

**Arab American University
Faculty of Graduate Studies
Department of Legal Sciences
Master Program in International Law and Diplomacy**



**The Role of Public Diplomacy in Mobilizing International
Support for the Palestinian Cause After the Aggression on
Gaza Strip**

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**This Thesis Was Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
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Palestine, July/2025

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Thesis Approval


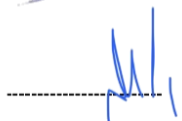
The Role of Public Diplomacy in Mobilizing International Support for the Palestinian Cause After the Aggression on Gaza Strip

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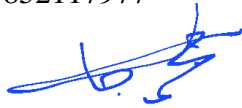
Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this thesis is substantially my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the Arab American University or any other institution.

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Date of Submitting the Final Version of the Thesis: 16/03/2026

Dedication

To my dearest Mum and Dad, In the quiet of my heart, where words fall short, your unwavering support and boundless love have been the pillars that held me up through this academic journey. You've been my guiding stars, lighting the path to knowledge and understanding. With heartfelt gratitude, this thesis is dedicated to you.

To my wonderful siblings, who supported me and have shared my journey with laughter and fun.

To my friends, who were there when they were needed most and supported me.

And to my teachers and academic mentors, whose guidance and wisdom shaped the entirety of this work.

With the deepest respect and appreciation - to all of you, this thesis is dedicated.

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Mohamad Mahmoud Jamous

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the essential role of Public Diplomacy in presenting international support for the Palestinian cause following the 2023 Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip. It considers how Public Diplomacy has offered a prominent avenue for mobilizing international political attitudes toward Palestine through non-state actors, digital platforms, cultural initiatives, and grassroots movements. The study utilizes a qualitative research design of case studies, media content analysis, and semi-structured interviews to investigate the dynamics of official and popular diplomacy and examine their success at restructuring international narratives about the conflict. The research demonstrates the noteworthy contributions by Palestinian journalists, social media activists, and cultural producers to contest the dominant Israeli narratives and humanize the plight of the Palestinian struggle through digital storytelling and representation in cultural productions. It highlights the challenges for a Palestinian Public Diplomacy strategy, including limited resources and funding, a biased media narrative, and organizational fragmentation. The findings show that while official diplomacy remains limited by structural politics and constraints, Public Diplomacy has demonstrated its capacity to amplify Palestinian voices, facilitate transnational solidarity, and influence humanitarian and or political responses on the global level. The research concludes with suggested strategies and recommendations for improved coordination between State Institutions and civil society. Keywords: Public diplomacy, Palestinian cause, Gaza aggression, soft power, non-state actors,.

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Introduction

For an extended period of time, spanning several decades, the region of Gaza has been subjected to a series of relentless military incursions, with the most recent offensive being characterized by unprecedented levels of violence, devastation, and destruction. This latest military operation culminated in the catastrophic dismantling of essential infrastructure, leading to the tragic loss of countless civilian lives and the resulting displacement of thousands upon thousands of Palestinian families, who were forced to abandon their homes and communities. The ramifications of this escalation were not confined merely to the immediate physical destruction; rather, they cast a profound and pervasive shadow over the Palestinian cause within various international forums, thereby illuminating the intricate complexities of the conflict and its far-reaching implications for the stability of the broader region. In light of these ongoing challenges, it has become increasingly evident that traditional diplomatic approaches aimed at mitigating this aggression have frequently proven inadequate, thereby underscoring the urgent need to investigate and implement innovative and unconventional strategies for garnering sympathy and fostering international support on behalf of the Palestinian people.

In this intricate context, public diplomacy emerges as a vital and influential mechanism that plays a significant role in shaping and transforming global public opinion, encouraging a more sympathetic and supportive stance toward the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people. This form of diplomacy strategically leverages social media platforms, cultural initiatives, and well-coordinated media campaigns orchestrated by a diverse array of individuals and non-governmental organizations, with the explicit aim of raising awareness regarding the Palestinian cause while simultaneously striving to influence the positions of governments and international organizations. By circumventing official and bureaucratic impediments, this type of diplomacy is uniquely positioned to directly engage with global audiences, thereby rendering it a formidable tool for countering the prevailing Israeli narratives that are often propagated within certain Western media outlets.

Consequently, the critical importance of this study resides in its endeavor to illuminate the increasing significance of public diplomacy in mobilizing and galvanizing international support for the Palestinian cause, particularly in the wake of the recent military assault on Gaza. The primary aim of this research is to furnish a comprehensive

perspective on the most effective methods for utilizing public diplomacy, as well as to devise strategic approaches that can meaningfully influence the positions of various countries and international institutions towards a more favorable alignment with the Palestinian cause. Ultimately, the overarching objective of this scholarly inquiry is to demonstrate the immense potential that public diplomacy possesses for fortifying international solidarity with the Palestinian populace, while simultaneously directing concerted efforts toward the realization of justice and enduring peace in this tumultuous region.

Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

Literature Review on Public Diplomacy and its Role in International Conflicts, Particularly in Relation to the Palestinian Cause

1. Concept and Evolution of Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy, distinct from traditional diplomacy, focuses on influencing public opinion in other countries rather than engaging directly with foreign governments. Its primary objective is to foster mutual understanding, shape perceptions, and influence policy indirectly through public sentiment. Scholars such as Nicholas J. Cull have traced the development of public diplomacy as a response to the shifting dynamics of global communication, particularly in the post-Cold War era when the media and public opinion became significant in shaping foreign policies.¹

Public diplomacy encompasses a diverse array of strategies and methodologies, which include, but are not limited to, cultural exchanges that foster mutual understanding between nations, international broadcasting that disseminates information across borders, and the increasingly prevalent digital and social media platforms that have revolutionized communication in the contemporary world. This intricate network of diplomatic engagement involves not only governments and established non-governmental organizations but also individual citizens who actively participate in these initiatives, thereby underscoring the grassroots nature and widespread appeal of public diplomacy as a practice. The evolution towards what is frequently termed "new public diplomacy" underscores the growing significance of non-state actors in this field, thereby enabling

¹ Cull, N. J. (2009). Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past. USC Center on Public Diplomacy.

public diplomacy to transform into a decentralized and adaptable instrument within the complex landscape of international relations.²

2. Public Diplomacy in Conflict Situations

Within the context of international conflicts, public diplomacy emerges as a pivotal tool of soft power, tasked with the critical functions of shaping prevailing narratives, counteracting adversarial propaganda, and garnering essential international support for one's own position. Securing the allegiance of individuals and communities through positive engagement and persuasion is frequently a more effective approach than resorting to coercive measures or military actions in resolving contemporary conflicts. The significance of public diplomacy becomes particularly pronounced in conflict-affected regions, where the contest over narratives has profound implications for international intervention efforts, the provision of humanitarian assistance, and the formulation of foreign policies by various states and organizations.³

A salient illustration of the critical role that public diplomacy can play in conflict situations is exemplified by the events surrounding the Bosnian War, during which the perceptions of the international community were significantly shaped by the media portrayals and public campaigns undertaken by the various factions involved. In this context, the strategic application of public diplomacy was instrumental in garnering both international support for the affected populations, shaping the peace process, and engendering sympathy and aid from global actors.⁴

3. Public Diplomacy and the Palestinian Cause

The pursuit of the Palestinian cause has historically been heavily reliant on the mechanisms of public diplomacy as a means to galvanize international support and counter the narratives propagated by the Israeli side. Over the years, Palestinian public diplomacy has faced formidable challenges, particularly given Israel's robust international presence, which is bolstered by strong diplomatic relationships, significant media influence, and well-coordinated strategic communication initiatives. Nevertheless, the advent of social media and citizen journalism has altered some of these dynamics, affording Palestinians new avenues to convey their narratives more directly to a global audience, thereby democratizing the flow of information concerning their situation.

² Melissen, J. (Ed.). (2005). *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*. Palgrave Macmillan

³ Nye, J. (2004). *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. PublicAffairs

⁴ Ibid.

Academics such as Zaharna (2010) have posited that traditional Palestinian public diplomacy has primarily concentrated on framing their struggle as one rooted in the principles of self-determination and human rights. Initially, these efforts predominantly followed state-centric models of diplomacy, with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) serving as the principal representative voice for international engagement. While this traditional approach yielded some successes in specific diplomatic circles, it often fell short of achieving the extensive public engagement necessary to effectively influence global public opinion on the issue.⁵

With the eruption of the Second Intifada in 2000 and the subsequent series of conflicts that unfolded, there was a notable shift in the Palestinian strategy towards adopting a more decentralized form of public diplomacy. This transformation saw grassroots movements, advocacy organizations, and diaspora communities assuming increasingly prominent roles in the realm of international advocacy. A particularly noteworthy example of this evolution is the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which was initiated in 2005 and stands as one of the most significant instances of non-state actors engaging in public diplomacy with the objective of swaying global public opinion and exerting pressure on Israel through peaceful and non-violent means. The BDS campaign has adeptly harnessed the potential of social media and international networks to garner support from various segments of civil society, human rights organizations, and academic institutions on a worldwide scale.⁶

4. Challenges Facing Palestinian Public Diplomacy

In light of the aforementioned efforts, it is imperative to recognize that Palestinian public diplomacy is confronted with a multitude of significant challenges that impede its effectiveness. One of the most critical obstacles arises from the pronounced asymmetry in both media access and the control of narratives that are disseminated to the public. Israeli public diplomacy, which is frequently termed "Hasbara," is characterized by its substantial financial backing and is further bolstered by a comprehensive network of influential global media outlets; in stark contrast, Palestinian initiatives regularly grapple with severe limitations in resources and face considerable difficulties in securing access to vital international platforms that could amplify their voices. Furthermore, the manner

⁵ Zaharna, R. S. (2010). *Battles to Bridges: U.S. Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy after 9/11*. Palgrave Macmillan.

⁶ Barghouti, O. (2011). *BDS: Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions – The Global Struggle for Palestinian Rights*. Haymarket Books.

in which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is portrayed within Western media has emerged as a highly contentious topic, with a plethora of studies meticulously documenting a pervasive bias that tends to frame Israel in the role of the victim while depicting Palestine as the aggressor, thereby complicating and undermining efforts to cultivate sympathy for the Palestinian cause among international audiences.⁷

Additionally, it is essential to acknowledge that Palestinian public diplomacy is frequently characterized by fragmentation and disunity. While a range of Palestinian factions and organizations endeavor to advocate for their narratives, the absence of a cohesive and well-coordinated communication strategy often serves to undermine the overall potency of their collective message. The Palestinian Authority (PA), Hamas, and various civil society organizations frequently project mixed signals and conflicting messages, which ultimately results in confusion among international audiences and detracts from the overall effectiveness of their public diplomacy initiatives.⁸

5. Impact of Public Diplomacy on International Perceptions of the Palestinian Cause

While it is crucial to assert that traditional state-led diplomacy continues to hold significance in international relations, it is equally important to recognize that the public diplomacy efforts undertaken by Palestinians have demonstrably influenced international perceptions regarding their cause. The notable increase in support for Palestine within international civil society, including among student organizations, labor unions, and cultural figures, can be largely attributed to the efficacy of successful public diplomacy campaigns that have resonated with diverse audiences. This shift in perception has manifested in various forms, including an increasing international recognition of Palestinian rights, as well as affirmative votes in favor of Palestinian statehood within the United Nations (UN) and other crucial international forums. Nevertheless, despite these advancements, it is essential to acknowledge that the effectiveness of Palestinian public diplomacy continues to be significantly impeded by a myriad of geopolitical factors, including the enduring occupation, persistent internal political divisions, and the overwhelming disparity in power dynamics between Israel and Palestine. Yet, despite these formidable challenges, the growing prominence of public diplomacy, particularly through the utilization of digital channels, presents a glimmer of hope for the potential to

⁷ Philo, G., & Berry, M. (2011). *More Bad News from Israel*. Pluto Press

⁸ *Ibid*, Zaharna.

reshape and redefine the global narrative surrounding the Palestinian cause, fostering greater understanding and support among international audiences.

Exploration of Previous Research on Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy, particularly in conflict zones, has sparked increased scholarly interest as global communication networks evolve and soft power tools become more important. Research in this field, particularly in the context of protracted conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, sheds light on the role of public diplomacy in shaping international perceptions and influencing foreign policies. This review examines key studies on public diplomacy in conflict situations, highlighting their strengths and gaps that future research should address.

