fifth with 8.5 percent (79 posts). This method entails manipulating terminology and choosing names that correspond to Israeli policy and narrative. For instance, there is an abundant use of terms such as “terrorists” and “saboteurs” in reference to the Palestinian and Arab resistance, as well as replacing names of Arabic cities with Hebrew names, such as “Judea and Samaria” instead of the “Occupied West Bank.” These findings support Muhammad Ezzat’s finding that the “method of replacing names” is one of the propaganda methods and tactics used in the Facebook page of Avichay Adraee, the head of the Arab Media Department of the IDF Spokespersons’ Unit.⁵⁹

The tactic of “lying, deception and falsification of facts” ranked last with a percentage of 7.3 (68 posts). This method entails misleading public opinion and obscuring information. For example, on June 10, the page published an image of the effects of the Israeli bombing of a school accusing Hamas of endangering the lives of students in Gaza. The image was captioned, “Hamas tunnels have turned school students into human shields! This is one of the tunnels that Hamas is investing to serve Iran in its terrorist project at the expense of the children of Gaza” (Figure 8).⁶⁰

⁵⁸ “Israel Speaks Arabic,” *Facebook*, retrieved October 30, 2022, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02sWYrWRFLGG2Fr986p5K3jFjYgDaqH9hbycSV5FeohmWRxK39YSh4ETmKUA4MwmLkl&id=173441069359976&sfnsn=scwspmo&mibextid=6aamW6.

⁵⁹ Mohammed Mostafa Refaat Moharam Ezzat (2002), “The Zionist Propaganda Discourse on Twitter during the Fourth War on Gaza in 2021: Analytical Study,” *The Egyptian Journal of Media Research*, Vol. 78, p. 520.

⁶⁰ “Israel Speaks Arabic,” *Facebook*, retrieved October 30, 2023, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02v8gMKVxHe83dS8WkCwFcNtcTXiHkZ8YX9kEh8uEiAqFXTPICorcNzNqLHnZRCa5Hl&id=100064604443012&sfnsn=scwspmo&mibextid=6aamW6.

Figure 8: Post by “Israel speaks Arabic” utilizing a lying strategy. The image discusses an Israeli bombing of a school by accusing Hamas of endangering the lives of students in Gaza. It writes, “Hamas tunnels have turned school students into human shields! This is one of the tunnels that Hamas is investing to serve Iran in its terrorist project at the expense of the children of Gaza.”



Source: “Israel speaks Arabic,” Facebook, June 10, 2021

Strategies and Tactics of Addressing Arabs

“Getting closer to Arabs” topped the strategies used by the social media page with 35.7 percent (382 posts). It was observed that following the normalization agreements with certain Arab governments, Israel strengthened its emotional rhetoric towards Arabs in order to attract more Arab masses towards Israel. In June, the page published several photos showing Arab citizens arriving in Israel from countries of normalization (Figure 9). Here, Israel strategically used images and captions to gain Arabs’ affection. Figure 9 is captioned, in Arabic, “Brotherly meetings between the nations of peace. Israeli citizens are excited to see tourists from Morocco, Emirates, and Bahrain, and welcome them with open arms. Such moments will remain engraved in one’s memory.”⁶¹

Figure 9: Post showing images of “nations at peace”



Source: “Israel speaks Arabic,” Facebook, June 21, 2021

⁶¹ “Israel Speaks Arabic,” Facebook, retrieved October 20, 2023, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02F6s1AQ43UBoCTAnxQgEc2iqe9LxTWrT9VhARsuZtpDJphr3aoTYJYsNF3Vp2iDbYl&id=100064604443012&sfnsn=scwspmo&mibextid=6aamW6.