The study by Al-Tamimi (2022) focuses on the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the political field, particularly their impact on foreign policy, with a focus on Palestinian foreign policy. It highlights the importance of these organizations in promoting human rights, justice, and peace internationally, and how their efforts influence the Palestinian government's international relations. Using a descriptive approach, the study found that NGOs have played a significant role in popular diplomacy at the global level, particularly due to their presence in specialized international agencies and networks. Key organizations include the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the International Commission of Jurists, and the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network. These NGOs have built strong international relationships, effectively advocating against racial discrimination and human rights violations against Palestinians, and promoting cultural and educational exchanges. Two successful examples of their influence include the 2002 "Popular Campaign Against the Wall in the West Bank" and the 2005 Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. The study recommends increasing efforts and resources to enhance the role of these diplomatic tools in advancing Palestinian foreign policy and national interests.⁹

As for the study (Jarrar, 2022)¹⁶, the study aimed to research popular diplomacy as an entry point for strengthening Palestinian political action. The study adopted the descriptive analytical approach, and reached a set of results, the most important of which are: that there is a possibility to support peoples, and the approach to strengthening

⁹ Al-Tamimi, Bassem (2022), *Diplomacy of Governmental Organizations in Palestinian Foreign Policy*, *Siyasat Magazine*, Institute of Public Policy, Issue 47, Ramallah, Palestine

support for Palestine is with a different methodology. Starting from the bottom and rising to influence decision makers is effective. On the other hand, the volume of interaction with the Palestinian issue from various countries of the world confirms the purity and justice of the issue and reflects the importance of activating popular diplomacy, and the necessity of mobilizing all capabilities in order to activate it in all countries of the world. The study confirms that popular diplomacy is complementary to official diplomacy in all its aspects, as it played a remarkable role in strengthening international humanitarian and political sympathy with the Palestinian cause and people, and even covered what traditional official diplomacy was unable to achieve. The study recommended the necessity of investing in the outputs and unifying the efforts of digital platforms, as well as working with communities, while working to raise the capabilities of official diplomacy in the field of popular diplomacy and supporting its initiatives, and investing in those involved and supportive influencers.¹⁰

Importance of the Study

The research holds significant scholarly relevance. It addresses the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly how public diplomacy can mobilize international backing post-Gaza assault, thus responding to a pressing geopolitical issue. The study also enriches the discourse on public diplomacy by examining its function within asymmetric conflicts like the Palestinian situation, thereby filling existing academic gaps. Furthermore, it offers practical strategies for Palestinian advocates, emphasizing effective public diplomacy utilization through digital media and grassroots initiatives to enhance global support. Insights from this study may influence international relations by illustrating the potential of soft power to shape global narratives and policymaking. Ultimately, this research promotes peace and justice by advocating for the amplification of human rights narratives in support of the Palestinian cause.

Problem of the Study

This study addresses the limited effectiveness of traditional diplomatic efforts to garner sustained international support for the Palestinian cause, particularly in the aftermath of

¹⁰ Jarrar, Montaser. (2022), *Popular Diplomacy: An Introduction to Strengthening Palestinian Political Action*, Research Center, Al-Bireh, Palestine.

the recent assault on Gaza. Despite widespread global attention and condemnation, the effectiveness of these efforts in influencing foreign policies and mobilizing tangible support is limited. The study will look into how grassroots movements, digital platforms, and non-state actors can use public diplomacy to better shape international opinion and build support for Palestinian rights and justice. It aims to investigate the challenges and opportunities that come with using public diplomacy to influence global narratives and policies in favor of the Palestinian cause.

Objectives of the Study

1. Analyze the Impact of Public Diplomacy: To assess how public diplomacy influences international opinions and policies in conflict settings, particularly regarding the Palestinian cause.
2. Evaluate Palestinian Public Diplomacy: To examine the effectiveness of Palestinian public diplomacy efforts in mobilizing international support following the Gaza assault.
3. Recommend Strategies for Improvement: To provide actionable recommendations on how to enhance Palestinian public diplomacy, leveraging grassroots movements, digital platforms, and non-state actors to strengthen international advocacy for the Palestinian cause.

Research Questions

This study will address the following research questions:

1. What public diplomacy strategies were employed by Palestinian leaders and organizations after the aggression on Gaza?
2. How have international media and social media platforms contributed to the mobilization of global support?
3. What specific forms of international support were garnered through public diplomacy efforts (e.g., political endorsements, humanitarian aid, public opinion shifts)?
4. What challenges did public diplomacy efforts face, and how can these be mitigated in future campaigns?

Scope and Limitations

Geographical Scope: This research will examine the influence of public diplomacy in Palestine on significant international stakeholders, such as Europe, North America, and the Arab region. **Temporal Scope:** The analysis will concentrate on public diplomacy initiatives following the latest hostilities in the Gaza Strip within the past two years.

Limitations: Given the challenges in quantifying the direct impacts of public diplomacy, the study will utilize qualitative evaluations, media content analysis, and expert interviews, potentially constraining the applicability of the results.

Methodology

This study will adopt a qualitative research design, incorporating the following methods:

Case Study Analysis: An in-depth case study approach will be used to examine public diplomacy efforts after the aggression on Gaza.

Content Analysis: A content analysis of media reports, social media campaigns, and public statements by Palestinian leaders and advocacy groups will be conducted to assess the strategies and messaging used.

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews with diplomats, communication experts, and leaders of Palestinian advocacy organizations will provide insights into the challenges and successes of public diplomacy efforts.

Document Review: A review of public diplomacy literature, NGO reports, and international responses to the Gaza aggression will be conducted to understand the broader context of the study.

Research Plan

Chapter One: Theoretical Foundations and the Growing Role of Non-State Actors in Palestinian Public Diplomacy.

Chapter Two: Performance and Challenges: Palestinian Public Diplomacy After the 2023 Gaza Aggression.

Conclusion and Recommendations.

Chapter One: Theoretical Foundations and the Growing Role of Non-State Actors in Palestinian Public Diplomacy.

Currently, public diplomacy has become a handy point of international affairs to marginalized nations and civilisations who demand respect, fairness and assistance at international scene. The foreign public, civil society and all media are not the fundamental unit of work of the current civil diplomacy but the center of the public diplomacy work to change perceptions, apply soft power in the name of development. In the sphere of Palestinian experience, public diplomacy is assuming the status of a need in light of being constrained by the impacts of occupation, fragmentation, and powers of international relations in terms of the ability of the real possibility to so engage. We look at the history of public diplomacy through its conceptual beginnings, within the context of official diplomacy, and look into the history of it, through the lens of internationally crafted and observingly becoming nationalist to Palestine. This chapter reviews the conceptual and theoretical framework and the role of non-state actors in public diplomacy within two sections.

Section One: Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

A type of diplomacy referred to as public diplomacy has introduced a new method to global opinion and decisions that is very different from the official state interactions in traditional diplomacy. It allows not only governments but also activists, the media, and digital platforms to participate in global discussions about various causes regardless of the diplomatic channels.

In any international conflict, public diplomacy is a force that helps to awaken both the world and the nation and also the opposition narratives which constitute most of the case. The Palestinian issue is the best example of how it is done because for years Palestinians have been using it to voice themselves and also to get global support.

This section presents the public diplomacy concept, compared to the traditional official diplomacy, and outlines the historic and political framework of the Palestinian public diplomacy.

1.1 The Official Diplomacy and Public Diplomacy

Within international relations, diplomacy acts as an essential tool for states and societies in managing their interactions, negotiations, and conflicts. It is multifaceted and consists of two primary forms, which are official diplomacy and public diplomacy, both of which are different but relate to each other as follow:

1.1.1 The official diplomacy

Official diplomacy can be characterized as a type of diplomacy that deals with the formal relations of government to government, state to state, formal relations at the diplomatic level. It can be broken down into being the act of sending and receiving ambassadors and official diplomats, as well as exchanging official messages and statements between the governments. Official diplomacy is the practice that is meant to stimulate international relations, and it is used to allow for effective communication between the various countries in different areas like politics, economy, culture, trade, security, and law.¹¹ It is carried out within a framework of established protocols and regulations governing diplomatic relations, including agreements, treaties, contracts, memoranda of understanding, official visits, and bilateral and multilateral negotiations. The central objective of official diplomacy stands out as protecting the interests of individual countries, along with international peace and security as well as mutual harm-avoidance.¹²

As for the Palestinian official diplomacy, it is a kind of diplomacy as a set of vertices and edges that is the matrix of a weighted network whose vertices are the states and organizations and the edges represent the relationships by the means of communication between them. The activities and measures of the Palestinian National Authority, as an internationally recognized political entity, which are geared for developing and managing formal relations with states, international institutions, and organizations, is what Palestinian official diplomacy involves. This means that Palestine's foreign affair is conducted through these traditional diplomatic measures.

¹¹ Firas Muhammad, *Public Diplomacy and Chinese Soft Power* (University of Mosul, 2021), p. 32.

¹² *Ibid*

1.1.2 The Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy is a form of diplomacy that consists of the modules of diplomatic work aimed at the general public through popular means to establish direct relationships between the nations, and to obtain support. The development of public diplomacy has been greatly stimulated by the development of technology and the introduction of various communication methods. Public Diplomacy was a term first used and debuted in the United States in 1956 which was later availed to journalism and communication outlets in the field of international relations.¹³ These activities have largely focused on shaping public opinion and strengthening the interaction of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other international associations, thus, they have been substantially contributing to the development and management of international relations. The public diplomacy is the most effective tool of soft power that needs to be taken into account. In soft power, a country's narrative and reality must agree. A country's identity is inherently a combination of history and ongoing construction. There are certain attributes of a country's reputation that can be changed, generally through strategic choices in taking action, speaking the words and using symbolism. While even the legacy components of a nation's reputation are subject to revisions over the time. Plenty of countries have achieved remarkable success in boosting their branding, and Palestine cannot commit to remain reticent.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the term public diplomacy was widely recognized during the 1990s and became more and more popular after the September 11th, 2001 attack. It became particularly famous in the United States, where President George W. Bush Jr. pointed out its significance, saying: "Our efforts in public diplomacy are not good enough and not nearly as effective as those who promote hatred."¹⁵ The 20th century is the time when public diplomacy was strictly a state-instrument. It was employed by foreign ministries and governments to communicate and influence the people to form new relationships, Public diplomacy nowadays has a number of channels that are being utilized by states, regional organizations, sub-state actors, and non-governmental authorities to discern the cultures, attitudes, and behaviors; to create and maintain

¹³ Zaid Abu Sham'a, *The Role of Al Jazeera in Influencing Palestinian Diplomacy After the 2008 Israeli Aggression on Gaza* (Birzeit University, Birzeit, Palestine, 2013), p. 6.

¹⁴ Dalal Iriqat, *Palestinian Nation Branding via Public Diplomacy*, *International Relations and Diplomacy*, 7(5) (May 2019): 202–216.

¹⁵ Enas Dahlan, *The Role of Popular Diplomacy in Strengthening Palestinian-Algerian Relations* (Faculty of Higher Administration and Policy, Gaza, 2020), p. 26.

relationships; and to influence ideas and actions to support the national and guiding principles, which in return give shape to foreign policies. To be more specific, governments often set goals and develop a plan on different issues; at the same time, they try to transform their partners' point of view to the one that is similar.

Please note that the policy is that diplomacy is the sphere of interests, and the chief aim is to spread these interests globally. Public diplomacy is about enabling conviction, interaction, authority, and information-sharing to attain that aim. According to the palmistry of the century, this value has increased to become what is now called New Public Diplomacy (NPD).¹⁶

Since Palestinian public diplomacy is considered, in practice, to be a series of activities and initiatives that Palestinian civil society and the public at large, including NGOs, associations, and grassroots institutions, come out with to world the Palestinian issue and stand for the Palestinian rights at the international arena. It is depended on the networking of the civil society and social movements with the world to put pressure and achieve political and social goals supporting the Palestinian cause.

1.1.3 The Historical Background of the Palestinian Official and Public Diplomacy

The historical background of Palestinian official and public diplomacy is closely intertwined with the ongoing of the struggle for statehood, sovereignty, and international recognition. Diplomacy became a vital tool for navigating the complex geopolitics landscape, after the beginning of the 20th century, when the Palestinian national identity centered and the responses to the external influences and the colonial occupations. During the first 20 years after the Israeli occupation in 1948, the Palestinians began being recognized and supported globally. Discussions to get international support for the Palestinian cause and to inform the international community about the rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people have been the main agendas in Palestinian diplomacy platforms. Through the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) interactive diplomacy to the United Nations has taken a fundamental role in official diplomacy. On the other hand, to chase public diplomacy the main tasks have been to attract public opinion and to cultivate the unification of people through

¹⁶ Iriqat, Dalal. (2023). Public diplomacy in the twenty-first century: Examining the changing channels of international relations and country branding. *This Week in Palestine*. Retrieved January 13, 2024, from <https://thisweekinpalestine.com/public-diplomacy-in-the-twentyfirst-century/>

media, cultural outreach and grassroots activism. The diplomatic method of using these two strategies is essential to recognize the need of both formal state engagement and popular participation to succeed in the Palestinian self-determination quest.

1.1.4 The Historical Background of Official Palestinian Diplomacy

Since the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 during the first Palestinian National Council meeting in Jerusalem, the PLO has played the role of putting the Palestinian cause on the international agenda. In 1974, the Arab League voted to recognize the PLO as the sole and exclusive representative of the Palestinian people during the Arab Summit in Rabat. Therefore, the PLO launched various diplomatic initiatives globally, leading to inclusion of the Palestinian cause as a separate item on the United Nations' agenda. On November 22, 1975, the United Nations adopted Resolution 2236, which ratified the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, sovereignty, independence, and the right of return to their home country.¹⁷

The PLO prioritized diplomatic action to resolve the Palestinian issue as its activities kept increasing, because diplomacy is one of the major means by which states implement their foreign policies and achieve their goals, alongside military, economic, and media policies. The Palestinian diplomacy was conferred with a special significance internationally, particularly after the PLO initiated talks with the Israeli occupation and other countries intended to resolve the Palestinian issue. Following the Palestinian National Council announcement of the state of Palestine in Algeria in 1988, Palestinian diplomacy was influential in the peace process, especially on states like the United States and European countries. Palestinian diplomatic activities increased following the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 between the PLO and Israeli occupation with the purpose of affecting and pressurizing countries that were supporting the peace process in various ways, most significantly lobbying for the Palestinian cause during negotiations with the Israeli occupation, securing financial aid, lobbying for development projects in Palestine, and enhancing the institutions of the Palestinian National Authority.¹⁸

¹⁷ Sarsour, T. (2017). The development of the Palestinian file in the United Nations towards the full recognition of legitimate national rights. *Research Journal for Humanities and Social Sciences*, Khaled Hassan Foundation – Center for Studies and Research, Palestine, p. 105

¹⁸ Salahat, A. (2015). The role of Palestinian diplomacy in influencing the positions and policies of the European Union towards the Palestinian political development process (2005-2015) (Master's thesis). Faculty of Graduate Studies, An-Najah National University, Nablus, p. 2.

Palestinian diplomacy achieved a huge global milestone on the 29th of November, 2012, when they received recognition of Palestine as a state and acceptance as a non-member observer state at the United Nations, ending all uncertainties about Palestine as a state.¹⁹

1.1.5 The Historical Background of Public Palestinian Diplomacy

In this section, we will discuss the historical background of Palestinian public diplomacy within several branches, including its origins, objectives, pillars, means and tools, and finally the forms of Palestinian public diplomacy.

Firstly, The Origins of Palestinian Public Diplomacy

The Palestinian public/popular diplomacy has exploded and witnessed development over time with the advancement of the Palestinian cause. The early signs of the Zionist project and its dangers began to appear and take shape starting from the adoption of the British mandate over Palestine by the League of Nations in 1922. During the 1920s, Palestinian resistance saw significant development in confronting the British mandate policies and the Zionist project. This resistance was characterized by peaceful methods and expressed through a series of demands in conferences, seminars, and protests.²⁰

A significant period occurred between 1936 and 1939, known as the Great Palestinian Revolt, which resulted from the accelerated increase in Jewish immigration to Palestine beginning in the early 1930s. The "Hebraization" policies in Jewish settlements, the rise of unemployment in rural and urban areas, and the spread of land brokerage and the transfer of land ownership to the Jewish Agency negatively impacted the rights of the Palestinian Arab people. Thus, the Great Palestinian Revolt, also known as the "Palestinian countryside revolt," erupted from 1936 to 1939. The revolution was marked by peaceful resistance methods, led by national committees and their branches in various Palestinian cities. A long-term strike lasting six months began in Jaffa, and its repercussions spread throughout Palestine. The committees worked together with relief,

¹⁹ Al-Mazini, F. (2018). The achievements of the State of Palestine after obtaining non-member observer status at the United Nations. *Al-Isra University Journal for Conferences*, (2), p. 14.

²⁰ Awda, Abdel Raouf . (2021). The role of public diplomacy in activating European Union decisions regarding the Palestinian issue – From the perspectives of Palestinian journalists. Al-Aqsa University, Gaza, Palestine.

boycott committees, and youth associations, and institutions and businesses, but not bakeries and pharmacies, were shut down. The revolution existed in many forms, such as demonstrations, strikes, and peaceful activities, which brought light to the cause and created more interaction with it, as follows:

The Palestinian Arab Youth Movement was instrumental by helping to build organizational and sports activities. It formulated a national charter for the youth of Palestine, promoted girls' education, and promoted industrial, agricultural, and commercial education.

In the economic sector in Palestine, the Arab Economic Bank, Agricultural Bank, and Industrial Bank were opened, and the Ummah Bank was created to consolidate the banking industry.

The Palestinian youth revolution provided national media with a significant role in influencing public opinion and offering comprehensive information regarding the threats of Zionism and the need to counter them.

During this time, Arab labor unions became engaged in fighting "Hebraization" policies to transfer work to Jewish hands.²¹

Both public diplomacy and classical diplomacy share the goal of achieving the same national objectives, whether by enhancing bilateral relations or contributing to the international arena. However, the means and methods used in each type differ. Public diplomacy is a modern concept that has been firmly established recently due to technological progress and the development of media. This idea became evidently apparent after the world's most influential nations, especially the United States, embraced this approach after the September 11, 2001, incidents. This form of diplomacy is an efficient way of attaining its objectives after trying other approaches.²²

There have been several definitions of public diplomacy, including:

- "Activities designed to speak to the public through popular channels, to create direct relations between peoples."²³
- "It includes non-governmental organizations and those that influence public opinion, with the aim of influencing the decisions of governments on foreign policies directly or

²¹ Ibid.

²² Jarar, Muntaser. (2022), *Popular Diplomacy: An Introduction to Strengthening Palestinian Political Action*, Research Center, Al-Bireh, Palestine.

²³ Al-Samarrai, Shafiq. (2002). *Diplomacy*. Dar Al-Hikma, London, Britain, p. 273.

indirectly, apart from its function in direct interaction with other individuals to influence their ideas and governments' policies." ²⁴

- Public diplomacy is a series of programs and measures directed towards influencing foreign populations and public opinion to the benefit of a country's foreign policy goals. This diplomacy involves the exchange of information and direct communication with individuals and non-governmental players in order to promote understanding and build relationships. This diplomacy is distinguished by its focus on informal (popular) players, with the goal of achieving some political objectives for states.

The author defines public diplomacy as: a term referring to the use of informal and non-governmental instruments and methods of shaping international public opinion and foreign policies by engaging the international community. Public diplomacy is rooted in direct contact with the masses and non-governmental organizations with the aim of achieving specific political or social objectives. Public diplomacy is closely related to social movements, since social movements employ the tools of public diplomacy to spread their causes and demands and influence international public opinion. Social movements can express their causes and attract greater popular sympathy and support via the media and social campaigns.

Secondly, The Objectives of Palestinian Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy is an effective instrument used by the Palestinian people since the beginning of Zionist immigration to Palestine. Popular resistance developed in parallel with the evolution of the Palestinian cause, as the Palestinian people became the pillars of resistance and confrontation with the occupation by adopting all means of protest and confrontation. These instruments are characterized by their ability to influence global public opinion and present the Palestinian cause in a way that highlights its different aspects. Palestinian public diplomacy is designed to achieve a number of essential objectives:

- Exposing the crimes of the occupation and refuting its falsehoods through established and independent media channels.
- Defending the Palestinian cause and making it heard through social media.
- Activating and mobilizing global public opinion to support the Palestinian cause.

²⁴ Ibid, Dahlan, p. 28.

- Asserting Palestinian people's rights through international decisions.²⁵
- Opening up lines of communications with civil society stakeholders, such as non-governmental institutions, the press, and the broader public, so as to tap into the strength of these actors and assist in playing a crucial role in defending the interests of the state.
- Participating in peace building and conflict resolution at the international level, and launching programs for peace-building, tolerance, and reconciliation.
- Empowering the concept of citizenship and implementing the role of peoples in attempting to correct wrong directions and provide solutions to issues that may be difficult for the official institutions to deal with.
- Focusing on shaping and molding public opinion through media, like newsletters, books, seminars, and lectures, with the view of persuading public opinion in support of specific positions that drive government policies.
- Connecting with local stakeholders and coordinating more with foreign ministries, culminating in concerted policies and strategies.
- Achieving long-term goals and connecting with international public opinion through providing easy and quick access to information in the hope of pressurizing governments for policy reform.²⁶

Thirdly, Pillars of Palestinian Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy is an abstract concept that represents multiple Pillars defining its real implication. These are:

- Government and citizens' communication relationship: Public diplomacy represents the interdependent relationships between the people and government, representing citizens' ideals and expressing their opinions and demands. The manner of such diplomacy depends on two-way communication between the government and citizens involving daily affairs and incidents.
- Civil society organization cooperation: This component involves the inter-cooperation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the government, where such organizations contribute independently towards their work and direct efforts to

²⁵ Abu Kheswan, Yahya Qaoud. (2020). Digital popular diplomacy. The Democratic Arab Center for Strategic, Political, and Economic Studies, Berlin, Germany, p. 16.

²⁶ Ibid, Awda.

common goals. The interconnection between these organizations and the government strengthens the aspect of public diplomacy.

- **Public participation:** Public diplomacy rests on taking the public to work. It does so through various channels, including public campaigns, demonstrations, and seminars, for the purpose of sharing knowledge and stirring action about issues.
- **Utilization of culture and the arts:** Public diplomacy is based on utilizing culture and the arts to address the public and convey ideas and opinions. Such methods have a strong appeal and provide the authority to influence public opinion effectively.
- **Shaping the international sphere:** Public diplomacy aims to shape international public opinion through media and communications with overseas institutions. Representatives and activists advance their perspectives and assist in shaping international decisions.²⁷

Simply, the components of public diplomacy comprise communication with and among citizens as well as government, partnership with civil society actors, drawing in and guiding the public, utilization of culture and the arts, and influencing public opinion abroad with the aim of achieving its diplomatic goals.

Fourthly, The Tools of Palestinian Public Diplomacy

- **Associations and unions:** These include various associations and unions such as women's unions, peace activists' association, student and labor unions, and other professional associations. These mass organizations have the ability to mobilize, communicate, and coordinate the public.
- **Literary and artistic spheres:** Literary and artistic spheres are some of the most powerful spheres utilized in public diplomacy. These spheres have the ability to overcome barriers constructed by conflicting elements to this kind of diplomacy. Literature and arts help raise public opinion and lead the masses to important issues. Some examples include: art exhibitions, books, folk arts, fashion, singing, and music.
- **International organization specialists:** These are specialists who work in international organizations such as the United Nations and its specialized agencies, and have deep knowledge in various fields such as economics, social affairs, and technology. These

²⁷ Abu Jahl, Ibrahim. (2020), *The Role of Popular Diplomacy in Strengthening Egyptian-Palestinian Relations (2011-2019)*, Al-Aqsa University, Gaza, Palestine.

specialists play a crucial role in clarifying their countries' positions on various issues and exercise great power in deciding what should be the public opinion.

As may be gleaned from the foregoing, public diplomacy relies on a variety of instruments and tools, including popular movements, literary and artistic environments, as well as international organizations' specialists, to achieve its goals and spread its ideas and perceptions within the public and the international community.²⁸

Fifthly, Forms of Palestinian Public Diplomacy

Palestinian public diplomacy revolves around the creation of a world value system to confront injustice, oppression, and aggression, fighting all forms of violent bloodshed in peaceful or non-violent manners. Among the forms of public diplomacy, the author takes the lens of peaceful popular resistance, a strategy that has been the Palestinian people's way for decades:

- Symbolic Public Diplomacy: This involves the exercise of effective communication among members of the movement. It is complemented by the establishment, utilization of symbols, signs, names, and the special dress of the movement members. The symbols are designed to establish a strong national identity and to talk to people by participating in activities that are of national significance and the preservation of folk heritage.
- Accumulative Public Diplomacy: This refers to conducting field activities and taking protests and movements to the domain of the popular movement. This approach increases communication and interaction with the public, convincing others to participate in the struggle against occupation and the enemy.
- Offensive Public Diplomacy: Organizing a campaign of events in the field is used here to demoralize and embarrass the enemy's forces, piling pressure with demonstrations, strikes, and other direct action. This approach tries to win over public sympathy and encourage participation in social movements.
- Defensive Public Diplomacy: This tactic approaches the adversary with caution, attempting to hold on to resistance morals and principles of common human nature. It attempts to control the excessive application of violence and force, tending instead towards defending people and infrastructure in nonviolent ways.

²⁸ Shadid, Wael. (2021), *The Role of Public Diplomacy in Promoting the Issue of Palestinian Prisoners*, Academy of Refugee Studies, United Kingdom, Britain, p. 26.

- Positive Public Diplomacy: It emphasizes the construction of legal and institutional alternatives which would operate in the public interest of the populace. It encourages the populace to avoid dealing with the occupation institutions or the oppressive regime and engages in building independent social, economic, and developmental institutions.²⁹ By employing these various modes of public diplomacy, Palestinian non-state actors can successfully be part of the campaign for justice, freedom, and realization of their rightful claims.

Section Two: The Role of Non-State Actors in Public Diplomacy

Introduction

Modern international relations embrace a broad variety of ways in which non-state actors are becoming more and more important protagonists in forming diplomatic landscapes, fulfilling this function particularly through the execution of public diplomacy. This diverse range of actors that extend from NGOs, grassroots initiatives, and diaspora communities to activists, media representatives, and student-led groups have been really outstanding in the respect of their ability to communicate their messages to the international public and, as a result, also affect the political decisions especially in areas of conflict where traditional state diplomacy is sometimes impaired. The Palestinian case is an excellent example to reveal the role of non-state actors as very active and proactive stakeholders in creating stories for the world. They also stand against the mainstream narratives and strongly advocate for justice and human rights worldwide. This section makes clear what the concept of non-state actors is, describes the most influential Palestinian players within the given framework, studies the strategies they adopt, and provides specific examples of their influence and limitations or lack of them.

²⁹ Yousef, Ayman. (2020), *The Palestinian Youth Movement in the West Bank: Student Democracy, National Reconciliation, and Popular Resistance in Times of Political Division 2007-2013*, Arab American University, Jenin, Palestine.

1.2 The Definitions of Non-State Actors and Their Growing Influence in Global Politics

Diplomacy is no longer the sole purview of governments and their official representatives in the dynamic field of international relations. A new class of powerful players—non-state actors—has emerged as a result of globalization, technological development, and international communication. Beyond conventional government channels, these actors—which include advocacy networks, media outlets, academic institutions, diaspora communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and individual influencers—have taken on more and more crucial roles in influencing public opinion, advancing diplomatic objectives, and forming global narratives.

A powerful illustration of this phenomenon may be found in the Palestinian situation. Palestinians have mostly depended on non-state actors to tell their story, fight for their rights, and subvert prevailing international narratives because of the limitations of limited statehood and political fragmentation. especially after the 7th of October 2023. These players, which range from human rights groups to international solidarity movements like BDS, have broadened the reach of Palestinian diplomacy by interacting with a variety of audiences and influencing discussions throughout the world.