The result of the current study is consistent with Khalaf Arrak Muhammad’s study where the category of “Jewish-Arab rapprochement” ranked first with a rate of 29 percent in the analysis of the Israeli state’s Facebook page “Israel in the Iraqi dialect.”⁶² However, in Abu Mualla’s work, the “rapprochement and the establishment of friendly relations” approach ranked second with a rate of 40 percent in the official page of the Israeli Military Spokesman Avahai Adraei.⁶³

The “beautifying and promoting the occupation strategy” ranked second with 21.2 percent (226 posts). By employing this strategy, Israel tries to cover up its true image as a racist occupying state and an aggressor against Palestinians and portray itself as a peace-loving and developed state that is constantly under threat from the Palestinian resistance, the Lebanese Hezbollah, and Iran. In this manner, Israel aims to promote its ideas and policies, improve its relationship with neighboring countries, and enter the Arab consciousness and change it towards accepting Israel as a normal state instead of one occupying Palestinian lands for decades.⁶⁴

The “humanitarian and religious sympathy strategy” came third with a rate of 14.3 (153 posts). This strategy entails placing attention on the humanization of the occupation army and describing occupation soldiers as ordinary people who have dreams and are not the enemies of Palestinians.

While the media were busy covering the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip, the page published a humanitarian post on May 29, 2021, with a photo of an Israeli soldier repairing a bicycle tire and the caption, “God bless a hand that has stretched out to draw happiness on a child’s face. The picture is of an Israeli soldier helping a Palestinian child repair his bike” (Figure 10).⁶⁵

Figure 10: A post by “Israel speaks Arabic” on Facebook showing “an Israeli soldier helping a Palestinian child repair his bike”



Source: “Israel speaks Arabic,” Facebook, May 29, 2021

The Israeli digital diplomacy frames its publications in a manner that evokes human feelings and emotions by focusing on specific issues within studied and set frameworks to affect masses and manipulate them into seeing events from the angle and frame it desires.

The “warning, incitement, and accusation strategy” ranked fourth with 13.6 percent (145 posts). This strategy was clear mainly when mentioning Iran, Hezbollah, and the Palestinian resistance. In this context, the page deliberately made comparisons between the countries that support the resistance and

⁶² Arrak Muhammad (2021), “The Communicative Content of “Israeli” Popular Diplomacy from the Perspective of International Public Relations,” *AL-Bahith AL-A’alami*, Vol. 13, No. 52, pp. 87-110.

⁶³ Saeed Abu Mualla (2017), “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*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 52-75.

⁶⁴ Huda Naim (2017), *The Israeli Propaganda Discourse in Arabic towards the Palestinian Resistance through Social Networks: A Comparative Analytical Study*, Gaza: The Islamic University, p. 157.

⁶⁵ “Israel Speaks Arabic,” *Facebook*, retrieved February 10, 2023, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02o4p9etS7UB9EpJBz76rcsWQC64L28gZk9t55wbCGK4fCAeKRvBUHZsEqz8CQ4XUI&id=100064604443012&sfnsn=scwspmo&mibextid=6aamW6.

the countries with normalized relations with Israel, linking the first with terrorism and destruction, and the second with “peace, love, and economic and tourism prosperity.” For instance, on May 22, 2021, the page published several incitement publications against Hamas, including a post that stated, “Hamas’s illusory victory far from the tragedies that the movement causes to the residents of Gaza.” The post was accompanied by a cartoon showing a Hamas leader vacationing in Qatar, enjoying his time, while talking on the phone about the victory of the resistance in Gaza. A person in Gaza, on the other half of the image, looks devastated and broken, and responds by saying, “We won from the inside, but we’ve lost in reality” (Figure 11).⁶⁶ The aim of employing this strategy is to attack the Palestinian resistance and to deflect blame and destruction on the Palestinians.

Figure 11: Post using the “Warning, inciting and accusation strategy.” A Hamas leader vacations in Qatar, enjoying his time, while talking on the phone about the victory of the resistance in Gaza. A person in Gaza, on the other half of the image, looks devastated and broken, and responds by saying, “We won from the inside, but we’ve lost in reality.”