Accordingly, non-state actors may be described as organizations that participate in a role based on their own personal abilities rather than in a formal capacity. By lobbying and exerting pressure on formal and informal players, these organizations contribute to the policy-making process and play a significant role in creating legally enforceable public policies. This unofficial function can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including discussion, cooperation, public pressure, and pro- or anti-government campaigns.³⁰

The researcher sees these players as groups and individuals who not only create public awareness and have public discussions but also apply pressure on both the government and the private sector to implement significant change.

While the researcher also finds these players as individuals and groups as the basic unit of a society's progression, many tasks and goals in various areas could not even be realized without them.

As the building blocks of society, they are vital in the provision of countless services and the realization of several goals and objectives in a wide range of fields.

³⁰ Omar Bin Salman, Unofficial Actors and Their Mechanisms of Influence on Social Policies, Al-Haqiqa Journal, Vol. 17, Algeria, 2018: 104.

The author identifies some of the players as people and organizations in the fields of charity, labor, youth, community, socially aware businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and individual activists, among others who actively participate in social development, civil rights, health, education, and democracy.

Along with these players and the issues affecting societies, human rights, health, education, social justice, and nature preservation are the subjects they mainly address.

1.2.1 The Growth of Non-State Actors

Over the years, the role of the state experienced significant transformations that were very obvious by the increased cooperation of governing bodies, private sector organizations, transnational companies, international institutions, and social groups in policy-making. Such co-operations also marked the change of the paradigms of development which started to focus on human elements, engaged in the fight against poverty, and the delivery of basic human needs. The notions describing the above were “empowerment” and “reaching the poorest”. The abovementioned points evidenced the transition of the theory of sovereignty, revolutionized by progress in technology and communication. Consequently, the third sector became visible as a determinant of resource distribution and the attainment of social justice. The latter was further aggravated by the involvement of NGOs, private sector players, and international organizations in both the attainment of public policy and program design and the execution thereof.³¹

The establishment and support of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to offer social services to citizens gained momentum, though the motivations behind this support varied across governments. Some of which recognize these organizations as substitutes for direct state intervention, relying largely on private funding to sustain their activities. Others positioned civil society organizations as intermediaries that bridge the gap between the government and the public, actively supporting them through state funding. This trend led to a notable expansion in the role of civil society in service provision across numerous countries.³²

From the researcher's view point, this illustrates how the role of the state changed starting in the 1990s and going forward. This change calls for a reinterpretation of the state's role in influencing public policy and promoting neighborhood growth. This change is

³¹ Fahmi Khalifa Al-Fahdawi, *Public Policy*, 1st ed., Dar Al-Masira, Amman, Jordan, 2001: 30.

³² *Ibid*, Omar Bin Salman, 94.

especially important as the state plays a major role in promoting social and economic prosperity. Furthermore, cooperation between public and commercial organizations has increased, enabling resource efficiency and the sharing of experience. The third sector, which includes civil society organizations, non-profits, and NGOs, has consequently assumed a more significant role. Through the joint efforts of many stakeholders, this enlarged role improves social fairness and facilitates more equitable and effective resource allocation.

1.2.2 Social Movements as Non-State Actors

The term "social movement" was initially coined by Lorenz von Stein in 1842, to refer to protests aimed at bringing about constructive social change. Historically, this phrase began to refer to important uprisings like Spartacus's well-known slave rebellion against Roman control. Later, it expanded to cover important societal changes like labor movements, feminist campaigns, and peasant uprisings. Important historical occurrences like the English Revolution (1698), American Revolution (1776), French Revolution (1789), and Bolshevik Revolution (1917) have shaped our contemporary understanding of social movements and protest action over the course of time, especially in the last three centuries.³³

While Charles Tilly defined social movements as "a series of sustained actions, protests, and campaigns by ordinary people to raise a set of demands," he considered social movements an important means by which ordinary people can participate in politics. Tilly reinforced his definition of a social movement as "collective action aimed at establishing a new order of life"³⁴

According to Eric Neveu, it is "the mobilization of women and men around hopes, emotions, and interests." It's also a great way to talk about the societal implications of studying injustice and justice. Additionally, it can occasionally be used to mobilize politics and society in order to leave a lasting impression on the public.³⁵

³³ Hajar Al-Badawi, *Sociology of Social Movements: Protest Movements in Morocco as a Model*, *Moasher Journal for Prospective Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 6, Rabat, Morocco, 2022: 35.

³⁴ Charles Tilly, *Social Movements 1768–2004*, trans. Rabie Wahba, 1st ed., National Translation Project, Cairo, 2005: 44.

³⁵ Souraya Ramadani, *Social Movements: A Sociological Approach*, *Journal of Human and Social Sciences*, No. 24, University of Algiers 2, Algeria, 2016: 342.

Social movements, also defined by Ibrahim Al-Bayoumi Ghanem in his book "Protest Movements in the Arab World," are the concerted efforts of a group of citizens representing a popular base without formal representation with the goal of changing current structures, policies, or conditions to more closely align with the values on which the movement is founded. These movements may have a local focus or might have a national or even worldwide reach.³⁶

By sociological definition, a social movement is made up of various activities initiated as a result of the fervor to sustain a principle or reach a collective aim. As a rule, these masses are the ones who are endowed with common beliefs or values and who work together to achieve common ends. Thus, the term "social movement" implies more attention to the collective action rather than to the essential principles themselves.

There are innumerable social and political movements that can be considered as good examples of meeting these requirements. The participants can be found literally everywhere, from working mothers involved in non-dramatic actions to intellectuals who are endeavoring for the cause to many people who show their solidarity by marching in the streets.

Despite the ongoing developments and diversity in the elements of social movements, they have continued to evolve and spread. In this sense, we have observed that social movements have a long history. Their history is distinct from that of other political forms, such as electoral campaigns, national celebrations, displays of military force, the appointment of public officials, and collective mourning. Consequently, many studies indicate that social movements are not limited to public mass actions or activities organized by people for a specific cause with the goal of achieving a specific objective.³⁷

The transformation experienced by social movements affected four levels:

Movement Identity

With more types of movements appearing, like feminist, student, environmental, minority and peace groups, movements came to better reflect the diversity of identity.

Forms of Protest

The movements chose not to use large organizations and preferred things like marches, public protests, sit-ins, strikes and taking over public or symbolic spaces.

³⁶ Ali Shabita, *The Concept of Social Movements*, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Mohamed Lamine Debaghine University – Setif 2, Algeria, 2023: 56.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 62.

Characteristics of Demands

Social movements today usually push back against social control and highlight the need for different social groups to be independent. They usually insist on what they want with no compromise. As an example, during the protests in Algeria in 2019, people strongly demanded the resignation of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and would not be satisfied with anything less.

Social Composition

Today's movements involve different sectors of the community coming together such as workers, women, students and farmers, because they share certain cultural or political beliefs. They often group together because of common concerns, mainly those involving injustice or lacking democracy.³⁸

Accordingly, social movements have specific goals that vary depending on the context and time, and can include a variety of methods and strategies, such as demonstrations, protests, public campaigns, political pressure, and even charitable activities. Social movements represent a way for individuals and groups to express their protest and positions, and often contribute to changing reality and improving societal conditions by communicating and engaging with issues and problems that movement members see as requiring collective intervention.³⁹

On the other hand, the internal cultures that activists create inside social movement groups encourage dedication and communication and help ensure their long-term viability. These cultures are essential to maintaining the movement's continuity and fostering its cohesion and unity. In addition to encouraging recruitment, organizing, and the formulation of goals and objectives, this internal culture also shapes the movement's identity, which in turn affects the movement's rise and effect. Activists establish common concepts that set apart their group identity and establish the specifics of their relationships and political positions. In order to draw in new members and bring about the necessary change, they also create frameworks and discourses that aid in comprehending the topics they are trying to promote.

³⁸ Mabrouk Sahli, *The Role of Social Movements in Political Change in the Arab World: A Case Study of Sudan*, *Journal of Human and Social Sciences*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Algeria, 2021: 225.

³⁹ Sayed Fares, *The Culture of New Social Movements: Anthropological Approaches*, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Doha, Qatar, 2023.

1.2.3 The Aims of Social Movements

The main goal of social movements is to alter society values and cultural norms, especially those pertaining to personal freedom and autonomy. New social movements have their roots in a wider, more varied social makeup than old ones, which were frequently founded on class-based battles, such as those carried out by workers or peasants, who usually had a fairly homogeneous social foundation. These comprise populations like women, young people, and other underprivileged groups. The variety and diversity of their social underpinnings is one of the main topics that contemporary social movement theories explore.⁴⁰

Another notable feature of new social movements is their heterogeneity and structural flexibility. Modern movements are more flexible and inclusive than their predecessors, which were usually rooted on collective identities like the working or middle classes. They prioritize bringing about change by questioning dominant cognitive and ideological frameworks, and they frequently focus on identity-based attachments, such as gender, race, age, nationality, and culture. Some of these movements seek to broaden the scope of public discussion and contestation by redefining fundamental social categories like gender roles, ethnicity, or religious identity.⁴¹

Many of these movements are seen to be theoretically reactions to structural patterns of inequality and social marginalization. Promoting social diversity, improving inclusion, and guaranteeing equal opportunity are their goals. They may thus be seen as a group reaction against the hegemony of established political and social structures. Furthermore, these movements can develop and spread across national borders more easily and adaptably since they frequently consist of loosely organized networks that share similar identities and ideals.⁴²

1.2.4 Types of Social Movements

Academics in the domain of social movement theory, particularly within developed societies, frequently differentiate between two principal categories of social movements:

⁴⁰ Eric Neveu, *Sociology of Social Movements*, La Découverte, Paris, 2019: 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Badawi, 37.

1. Traditional (or Classic) Social Movements: These movements are historically associated with the labor force and their confrontations against the inequities of capitalism. Arising within the milieu of the industrial economy, they are predominantly represented by labor unions and worker movements advocating for entitlements, enhanced remuneration, and superior working conditions.

2. New Social Movements: Conversely, new social movements transcend purely economic or production-centric concerns. These movements often encompass both organized and unstructured forms of protest and address a broader spectrum of issues across various domains. They tend to resonate with more heterogeneous social groups, employ multifarious strategies, and concentrate on identity, cultural recognition, and social equity. These movements have significantly compensated for the lacuna left by traditional labor unions, particularly in response to the shifting crises in worker representation and political engagement. While these movements have experienced notable revitalization in certain regions of Europe, where labor unions now bear diminished responsibilities, analogous movements have proliferated rapidly in the Global South, including the Maghreb. In these areas, their expansion is ascribed to systemic social subjugation and the historical constraints of organized protest, as well as political and economic transformations influenced by liberal policies.⁴³

these two overarching types can be further subdivided into more specific classifications:

Reform Movements: Aim to instigate specific legal or institutional changes to enhance rights or conditions in particular sectors, such as environmental activism or union initiatives.

Radical Movements: Seek profound transformation in societal values and structures—civil rights movements that strive for racial equality are a quintessential example.

Value-Based Movements: Focus on redefining cultural norms and social values, such as religious movements advocating reform within faith traditions.

Conservative Movements: Endeavor to maintain existing societal norms and traditional values, resisting substantial change.

Normal Movements: Target procedural or regulatory modifications without contesting the foundational values themselves.

Salvation Movements: Concentrate on individual transformation, often grounded in personal or spiritual renewal, as exemplified by evangelical initiatives.

⁴³ Omar Dras, On Social Movements, *Insaniyat – Algerian Journal of Anthropology and Social Sciences*, Algeria, 2023. Accessed on 24/5/2025: <https://journals.openedition.org>

Peace Movements: Advocate nonviolence and seek to mitigate societal conflict.

Violent Movements: Depend on coercion or armed resistance to realize their objectives.

Transformative Movements: Champion comprehensive changes across all dimensions of society.⁴⁴

Furthermore, social movements typically revolve around three types of demands:

Programmatic Demands: These entail explicit support for or opposition to specific actions or proposed measures.

Identity-Based Demands: These assert the legitimacy and cohesion of the movement's constituents, emphasizing their collective identity and shared purpose.

Positional Demands: These pertain to the movement's alignment or association with other political actors, such as marginalized communities or institutional allies. In certain instances, movements advocate for the protection or recognition of specific individuals or groups confronting marginalization or injustice.

Social movements also exhibit several general characteristics, albeit with varying intensity. These include:

A confrontational disposition toward well-defined adversaries;

Informal networks and communication among members;

A collective identity that unites participants in a shared cause.⁴⁵

1.3 Key Palestinian Non-State Actors

In the framework of the Palestinian endeavor for self-determination and global acknowledgment, non-state agents have surfaced as crucial participants in the domain of public diplomacy. Functioning beyond formal state apparatuses, these agents have undertaken a pivotal function in molding global discourses, mobilizing solidarity, and championing Palestinian rights on the international platform. From grassroots initiatives and human rights entities to diaspora collectives and student associations, these varied organizations have labored assiduously to amplify the Palestinian voice in international discourses. Their endeavors have been particularly essential in challenging prevailing narratives, revealing human rights transgressions, and constructing global coalitions through nonviolent, strategic campaigns. This section examines the most salient

⁴⁴ Ibid, Ramadani, 347.

⁴⁵ Ibid, Shabita, 4.

Palestinian non-state agents, their methodologies, and the distinctive roles they fulfill in promoting the Palestinian cause across political, cultural, and digital spheres.

There are many non-state actors that played important roles in mobilizing international support and spreading the Palestinian narrative and had a strong influence on Palestinian public diplomacy, including:

1. **The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement:** The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement is a prominent informal means of exerting peaceful pressure on Israel to achieve Palestinian justice. BDS efforts can complement official Palestinian public diplomacy efforts by creating international pressure and highlighting human rights violations by Israel. Official Palestinian diplomacy can leverage the success of the BDS movement as evidence of international support for the Palestinian cause.⁴⁶
2. **Al-Haq Organization:** Founded in 1979, Al-Haq is among the most venerable and esteemed Palestinian human rights entities. It has assumed a pivotal function in chronicling infringements of international humanitarian and human rights statutes within the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Al-Haq integrates empirical research with juridical advocacy, frequently presenting comprehensive reports and evidence to global institutions such as the United Nations and the International Criminal Court. The organization is recognized for its legal acumen and reliability, functioning as a conduit between local human rights documentation and international legal advocacy, thereby establishing itself as a foundational element of Palestinian non-state diplomatic endeavors.⁴⁷
3. **Palestinian student movements:** These movements play a vital role in representing the voice of Palestinian youth and mobilizing support for the Palestinian cause both inside and outside Palestine. Universities and educational institutions that host Palestinian student movements can serve as platforms for channeling international awareness and debate on issues of occupation and justice. Palestinian student movements should cooperate with official diplomacy by communicating their demands and goals to the international community through Palestinian embassies and representatives.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ <https://bdsmovement.net/ar>

⁴⁷ <https://www.alhaq.org/>

⁴⁸ Ayman Yousef, *The Palestinian Youth Movement in the West Bank: Student Democracy, National Reconciliation, and Popular Resistance in the Time of Political Division 2007–2013*, Arab American University, Jenin, Palestine, 2020: 7.

4. **Social movements in the Jerusalemite community:** Social movements in the Jerusalemite community are emerging as entities that promote national unity and support official efforts to preserve Palestinian identity in the city of Jerusalem. These movements can help strengthen the resilience of Jerusalemites against the legal and political pressures and challenges imposed by Israel. Official Palestinian diplomacy must leverage the role of these movements to draw international attention to the issue of Jerusalem and the need to protect religious and cultural freedoms there.⁴⁹
5. **Youth Movements and Grassroots Initiatives:** Palestinian youth are increasingly using grassroots organization and digital action as effective means of public diplomacy. Stories, art, and social media are used by movements like "We Are Not Numbers," the "Palestinian Youth Movement," and other independent media collectives to personalize the Palestinian experience and combat misrepresentation in international discourse. Decentralized, innovative, and extremely responsive to digital platforms, these efforts are particularly successful in reaching and enlisting the support of younger people throughout the world.
6. **Individual actors:** A number of well-known Palestinian non-state actors have had a major influence on international lobbying, public diplomacy, and awareness-raising for the Palestinian cause. These individuals employ a range of venues, including internet, intellectual, cultural, and legal ones, to question prevailing discourses and promote Palestinian narratives. Below is a list of important people along with their roles
 - **Mohammad Al-Kurd**, is a prominent Palestinian social media and digital influencer. He is known for his efforts to raise awareness of the Palestinian cause and highlight the suffering of the Palestinian people. This type of individual is crucial because they use social media to connect with a wide audience and effectively convey news and information.
 - **The Trio Joubran**, It is a Palestinian musical band consisting of three brothers, originally from the city of Nazareth. The Trio Joubran is famous for playing the oud in all parts of the Arab world until they reached the international level, as the trio presents musical performances in most countries of the world, and thus they have become artistic ambassadors for Palestine and oriental art in general, as the

⁴⁹ Salem, Walid. (2019). Social Movements in East Jerusalem: From General National Struggle to Local Developmental Struggle and Building Sovereignty from Below. Jerusalem: Center for Jerusalem Studies, Al-Quds University. Retrieved from <https://maqdisyya.alquds.edu/pdf/Al-Maqdisiyah-Magazine7.pdf>

trio represents the Palestinian identity and the Palestinian musical identity in countries of the world, according to the Palestinian artist Wissam Joubran, one of the band members.

- **Al-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe**, Al-Funoun is an independent, non-profit artistic body that relies primarily on the efforts of its volunteers. It was founded in 1979 by a group of enthusiastic and promising artists. Since then, Al-Funoun has become a pioneer of Palestinian folk dance, presenting more than 1,000 shows locally and internationally, producing 12 dance artworks in addition to dozens of paintings, and winning numerous first prizes and distinguished certificates of appreciation from local and international festivals. The troupe presents Palestinian folk heritage, both singing and dancing, with its own vision that combines authenticity and modernity. Through this vision, it works to develop the performing arts in Palestine, to contribute to the preservation and development of Palestinian cultural identity, and to promote the spirit of belonging, expression, creativity, and teamwork.
- **Bella Hadid**: She is a Palestinian model living in the United States of America. Bella Hadid is one of the most famous models in the world, as her social media pages have tens of millions of followers. Bella Hadid plays an important role in supporting the Palestinian cause, by harnessing the great fame she enjoys, in order to spread the Palestinian cause and expose the crimes of the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian people, as she publishes information and stories in the form of photos and videos on her social media pages and highlights the violations of the Israeli occupation. The model also participates in demonstrations and protests in support of the Palestinian cause that take place in the United States of America.
- **DR. Dalal Iriqat**, is a writer, scholar, and public diplomacy and strategic planning specialist from Palestine. Dalal Iriqat is well-known for her frequent writings and appearances in Arab and international media. She is an associate professor at the Arab American University. She contributes significantly to the cause of Palestine by raising awareness through public speaking, political commentary, and scholarly study. Iriqat emphasizes the use of country branding, soft power, and public diplomacy in order to modernize Palestinian diplomatic endeavors. She aggressively combats unfavorable stereotypes through her writings and talks, striving to provide a strong and impartial representation of Palestine in global debate.

- **Motaz Azaiza** is a Gaza-based Palestinian photojournalist and humanitarian advocate. During the Israeli invasion of Gaza in 2023, Motaz Azaiza became well-known across the world for his compelling and poignant reporting on the devastation and suffering endured by residents. Motaz chronicled the everyday reality of conflict on social media, where he accumulated millions of followers, often at considerable personal danger. His images and movies, which exposed the human cost of the war, were extensively circulated by celebrities and the world press. Through his perspective, he rose to prominence as one of the most powerful Palestinian voices in the internet age, utilizing his position to promote humanitarian aid, justice, and global recognition of the Palestinian predicament.

Palestine therefore has a large number of unofficial, independent players who effectively engage in diplomacy at all levels. Among the many significant individuals are literary scholar Edward Said and cartoonist Naji al-Ali. Since listing all Palestinian unofficial actors would be too lengthy, the study focused on contemporary younger social media influencers—a subject we shall discuss later.

Notably, nation marketing concentrates on altering behavior and fostering a positive identity, whereas public diplomacy seeks to increase awareness and influence for a nation overseas. While country marketing depends on visual and symbolic components, public diplomacy depends on connections and image control. While country marketing focuses on people and customers, public diplomacy aims to reach engaged audiences overseas. While country marketing depends on propaganda and the media, public diplomacy depends on two-way contact. The significance of national image in international relations is reflected in the rising interest in country branding. Creating a national image is based on the opinions of both domestic and international audiences and includes elements of both past and future aspirations. Furthermore, in light of globalization and technological advancements, soft power is increasingly important due to its influence on international politics, with the goal of improving national image internationally. This relies on specific strategies and tools.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Iriqat, Dalal. (2019). Palestinian Nation Branding via Public Diplomacy. *International Relations and Diplomacy*, 7(5), 202–216. Retrieved from <https://www.aaup.edu/publication/dalal.s.iriqat/article/palestinian-nation-branding-public-diplomacy>

Chapter Two: Performance and Challenges: Palestinian Public Diplomacy After the 2023 Gaza Aggression

The assault of Gaza Strip by the Israeli forces in 2023 has been a decisive moment in Palestinian people diplomacy. Amid widespread destruction, killings of civilians, and negative world outrage (in the international community), it would seem that one of the main tools of action needed to present the international discussion, create a narrative, and rally the crowds in solidarity with the targeted was the social networks on both the grass root and non-state levels. This chapter gives a modern evaluation of the Palestinian public diplomacy in the course and after the strike along with its tools types and styles of media communications. Moreover, the chapter considers threats that contributed to the decrease of viability and prospects of the Palestinian public diplomacy to the utmost (e.g. biased media reporting or coverage, limited financial/physical resources, and division of Palestinian agents in public diplomacy). The chapter evaluates the effectiveness (with reference to some examples and employing empirical analysis) of public diplomacy in terms of effecting the attitude of the world population, the rhetoric of diplomacy, and or humanitarian interventions. This chapter discusses it in two sections. firstly, public diplomacy and the Palestinian cause after the Gaza war, secondly, evaluation of effectiveness and challenges.

Section One: Public Diplomacy and the Palestinian Cause After the Gaza War

1.2 Introduction

The last aggression of Israel against the Gaza Strip was a turning point in the history of the development of international reaction on the Palestinian issue. However, unlike other military activities there was another element to the war it is the coordinated international outrage that rang through the media, diplomatic and popular activist systems and sensibilities. The magnitude of the devastation, the attack on civil infrastructure and broad publicity of the human rights abuses aroused great sympathy among the general population leading to an outburst of mass action in support of the Palestinian population. Against this background, the idea of public diplomacy turned out to become a main and proactive component of international consciousness and pressure. Whereas the methods

of diplomatic activities are somewhat restricted by geopolitical coalitions and bureaucratic restraints, there has been a new field of advocacy through public diplomacy that is more dynamic and independent of institutions and formal representatives. Digital media, civil society organizations and diaspora groups were instrumental in providing the humanitarian truths on the ground, organizing the popular opinion and even magnifying the Palestinian narrative worldwide.⁵¹

In this chapter, the writer dwells on the research of the nature and effects of the phenomenon of public diplomacy following the Gaza war. It looks at the framing of the conflict by the international media, the performance of both citizen or community-based diplomacy approaches over official approaches, and the multitude of the grassroots processes that created an ever-ascending tide of global support of Palestine. This chapter reveals and shows why the capacity of non-state actors has increasingly expanded regarding guiding the international discourse and demanding accountability and justice through the influences of media coverage, popular mobilizations, and advocacy campaigns.

2.2 The International Media and Diplomatic Landscape Post-Gaza War

The Israeli aggression on Gaza was not only a source of great humanitarian disasters but also a rearrangement of world media and diplomatic landscape. The rising role of the non-stat shift in the transformation of Israeli narrative was being initiated by an increased role of non-state actors, such as Palestinian journalists, influencers, NGOs, and grassroots digital campaigns, that played a leading role in opposing mainstream Israeli narratives and raising awareness of the crisis among global audiences. In this section, post-war landscape will be discussed in four broad branches:⁵²

- (1) global media coverage,
- (2) the rise of non-state actors in media activism,
- (3) diplomatic reactions across regions, and
- (4) the dynamic interplay between public and official diplomacy.

⁵¹ Yumuşak, G. (2022). Soft power, public diplomacy and public diplomacy techniques: A conceptual evaluation. *Turkish Business Journal*, 3(6), 103. ISSN: 2717-848X.

⁵² Mahmoud, A. (2022). The communication strategies of Palestinian and Israeli public diplomacy via Facebook during the Sheikh Jarrarh crisis and the Gaza war: An analytical study]. *Majallat al-Buḥūth al-I'lāmiyya [Journal of Media Research]*, 61(3), 1577.

2.2.1 Global Media Coverage

Western media, working on the principle of balance or even equivalence, classes an Israeli-Palestinian conflict, repeating often official Israeli statements and underreporting the facts of occupation and the use of disproportionate force. But in this latest attack, the sheer volume of civilian suffering recorded in Gaza (especially by social media and independent news channels) made many of the major global media reconsider their narratives.

International news agencies like Al Jazeera, The Guardian, France 24, and Middle East Eye broadcast more and more clips of demolition of residential buildings, medical facilities, and schools, along with the interviews with those who survived. Human rights groups and legal professionals were brought in to put the violence into perspective so as to be understood as possible war crimes and contraventions to international humanitarian guidelines. Such a change was indicative of developing awareness of how asymmetrical power and human suffering is and also the disastrous humanitarian consequences of such on the population of Gaza.⁵³

The revolutionary change of the media discourse was not only triggered by journalists at mainstream sources, but also because of the direct publications of videos, pictures, and testimonies by Palestinian people on the ground. With the help of the real time updates in social media, the world audience was exposed to the harsh realities of life under bombardment leaving no room to sanitized or biased accounts creating an emotional bond between observers of the war and the victims of the war.⁵⁴

2.2.2 The Role of Non-State Actors in Media Representation

Another influence of the media shift was the active presence of the Palestinian non-state actors. People like Motaz Azaiza, a photojournalist resident in Gaza, and Mohammed El-Kurd, a Jerusalem-born writer cum civil rights activist; utilized their social media

⁵³ Al Jazeera Centre for Studies. (2024). Digital Occupation: Pixelated Propaganda, Censored Platforms and the Battle for Narrative in Gaza [Analysis of Western media coverage]. Al Jazeera Centre for Studies. https://www.theaustralian.com.au/subscribe/news/1/?sourceCode=TAWEB_WRE170_a&dest=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.theaustralian.com.au%2Fbusiness%2Fmedia%2Fwestern-media-shuns-truth-tellers-on-gaza%2Fnews-story%2F1ce8c1a3eeeb1b00e8750c4ee8537b62&memtype=anonymous&mode=premium&v21=GROUP-B-Segment-2-NOSCORE&V21spcbehaviour=append

⁵⁴ Auda, A. R. (2023). The role of public diplomacy in activating European Union decisions toward the Palestinian cause – from the perspective of Palestinian journalists. Al-Aqsa University, Gaza, Palestine.

accounts to stream raw footage and testimonies coming out of occupied locations. They were widely consumed by a mass audience including millions of people around the world at low institutional levels in part because they were frequently smuggled out of the country at considerable personal risk, and because they went directly to the international civil society.⁵⁵

These actors used the digital diplomacy methods to draw attention to the humanitarian crisis, unmask the abuse of human rights, and project Palestinian resistance as the struggle of justice, dignity, and self-determination. Their success was that they made the war human. Through memoirs, love stories, war casualties, and personal experiences, they helped to rebrand the image of Palestinians on the international scale, not in terms of factored political challenge, but as a raw human tragedy.