Source: “Israel speaks Arabic,” Facebook, May 22, 2021

The “intimidation and amplification strategy” ranked fifth with 10.3 percent (110 posts). This strategy aims to deliver a message to the Arab publics that Israel and its army are advanced and possess huge capabilities to confront any possible military conflict. It is an attempt to confirm the infamous saying that the Israeli army is “indomitable.”

The “disinformation and opacity strategy” ranked sixth with 4.9 percent (52 posts). This strategy emerged during the war on Gaza, where the page under consideration deliberately concealed the reality of what was happening on the ground and replaced it with daily stories inside Israel. This approach is based on the premise of framing theory whereby “events do not in themselves have a certain meaning, but rather acquire it by placing them in a frame that focuses on some aspects of the subject and neglecting others.”⁶⁷

Framing Tools and Proof Methods

“Evidence” ranked first with a rate of 37.6 percent (314 posts). This reflects the extent of the page’s interest in proving the published information, such as showing the effects of resistance missiles on Israeli towns and thus justifying the killing of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. This method is considered one of the most important ones used to prove the Israeli narrative according to the Israeli military and security mentality and depends on passing lies as evidence. This result was consistent with previous studies that demonstrated the dependence of Israeli digital media on showing “evidence” to prove the Israeli narrative - regardless of its accuracy.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ “Israel Speaks Arabic,” Facebook, retrieved February 10, 2023, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02RZCRvqysca4hzo3jirh2a9ogQmntXiArIYuhMbCcp4MBdd78ioj4pcSdBJQHD9Yql&id=173441069359976&sfnsn=scwspmo&mibextid=6aamW6.

⁶⁷ Hassan Makkawi and Laila El-Sayed (1998), *Communication, and its Contemporary Theories*, Cairo: The Egyptian Lebanese House, p. 34.

⁶⁸ Mustafa Alwan (2020), “The Image of the Ego and the Other in the Contents of Israeli Social Networking Sites in Arabic. The Facebook Model: An Analytical Study,” *Journal of Media Research*, Vol. 55, No. 2, p. 894.

The Israeli Digital Diplomacy Directed at the Arabs: An Analysis of the “Israel Speaks Arabic” Facebook Page “Views” ranked second with a rate of 32.6 (272 posts). Here, the page focused on presenting the Arab and international viewpoints in such a way as to criminalize the Palestinians and hold them responsible for field developments. For example, On May 22, 2021 the page published a video of the Emirati sheikh Wasim Youssef (known for his hostility to the Palestinian resistance and Iran), in which he defends peace with Israel and says that Israel did not cause killing, destruction and division in the Arab countries, but the Arabs did.⁶⁹ Israeli Arabic-language platforms employ such testimonies by Arabs against Arabs based on the idea that such opinions have a greater ability to influence the Arab masses.

“Statistics and figures” ranked third with 15.8 percent (132 posts). This method was used when talking mainly about the number of Jews killed during the conflict with the Palestinians and the number of mosques in Israel.

“Historical events” ranked fourth 11.2 percent (93 posts). This method was demonstrated by reminding the 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. “Research” came in fifth place with 2 percent (19), and the remaining posts amounted to 0.5 percent (4 posts).

Content Discourse Language

The results of the analytical study showed that “suggestive discourse language” was present in 44.1 percent of posts (284). This means that the Israeli propaganda uses indirect language and tends to suggest and circumvent words without clarification or interpretation, so that it drags the audience into a whirlpool of ideas and information. This result differs from the study of Saleh Al-Masry, which found that colloquial language was the most commonly used discourse.⁷⁰ As an example of suggestive language, the page published a picture divided into two parts in May: the top half shows Israeli children inside a classroom, and the second part shows a Hamas leader at a celebration, holding a child with a gun in his hand. The picture was captioned, “The difference between the culture of life and the culture of death,”⁷¹ suggesting that Hamas is a movement that raises generations to kill and destroy. The Ministry of Health deliberately chose this photo, even though it is from a celebration, not a battlefield. It is ironic, however, that the very same page avoids publishing pictures of settler children training to shoot figures that are made to resemble Palestinians.

Figure 12: A publication utilizing suggestive language; “The difference between the culture of life and the culture of death.”



Source: “Israel speaks Arabic,” Facebook May 26, 2021

⁶⁹ “Israel Speaks Arabic,” *Facebook*, retrieved Oct 30, 2022, https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2521093031533105&extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-AN_GK0T-GK1C&mibextid=2Rb1fB&ref=sharing.

⁷⁰ Saleh Al-Masry (2020), *The Nature of the Israeli Discourse directed towards the Great March of Return through the New Media*, Gaza: Al-Aqsa University.

⁷¹ “Israel Speaks Arabic,” *Facebook*, retrieved February 11, 2023, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0SPuWhDrRFzwdmyzLu38xTKq4VXxUSZL7suinTJmNpzUFzP6wV5kdV5FbAaBTZaAfl&id=100064604443012&sfnsn=scwspmo&mibextid=6aamW6.

The “news language” ranked second with 29.5 percent (190 posts) and was adopted in presenting news related to the activities of the Israeli government, Arab-Israeli normalization meetings, and official diplomatic visits.

The “offensive, inflammatory and accusatory language” came in third place with 18.7 percent (95 posts). The Israeli propaganda excels in using this method, especially towards those who oppose Israel by linking them to terrorism, sabotage, and anti-Semitism, such as denouncing Arab and Islamic positions calling for confronting Israel and boycotting it politically, economically, and intellectually.

The “interrogative language” ranked fourth with 6.2 percent (40 posts). The goal of using this method is to keep followers connected to digital platforms by urging them to engage in further research and reflection on the questions asked. For example, the page raised the question “What is the Torah and what is the difference between it and the Bible?” The aim here is for the Arab observer to search the internet and keep in touch with the page to find the answers to its questions.

The language of “request, forbidding, or commanding” ranked last with 1.5 percent (10 posts). This reflects the lack of interest of the “Israel speaks Arabic” page in this language as its goal is to improve the image of Israel among the Arab countries as a peace-loving, democratic country. Therefore, the page avoided words that carry an order, a request, or a prohibition, to give the Arab public the impression of a democratic country that calls for love and brotherhood.

Conclusion

This paper sought to explore the strategies and methods that Israel uses to attract the Arabs using digital diplomacy and social media platforms. The analysis of the study sample revealed that Israel’s practice of digital diplomacy is a restoration of the strategies of the political propaganda of the Zionist movement that relied on international sympathy and legitimacy to establish the national home of the Jews on the land of Palestine. The aim of using propaganda strategies in Arabic nowadays is to improve the image of Israel in the Arab world, and to gain Arabs’ sympathy and their recognition of Israel, having failed to achieve just that in seven decades. Moreover, the analysis revealed that Israel employs many effective strategies to interact with the Arabs and attract them to publications on the page in question. These strategies include focusing on addressing the needs and emotions of Arabs, employing religion to get closer to them, showing the commonalities between Palestinians and Israelis, and framing posts by presenting Israel as a rational, civilized state, and a victim of Palestinian terrorism. Additionally, “Israel speaks Arabic” humanizes the occupation army, juxtaposing it with the alleged abuses and resistance of the Palestinians.

The same way the media can frame reality and fill people’s awareness with specific content determined by the communicators based on their ideology and policies, it can also penetrate the minds of the masses and hope to empty them of realistic political information and understanding. These days, this is exactly what the Israeli digital diplomacy targeting the Arabs is trying to do: marginalize the Palestinian cause and isolate the Palestinians by infiltrating the awareness of the Arab peoples and changing their view of both Palestine and Israel.

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