Parallels could be seen in the activities of cultural ambassadors, too. Other artistic efforts to bring about Palestinian identity include those of the Trio Joubran and the Al-Funoun Dance Troupe, who expressed their Palestinian identity through their musical efforts and regular actors like Bella Hadid who used their international stardom to promote awareness and demonstrate solidarity. This heterogeneous environment of influence-mongers, artists, and citizen journalists helped create a counter discourse that appealed to the consciousness of the globally minded people on two continents.⁵⁶

2.2.3 International Diplomatic Reactions: A Fragmented Landscape

Due to the war, international diplomacy portrayed a sharp regional difference. The governments of many Western countries, in particular the United States, Germany and the United Kingdom also confirmed their backing of the right of self-defense of Israel, despite their obvious reports about mass killings of civilians and bombardments of humanitarian informants. This was criticized immensely by the group of human rights organizations and section of the civil society as negligent or facilitating infringements of international law.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Le Monde. (2024, June 14). Le photographe palestinien Motaz Azaiza, témoin capital de l'enfer à Gaza [The Palestinian photographer who witnessed Gaza's hell]. Newspaper Le Monde. https://www.lemonde.fr/m-le-mag/article/2024/06/14/le-photographe-palestinien-motaz-azaiza-temoin-capital-de-l-enfer-a-gaza_6239710_4500055.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁵⁶ Newsweek. (2024). How Palestinian art and culture is being kept alive online. https://www.newsweek.com/palestinian-art-culture-resistance-protest-online-bella-hadid-mustafa-sliman-mansour-mia-khalifa-1918845?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁵⁷ Brehm, H. (2024). Western diplomacy and international law amid the Gaza conflict: A critical review. *Journal of International Relations*, 18(1), 45. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jir.2024.18.1.45>

In comparison, a number of Latin American countries such as Colombia, Bolivia and Chile offered more condemnations to the actions of Israel. Others withdrew their ambassadors or sent the whole diplomatic relations into recess. Equally, the states of the Global South such as Malaysia, Algeria, South Africa, and Qatar, were highly concerned and demanded the direct intervention of the international community. They referred to international laws and standards of justice in their official statements, stressing the premise that the Palestinian rights are central to any long-term peace.⁵⁸

The Arab world resulted with a number of its governments taking resolute diplomatic tones followed by emergency summits and colossal citizen protests in Jordan, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. Such mass actions put pressure on governments to go beyond condemnations and participate in diplomacy in supporting the right of Palestinians.⁵⁹

The humanitarian tragedy was condemned by the United Nations, with Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, and emergency sessions of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. The situation in Gaza was reported as being at the genocide levels by the UNRWA and other agencies that called to cease fire and investigation of the situation by international communities.⁶⁰

2.2.4 The Convergence of Public and Official Diplomacy

Public and official diplomacy made a meeting point and is one of the outstanding features of the post-Gaza war era. Protests in Europe, North America, and the Arab world, which were sparked by online movements and information shared through social networks, made a great number of political leaders publish their statements about the war. Hashtags like #GazaUnderAttack, #CeasefireNow and #FreePalestine were used worldwide during the aggression, as slogans of activism and policy discussion. In a number of countries, and especially in the European Union, popular outrage took the form of parliamentary questions and debates on weapons sales, diplomatic calls to restraint or responsibility.

⁵⁸ Ibid, Brehm, 52.

⁵⁹ Youssef, R. (2024). Arab world public protests and government diplomacy during the 2024 Gaza conflict. *Middle East Policy*, 31(2), 112

⁶⁰ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2024). Gaza humanitarian situation report: Genocide warnings and emergency calls for ceasefire. <https://www.unocha.org/gaza-situation-report-2024>

Petitions and resolutions were also issued in academic institutions, labor unions and in civil society networks requiring governments assume more decisive stances.⁶¹

Civil society groups like Al-Haq were important in the sense that they gathered and presented the data to international entities on war crimes to support the perceived aspect of law and demand legal convictions. Palestinian diaspora groups and student unions held digital campaigns, candle vigils and educational workshops to build pressure not only on the political nature of the struggle but also on its moral and humanitarian dimensions.

This combination of grassroots pressure and institutional diplomacy showed that public diplomacy is not only more complementary to official diplomacy any more, it can also drive and influence it. Emotional appeal, visual narratives and mass appeals in Gaza have forced the international actors to admit the extent of the crisis despite the binding alliances.⁶²

2.3 Role of Public Diplomacy in Responding to Humanitarian Crises

The humanitarian disaster that occurred in Gaza during the Israeli attack needed the immediate assistance and response of not only humanitarian workers directly on the ground but encountered a desperate need to present a convincing narrative to the rest of the world. Public diplomacy was key to this work to capture a globally distributed audience by utilizing emotionally relatable messaging, online organizing, and organizing on the ground to influence the way the world perceived and determined policy.⁶³ This section explores mainly five of the major components of that response:

2.3.1 Real-Time Digital Storytelling from Gaza

Activists, journalists, medics, and civilians turned to Instagram, X, Tik Tok, and YouTube to broadcast time-sensitive testimonies of hospitals, shelters, and the affected streets. Photojournalist Motaz Azaiza and filmmaker Bisan Owda captured boomings, maimed children, deteriorating infrastructure, and hospital emergency acts. The transformation of

⁶¹ Boyd, M. (2024). From hashtags to hearings: How digital activism shaped European responses to Gaza. *European Journal of Political Communication*, 39(1), 72.

⁶² Zayani, M. (2024). Social media and Arab public diplomacy: Reframing Gaza in the global discourse. *International Journal of Communication*, 18, 2796.

⁶³ Aouragh, M. (2024). Visual politics and digital resistance: The Gaza war and Palestinian cyber-diplomacy. *Media, War & Conflict*.

Owda in his lifestyle writing to urgent appeals, as in the: “Hi, I am Bisan in Gaza...” messages- as touched thousands of fans and were shared outside Israel.⁶⁴

This unadorned record led to an emotional appeal to the rest of the world and made a switch from theoretical geopolitics to personal pain, the defining characteristic of successful empathic diplomacy.

2.3.2 Strategic Use of Visual Symbols and Hashtags

The means of promoting a blood-stained schoolbag, a mobile clinic, a family deprived of their home, etc. as a symbolic picture were the tools of a public diplomacy that helped Gaza to remain in the minds of the global community as a tragedy. Hashtag activism, such as #GazaUnderAttack, #CeasefireNow and #FreePalestine has been posted billions of times across TikTok and Instagram with some achieving as much as 25+ billion views each on a single hashtag.⁶⁵

Scholarly studies have noted that hashtag activism played a vital role in developing a feel and a pull towards uniting the world during this war, particularly a young world, which gets its news through social media.

2.3.3 Diaspora Networks and Grassroots Diplomacy

Palestinian diaspora communities, students, activists, professionals and concerned organizations held mass protests, teach-ins, letter campaigns and vigils in cities such as London, Berlin, Chicago, Cairo and Amman among others. This had been accompanied by a massive activity in social media, which has brought convergence pressure to national governments to reconsider their military aid and foreign policy stance. Such people-to-people diplomacy turned the emotional empathy into action through enactments in parliamentary debates and declaration of ceasefire motions.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Ibid, Zayani, 2774.

⁶⁵ El Kurd, D. (2024). Hashtag politics and digital solidarity: Palestinian resistance in the age of social media. *Journal of Middle East Media*, 20(1), 52. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jmem.2024.0012>

⁶⁶ Nashif, N. (2023). Civic resistance and diaspora mobilization during the Gaza war. *Palestine Studies Quarterly*, 52(4), 99–117.

2.3.4 NGO and Legal Advocacy Integration

Major NGOs such as Al -Haq, Al -Mezan and Palestinian Centre of Human Rights worked together with international human rights group to collect and introduce evidence of anticipated war crimes and genocide. In November 2023, Al-Haq and PCHR provided the International Criminal Court with comprehensive legal briefs, requesting prompt investigations into the civic and humanitarian physical infrastructure attacks and human rights violations. The legal activism successfully contributed to the increased public diplomacy because it used to support the appeal to emotions via firm legal evidence, led to increased credibility and affected the global venues such as the UN and ICC.⁶⁷

2.3.5 Cultural and Artistic Diplomacy Amid Crisis

In the setting of great destruction, Palestinian artists and cultural workers were able to take advantage of art, poetry, music and theatre and articulate their survival and humanity. Such cultural connections with humanitarian messages were combined by artists such as Trio Joubran and Al-Funoun Dance Troupe and many of the creators in Gaza who hosted exhibitions, virtual concerts, and online poetry nights. Such cultural attempts were very potent in the worldwide soft-power spectrums. During humanitarian crises, cultural diplomacy can be a strategic tool, it highlights that cultural diplomacy can be a very effective means of expressing shared values such as in this case dignity, resistance, and communal memory.⁶⁸

2.3.6 Evaluating Impact: Narrative, Policy, and Humanitarian Outcomes

The interaction of all of the above strategies of digital storytelling, grassroots mobilization, legal advocacy, and cultural expression had practical outcome:

- a. The turnover of popular opinion, particularly young people in the west using social media are the reason.

⁶⁷ Al-Haq. (2023, November 14). Al-Haq and partners submit evidence to the ICC Prosecutor on Gaza war crimes. <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/22300.html>

⁶⁸ Said, E., & Shalhoub-Kevorkian, N. (2024). Cultural resistance in wartime: Palestinian artists in the face of destruction. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 27(2), 133–150.

- b. Policies revisions and motions in parliament concerning exportation of weapons and humanitarian corridors
- c. Some kind of wave of international solidarity measures, ranging from to NGO coalitions to interfaith vigils
- d. Official legal action such as ICC investigations, and UN special missions.

Nonetheless, issues exist and until they are addressed humanitarian-oriented public diplomacy demonstrates to be a radical shift in the mechanisms of societal responses to conflict: more appeals to emotion, decentralized, and able to shape formal diplomacy.

2.4 Pioneers of Palestinian Popular Diplomacy After the Gaza War

Aggression on the Gaza Strip in 2023-2024 triggered an outburst of Palestinian public diplomacy as organizations of the structure level did not seek to speak out and become the voices of conscience in the world, and it was people and groups who took this position. By means of photography, narration, music, law enforcement, and cultural act, these characters subverted the conventional media filters and went into contact with global people on the emotional, ethical, and political scale. This part points out the brightest cases of individuals and groups who turned into significant players in the field of Palestinian public diplomacy during and following the war.

2.4.1 Digital Humanitarians: Motaz Azaiza and Bisan Owda

Following the Israeli attack on Gaza which broke out on October 7, 2023, yet another type of a public diplomat unexpectedly appeared in the world the political establishment was not ready to receive him the real one, born precisely in the area of siege. Motaz Azaiza and Bisan Owda were among the greatest of these as they took advantage of both the scope and the timeliness of social media to cover the disaster live. Their activism was a crucial depiction of humanizing the Palestinian plight, anti-mainstream counternarrative, and global popular opinion reformation.⁶⁹

Motaz Azaiza The Eye of Gaza

Motaz Azaiza, a young photojournalist, who was born and grew up in Gaza, became the lens of the world on the destruction and determination of the enclave. He captured it all the so-called mass funerals and blood covered sidewalks, silent moments when children

⁶⁹ Ibid, Zayani, 2799.

are drawing in bomb-shelters. The events that he filmed were personal and traumatic: a man is pulling out his daughter body out of a rubble, a paramedic falls on his knees to weep, a little boy pleads: Will I die to-day? These were not some nameless tragedies but real ones known as well as experienced by the world.⁷⁰

Through his Instagram account (@motaz_azaiza), which was later to exceed the number of 18 million followers in three months after gaining only a few hundreds of them, Motaz shared images and videos with shorter and emotional notes.⁷¹ The lines such as I am doing this so the world can see it or this is my final post, just in case I die tonight were used as a viral call to action. There was something universal, across national, religious and ideological boundaries about his tone, which was never preachy, or political, but profoundly human in its note.

Efforts of Reaching and Influence

The big celebrities (e.g., Bella Hadid, Dua Lipa, Mark Ruffalo) shared his contents and thus could extend to tens of millions of people who do not identify as a political audience. Amnesty International, the Human Rights Watch and United Nations agencies have all used the photos of Azaiza in their reports and campaigns to create awareness.

In 2024, he was listed as one of TIME Magazine Top 100 Influential People.

His daily tweets educated and even influenced media discourse in The Guardian, Al Jazeera, and New York Times among other publications.

His footage was referenced in hearings, debates, and learning occasions by governments, NGOs and universities.

After covering the situation in Gaza for 108 days, in January 2024, Azaiza left Gaza and took his first foreign speech where he demanded that he would not simply want sympathy but justice. His rise as a citizen journalist to an international humanitarian witness is the perfect example of how the power of digital presence can become a feature of diplomatic power in the era of networked activism.

Bisan Owda: Voice of Survival

A filmmaker, activist and a humanitarian volunteer Bisan Owda became one of the most known faces of the war. Her social media updates, which started with the candid line of

⁷⁰ El-Kurd, D. (2024). Palestinian digital humanitarianism: Azaiza, Owda, and the ethics of bearing witness. *Journal of Global Media and Communication*, 20(1), 62.

⁷¹ Azaiza, M. [@motaz_azaiza]. [Instagram posts]. Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/motaz_azaiza/

introduction, Hi, I am Bisan of Gaza did not only give insight about her condition, but story-inspired visual diaries about life under the siege. The documentary film aesthetic of her material combined with the sense of the first person witness conveyed messages that were poetic and raw at the same time.⁷²

Her videos placed her in the hospitals with children, in shelters questioning the mothers, and on the rooftops during the airstrikes eloquently describing in striking calmness what she and her community were putting up with. She was in many respects a frontline humanitarian reporter addressing the world on the war zone in a composed, serious and eloquent way.

Efforts of Reaching and Influence

The videos made by Owda often had millions of views per post on Instagram, TikTok and Twitter (X).

Even her voice has been heard in the European parliament where a German MP used her videos in demonstrating that the sufferings in Gaza are disproportional.

The name of Bisan and her quotes were also seen as the cause of solidarity demonstration in such cities as Paris, London, and New York or even attendance demonstrations in Santiago.

International panels of volunteer networks translated her content into various languages without being censored or suppressed by the algorithm.

Her footage was included in human rights stories published by media outlets which included Le Monde, The Intercept, and Democracy Now!

Bisan was under great personal risk in part because of the necessity to relocate repeatedly and to endure power cuts, but she engaged in daily documentation of her situation. Comprising the essence of digital humanitarian diplomacy, her work brings together the idea of communication, compassion and advocacy in a real time broadcast of a humanitarian crisis during a time when it occurred.⁷³

In unison, Motaz and Bisan created another axis of Palestinian representation: young, credible, emotionally distinguished, unwavered. In their case, there was no need to have them translated, and unlike diplomats of spokespersons. The suffering was also visible,

⁷² France 24. (2024, February 2). Bisan Owda and the frontline testimony from Gaza shared worldwide. <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20240202-gaza-s-young-voices-breaking-through-the-noise>

⁷³ Democracy Now. 2023. Digital war diaries from Gaza: Bisan Owda's testimony goes global. https://www.democracynow.org/2023/12/14/bisan_owda_digital_diary_gaza

and it was direct and it could not be ignored, it was real and immediate. They were informing global public discourse, influenced popular media discourse and punished celebrities to talk, and some kind of truth-tellers in a blizzard of lies.⁷⁴

They changed the image of diplomacy in the 21st century not at the embassies or the press rooms, but on the cell phone videos recorded under the falling ceilings.

These online humanitarians did not just document war, they changed the world perception towards war, which gave the world an archive of Palestinian humans that will live long after the war itself.

2.4.2 Cultural Ambassadors: Trio Joubran and Al-Funoun Dance Troupe

Although frontline journalists and digital activists provided raw accounts of the Gaza war, a countermeasure to the force was countered using another form that could be just as effective to Palestinians; a cultural diplomacy that was conducted by Palestinian artists and performers. The music, dancing and acting did not only comprise a tool of mourning and unity, but also a high-level form of resistance. In that regard, two of the most famous artistic ensembles in Palestine Trio Joubran and Al-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe contributed immensely to maintaining the Palestinian identity, as well as introducing new topics to the emotional and political dialogue about Gaza during and after the war.⁷⁵

Trio Joubran : Strings of Resistance

Trio Joubran is a group of brothers (Samir, Wissam and Adnan) who gained international recognition as Palestinian oud musicians who are natives of Nazareth. With their music, which combines maqam, a traditional form of music, to modern improvisation, the Palestinian cause has long been a cultural symbol. However, after the 2023 war, their activities re-gained significance and became a kind of musical diplomacy. The trio performed concerts in memory of the victims of Gaza at live concerts in Europe and the Arab world. They did not preach political slogans on the stage, but they used poetic, symbolic language in their words carrying deep pain of war. In November 2023, they showed solidarity with Ukrainian military by pausing halfway during a concert in Paris in a moment of silence, followed by the performance of a song Greek Resistance

⁷⁴ Ibid, El-Kurd.

⁷⁵ Said, E., & Shalhoub-Kevorkian, N. (2024). Cultural resistance in wartime: Palestinian artists in the face of destruction. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 27(2), 133.

originally dedicated to the resistance fighters, "Masar". Their productions were accompanied by projections of destruction of Gaza and names of children already killed thus turning the concert hall into a place of lamentation and witnessing.⁷⁶

Efforts of Reaching and Influence

Thousands were drawn to listen to them around the world in places like Paris, Barcelona, Rabat as well as Beirut where concerts were also used to champion their cause through performances.

Their songs played in multimedia solidarity events, such as UN Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and fundraising efforts of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

The number of their listens per month on streaming websites such as Spotify and YouTube has shot up following the war, meaning interest in Palestinian culture as a means of expression and solidarity on a global scale.

The group also participated in cultural diplomacy roundtables in France and Chile in which they discussed how music can help maintain national identity in the face of occupation.

The silence between songs of Trio Joubran was at times as eloquent as words. The strings they bore were full of pain, frustration, and a constant declaration to the world, that Palestinian identity cannot be silenced through a siege.

Al-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe: Embodying Memory and Resistance

Established in 1979, Al-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe is a dance ensemble composed of volunteers with the aim of maintaining and advancing Palestinian folklore, specifically dabke. During the Gaza war, Al-Funoun increased its performances and online programming as a means of narrating stories through dance that depicted resilience, displacement, and collective memory.

One of their most notable contributions post-October 2023 was a virtual performance "Tujan" where she integrated traditional dabke with spoken-word poetry and video montage from Gaza. The performance streamed online then later performed in solidarity events in Ramallah, Beirut, and Istanbul. This depiction represents a choreographed

⁷⁶ Al-Arab Magazine .2023, The Arab Levant should be more open to the culture of the Maghreb: Artist Wissam Gebran: I am amazed by Gnawa music and its traditional instruments, Al-Arab Magazine, Issue 12814, <https://alarab.news>

allegory for Palestinian grief and perseverance whereby a mother searches for her children in the ruins. ⁷⁷

Efforts of Reaching and Influence

Al-Funoun's performances were folded into diaspora-organized protests and cultural events across the globe, which served to bend the war not only into a humanitarian crisis, but also a struggle of culture.

The troupe worked with other local artistic groups including Lebanon's Caracalla Dance Theatre and Tunisia's El Teatro ensemble to perform solidarity pieces focusing on Palestinian folklore and oral history.

Their social media push — with clips of rehearsals interspersed with footage of destruction in Gaza — got hundreds of thousands of views, and were shared.

Trio Joubran and Al-Funoun together exemplify the ways in which Palestinian artists have turned culture into a kind of diplomatic tool one that gets to go places that political envoys cannot. Theirs is work that communicates with embassies and audiences, television broadcasts and street festivals a bridge between emotion and advocacy.

Culture diplomacy speaks to the heart, not the head and it stays there. conventional kind of diplomacy is conducted through legalese and statements that no one really believes or notices, culture diplomacy is the kind that speaks to the heart, not the head so it sticks. So too songs, poems and dances these forms hold memory, humanity and history.

2.4.3 Diaspora Influencers and Global Public Figures

One of the most powerful new voices to rise up during and long after the 2023–2024 Israeli assault on Gaza was Bella Hadid, the Palestinian-Dutch supermodel who hijacked her social media accounts and turned them into an all-purpose international outlet of solidarity and support. But already vocal in her support for the rights of Palestinians, Hadid's role would shift from one of occasional political engagement to sustained digital public diplomacy she being the world-famous albeit apolitical person who, online, has

⁷⁷ El Funoun El Folklore Troupe website: <https://el-funoun.org/>

made it her mission to remind the world outside the conflict that Palestinians are human beings, and to debunk or mock Western media narratives.⁷⁸

Having 60+ million followers on Instagram, and a huge sway on other platforms like TikTok and Twitter (X), Hadid's messages went waaay beyond traditional activist or academic circles. Her emotional moves especially among younger, less politically oriented individuals were instrumental in helping to reframe Palestine from a distant geopolitical disaster to a deeply humaninaire. Hadid's response to the October 2023 attacks, initially, was to post messages of grief, anger, and defiance. Instead of amplifying political rhetoric, she was reposting firsthand footage from Gaza (including from journalists Motaz Azaiza and Bisan Owda), spreading its reach exponentially. She translated complicated events into digestible summaries, penned captions that reflected her own personal connection as the daughter of a Palestinian refugee and spotlighted the emotional and humanitarian cost of the war.⁷⁹

Most of her content included infographics with text and gifs, explaining breaches of international law (for example: targeting hospitals, using white phosphorous)

Graphic images and videos of Palestinian civilians, often accompanied by emotional text like "How many more?" or "No child should go through this."

In this respect, Hadid served as a cultural conduit, translating the Palestinian condition into a typology, language and aesthetic that could be consumed by the global youth as well as the non-expert.

Bella Hadid's public diplomacy was based on moral clarity and cultural fluency rather than formal alliances or political theory. She redefined the role of a celebrity during humanitarian crises while working in the fashion industry, a field that is generally removed from political discourse. Her advocacy turned celebrity influence into a potent soft power tool that could change public opinion and diplomatic narratives. She exposed new audiences to a cause that has historically been underrepresented in mainstream media by bringing the Palestinian story into fields like fashion, beauty, and lifestyle that hardly ever deal with conflict-related advocacy. Her efforts garnered attention from international publications that have traditionally given Palestinian voices little air, such as Vogue, The New York Times, and Elle. Her visibility also contributed to transnational solidarity,

⁷⁸ France 24. 2024. Bella Hadid's activism: From fashion runways to Gaza solidarity. <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20240112-bella-hadid-s-activism-from-fashion-runways-to-gaza-solidarity>

⁷⁹ Metwally, M. 2023, Bella Hadid: Beauty and the Palestinian Resistance Spirit, Al-Quds Al-Arabi Newspaper, <https://rb.gy/ft5kr>

including among Arab diaspora communities, oppressed and pro-justice networks globally. Culturally, Bella Hadid stepped up to the plate despite not holding an official title, using her name, reach, and inextinguishable voice to speak for Palestine. Her case is a lesson in how diaspora figures, armed with global platforms and moral fervor, can affect the human heart, make headlines and even mess with history all without gaining access to a formal negotiation room.

2.4.4 Academic and Legal Advocates

Academics and legal professionals, rather than social media influencers or artists, played a vital role in Palestinian public diplomacy by providing intellectual clarity and legal support for humanitarian and political demands stemming from the war. Dr. Dalal Iriqat and legal teams from Al-Haq, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) helped translate Palestinian suffering into language that could be discussed and transformed in international law and policy.

Dr. Dalal Iriqat: Bridging Academia and Strategic Communication

Dr Dalal Iriqat, a Professor in Diplomacy and Strategic Communication at the Arab American University and a leading media analyst, was one of the leading academic voices following the Gaza war.⁸⁰ As a public intellectual, she served two roles: to instruct the world public about the working of Palestinian diplomacy, and to advise the Palestinian institutions on how to articulate their cause effectively when faced with a dispassionately hostile world. Dr. Iriqat's English and Arabic media interventions sought to redefine Palestinian public diplomacy as an international law-based, justice, and human rights struggle. Her solution was to stress "rebranding" Palestine through appeals to universal values of freedom, dignity, and resiliency rather than political grievances. She wanted to counteract disinformation, dispel legal misrepresentations, and promote a more strategic public diplomacy practice based on emotional intelligence and cultural resonance via op-eds, television interviews, campus addresses, and social media engagement.

She has played a crucial role in determining the intellectual discourse of Palestinian public diplomacy. She has authored articles and policy briefs for leading regional and international publications such as Al Jazeera English, offering deep reflections on

⁸⁰ Iriqat, AD. (a.n.d.). Dalal Iriqat – Professor of Diplomacy and Strategic Communication. LinkedIn. <https://ps.linkedin.com/in/dalal-saeb-iriqat>

strategic communication and the Palestinian story. Her participation in foreign conferences on soft power and digital diplomacy put the Palestinian cause as a bottom-up, people-focused model of advocacy. Additionally, she has conducted training for youth, diplomats, and journalists on ethical story framing and effective communication tactics. A keen supporter of inclusive diplomacy, Dr. Iriqat is also a supporter of Palestinian women representation in public representation and decision-making. Her research and fieldwork have turned her into the center of the evolving Palestinian architecture of public diplomacy connecting theory to practice, and balancing emotional appeal to strategic communication.

Legal Advocacy: Al-Haq, Al Mezan, and the PCHR

alongside academicians, palestinians civil rights lawyers were, along with others, conducting their legal public diplomacy operations during the Gaza war. Though not diplomats working within the official state system, their work was tending to the construction of the international legal response.⁸¹ Thus, Al-Haq, Al Mezan, and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) and written others, issued reports in real time allege violations of IHL such as indiscriminate bombing, the target of medical clinics, and collective punishment. Their submissions before the International Criminal Court and the Human Rights Council of the UN and European parliaments rendered Palestinian public diplomacy into grounds of law, evidence, and accountability. On November 2023, the legal dossiers of war crimes were submitted jointly by Al-Haq and PCHR, with legal briefings for diplomats organized by Al Mezan in Ramallah and Geneva. These reports were indeed cited by UN rapporteurs in support of calls for ceasefires and investigation. They provided a crash course for activists and journalists on legalistic language, thereby raising the caliber of media advocacy in the area. With the assistance of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and FIDH, they built up their credibility and appeal from the backward part of the world.

⁸¹ Al-Haq. 2023. Al-Haq, Al Mezan and PCHR submit war crimes evidence to the ICC and call for international action.

Section Two: Evaluation of Effectiveness and Challenges

The Gaza War of 2023–2024 led Palestinian public diplomacy to become more intense and visible while also increasing in complexity. The campaign achieved notable progress in shaping worldwide public support and building alliances yet questions remain about its lasting effectiveness and coordination.

This chapter evaluates Palestinian public diplomacy achievements and shortcomings after the war through critical analysis. The analysis investigates campaign success metrics within decentralized and emotionally charged and reactive frameworks.

2.5 Criteria for Evaluating Successful Public Diplomacy Campaigns

Public diplomacy assessment in conflict-driven situations such as post-war Gaza needs to shift from traditional metrics like treaties and speeches to evaluate narrative influence and emotional engagement and institutional impact. The 2023 Gaza war led Palestinian public diplomacy to use fast decentralized digital tools alongside legal and cultural advocacy to challenge established discourses.

Four Key Evaluation Criteria Appeared:

a. Emotional Engagement & Digital Virality

Perhaps the most visible signpost of success in public diplomacy is a campaign's ability to create empathy and mass engagement on digital platforms. During and after the aggression in Gaza, powerful raw material—videos taken from bomb shelters and hospitals—was dispersed around the world through social media. Social media provided a space for activists. Research reveals that emotional pro-Palestinian content was able to gather a higher engagement average from users compared to all other posts, likely because of its 'real', authentic, and timely nature. This visibility was very important in humanizing Palestinian suffering and forging connections with audiences outside of traditional diplomatic channels who may not have come across this issue.⁸²

⁸² Zayani, M. 2024. The image war moves to TikTok: Evidence from the May 2021 round of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. *Media, War & Conflict*, 17(2), 185–202.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/17506352231222954>

Visual media such as TikTok and Instagram became arenas for empathy storytelling, demonstrating how virality, when combined with emotional truth, can be a potent diplomatic tool.

b. Disrupting Narrative and media outreach

Public diplomacy programs gain distinction in the power they have to disrupt the orthodoxies and in the spaces for coverage that they provide while mainstream news organizations improvise in their inability to bridge them. Citizen journalists offering instantaneous, unprocessed glimpses of Gaza and exposing such biases in global news coverage and ultimately energizing international solidarity movements. As media critics have contended, these digital storytellers challenged Western media coverage of the war with real-time coverage and humanitarian narratives that shifted public opinion in North America and Europe.⁸³ An Al Jazeera Centre for Studies report further noted that Palestinian-led reporting circumvented editorial filters and mobilized public sympathies across linguistic and geographical boundaries. In this context of narrative-making rather than necessarily volume of content, the time to play an interventionist supervision role is what counts as success.⁸⁴

c. Advocacy Impact & Institutional Response

Success is also registered when public diplomacy is converted into institutional action. In the wake of mass protests and online activism in 2023, some parliaments in Europe discussed the arms exports to Israel. Various media sources covered the legal submissions to the International Criminal Court (ICC) by Palestinian civil society organizations, including Al-Haq and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, which was most likely magnified at the grassroots level through online activism.⁸⁵ Campaigns which acquire political influence, affecting legal cases, public discussion, or governmental decisions on foreign policy, give not just visibility but also political recognition.⁸⁶

d. Resilience During Suppression and Network Formation

⁸³ Taqiya, F. M. S. 2024. Digital diplomacy and conflict: The Israel–Palestine social media war. *Modern Diplomacy*. <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2024/04/03/digital-diplomacy-and-conflict-the-israel-palestine-social-media-war/>

⁸⁴ Al Jazeera Centre for Studies. 2024. How citizen journalism reshaped global narratives on Gaza. <https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2024/1/5/how-citizen-journalism-reshaped-global-narratives-on-gaza>

⁸⁵ Ibid, Al-Haq. <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/22300.html>

⁸⁶ TRT Global. 2024. Social media activism behind European calls for ceasefire in Gaza. <https://www.trtworld.com/news/europe-social-media-activism-gaza>

Finally, an important factor in successful public diplomacy is the capacity to maintain advocacy campaigns despite institutional or algorithmic censorship. In 2024, digital rights groups monitored the removal of thousands of pro-Palestinian posts from major platforms, as in accordance with a 2025 Sada Social report on "digital erasure" recorded more than 25,000 removals and account limitations aimed at Palestinian content an instance of algorithmic censorship that jeopardized narrative consistency.⁸⁷ while activist networks utilizing backup accounts reposted within diaspora communities and engaged on alternative platforms. This highlighted not just the effectiveness of digital strategy but also the significance of coalition-based communication, particularly through movements spearheaded by youth, legal NGOs, and organizations associated with diaspora communities.⁸⁸

The four domains—the emotional, the narrative, the institutional, and the resilient—collectively create a complex network for assessing the challenging area of Palestinian public diplomacy following the conflict in Gaza.

The following table is a summary Table of Evaluation Criteria

Criterion	Definition	Illustrative Evidence
Emotional Engagement & Digital Virality	Ability to instill empathy and unity in worldwide circles	TikTok’s Gaza posts outperformed others in engagement—“reverse-symmetry effect”
Narrative Disruption & Media Outreach	Breaking into mainstream media narratives to correct or supplement coverage	Al Jazeera: citizen journalists circumventing Western media filters
Advocacy Impact & Institutional Response	Converting public pressure into policy or legal action	Social media activism spurred ceasefire debates & legal inquiries
Resilience Amid Suppression & Networking	Sustaining message flow and building alliances despite platform censorship	25k+ Palestinian content suppression cases

⁸⁷ Sada Social. Digital rights index 2024: Digital erasure of Palestinian content. Retrieved June 25, 2025, from <https://globalvoices.org/story/digital-erasure-how-social-media-platforms-are-silencing-palestinians-in-2024/>

⁸⁸ 7amleh – The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media. 2024. The shrinking space for Palestinian digital rights. https://7amleh.org/files/Palestine_Digital_Rights_2024.pdf

2.6 Obstacles Facing Palestinian Public Diplomacy

Despite impressive increases in storytelling capacity and new media diplomacy, Palestinian public diplomacy was put to the test severely in and after the 2023–2024 Gaza war. These three vital hindrances can be summarized as follows: media fragmentation and bias, digital repression, and resource limitation. Understanding these limitations is important for realistic evaluation and forward planning.

A. Media Bias & Framing Distortions

Western and global mass media had a tendency of portraying biased framing while reporting Gaza. The Centre for Media Monitoring (UK) found that over 76% of the headlines and news stories used the term "Israel– Hamas war," thereby concealing Israel's responsibility in escalating the war. Emotive terms such as "atrocities" and "massacre" were frequently applied to describe Israeli casualties—70% more than Palestinian—"occupation" references being all but absent.⁸⁹ Passive constructions of the verb ("died from lack of food") in foreign reporting concealed agency and responsibility.⁹⁰ New Arab analysis also demonstrated the facts, having a 5:1 pro-Israel slant when referring to the "right to defend." Such biasing frames operate systematically to detract from Palestinian efforts to revive the conflict on legal and humanitarian grounds.⁹¹

B. Digital Repression & Censorship

The virtual space, the most democratic realm of diplomatic participation, was transformed into contested terrain:

- 7amleh documented over 1,640 cases of Palestinian digital human rights violations during the first six months of 2024 alone. This represented 4,400 violations in 2023, most of which were after October 7, and 5100 coded violations up until September 2024. Correctives by leading tech platforms revealed 5,100+ Palestinian content

⁸⁹ Centre for Media Monitoring. 2024. Media bias Gaza 2023–24: UK media analysis. <https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CfMM-Report-Final-MEDIA-BIAS-GAZA-2023-24-ePDF.pdf>

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ The New Arab. 2024. Report highlights UK media bias in Gaza war coverage. <https://www.newarab.com/news/report-highlights-uk-media-bias-gaza-war-coverage>

removals, with Meta and others systematically deleting posts or engaging in geo-blocking— even it censoring posts on Al-Aqsa Mosque.⁹²

- Human Rights Watch confirmed 1,050 cases of systemic take-downs or account suspensions, shadow bans, and incorrect application of 'Dangerous Organizations' policies. Over 1,350 suppression incidents were documented through July 2024 alone deflecting a broad bias in content moderation against Palestine-related speech.⁹³

Activists used other approaches: diaspora reposts, VPNs, mirror accounts, and coordination between platforms. But these efforts were slow, needed technical skills, and organizational resources.

C. Resource Constraints & Disaggregated Capacity

Palestinian public diplomacy leans on decentralized citizen activists and civic movements without a formal organization:

- Individual online tales by citizens (e.g. citizen journalists) were trending but not strategically sustained or coordinated in messaging.⁹⁴
- Human rights legal campaigns produced genuine evidence, but lack of regular strategic coordination with the media and diaspora communities meant their media impact was minimal.
- The public diplomacy landscape was highly dispersed and resulted in duplicated efforts, disjointed narrative, and ineffective cross-community messaging.⁹⁵

These institutional limitations were worsened by digital censorship, which had the tendency to force groups to invest constrained resources in evading bans rather than message building or coordination.

2.7 Gaps in Coordination Between Official Institutions and Civil Society

Despite strengths in Palestinian public diplomacy, there are severe coordination deficits between official government institutions (e.g., Palestinian Authority, Ministry of Foreign

⁹² 7amleh – The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media. 2024. Palestinian digital rights violations: Mid-year report 2024. <https://7amleh.org/2024/07/01/mid-year-digital-rights-violations-report>

⁹³ Human Rights Watch. 2023. Meta's broken promises: Systemic censorship of Palestine content on Instagram and Facebook. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/12/20/meta-systemic-censorship-palestine-content-instagram-and-facebook>

⁹⁴ Nah, S., & Chung, D.-S. (2023). Understanding media empowerment: Citizen journalism in Palestine. Palgrave Communications. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01526-z>

⁹⁵ Ayoub, H. H. (2023). Assessing Palestinian public diplomacy: Realities, challenges and opportunities. *Global Media and Communication*, 19(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/17427665231184681>

Affairs) and other civil society stakeholders, including NGOs, academic institutions, and grassroots movements. Such discontinuities undermine strategic synchronization, resource sharing, and long-term effectiveness.

A. Fragmented Public Diplomacy Efforts

The Palestinian public diplomacy landscape suffers deep fragmentation, with state-led actions and civil society actions occurring in parallel (but separate) silos, and without corresponding strategic thinking. There are programs ranging from student exchanges, to cultural festivals, to sports diplomacy that are happening under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and yet they are not aligned or coordinated with grassroots efforts, diaspora channels, or NGOs. There is "limited coordination" between government actors and civic actors, resulting in a lack of coherency in messaging, and a limited overall impact.⁹⁶ This fragmentation at the institutional level is multiplied by structural conditions and realities of Palestinian civil society, as there are over 4,000 registered NGOs that operate independently of one another, and therefore lack a common communication system, as well as common strategic goals.⁹⁷ As a result, public diplomacy efforts tend to compete with, overlap with, or even contradict one another, making it difficult to cultivate an effective national narrative. Furthermore, the Palestinian Authority's internal administrative system is noted to have ambiguous mandates and weaknesses in internal communications, as well as a lack of direction relating specifically to the public diplomacy portfolio, leading to bottlenecks and slow response. Opportunities for sub-state paradiplomacy cultural or municipal outreach, for example are promising, but remain disconnected from the central diplomatic apparatus, with no official means of integration, nor a sustained engagement plan.⁹⁸ In general, the lack of coordination in Palestinian public diplomacy undermines its effectiveness to shape foreign policy, build a global solidarity movement, and mobilize public opinion at critical levels.

⁹⁶ Ayoub, H. H. 2023. Assessing Palestinian public diplomacy: Realities, challenges and opportunities. *Global Media and Communication*, 19(2), 166.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/17427665231184681>

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Wolff, S. 2024. Paradiplomacy for non-recognized states: The case of Palestine. Unpublished manuscript.

B. Weak Government–NGO Linkages

Although PA attempts at cooperation had been an initial success, the PA's relationship with civil society deteriorated, significantly weakening public diplomacy initiatives. Palestinian non-governmental organizations were able to lobby for reforms in the legal framework controlling NGOs during the early 2000s and were rewarded with major concessions on freedom to operate. The gains faltered after 2006 as Fatah and Hamas registered electoral contests, developing more political mistrust and institutional tension.⁹⁹ In Gaza, Hamas has imposed tight regulatory authority—compelling NGOs to obtain multiple licenses, closing offices they deem politically opposed to them, and even dismissing entire boards—essentially excluding opposing voices.¹⁰⁰ In the West Bank, on the other hand, the PA has consolidated NGO control via extensive registration processes, constant monitoring, and backdoor pressure mechanisms via security agencies.¹⁰¹ These activities fragment organizational networks and politicize collaboration, undermining cross-sectoral trust and stalling effective coordination across legal advocacy, media outreach, and diaspora activities. To that degree, Herculean efforts in legal documentation and international advocacy, such as those led by Al-Haq or PCHR, were not consistently echoed across government and civil society platforms, diminishing their broader effect.

C. Institutional Distrust & Resource Competition

By late 2023, public trust in the official Palestinian institutions had collapsed. Since a report by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) reported that 74% of Palestinians had no confidence whatsoever in the PA, and blamed its lack of confidence on the basis of corruption, while others saw the Authority as a burden and not a source of support. Such profound distrust has isolated both government and civil society coordination, especially when acting together in terms of public diplomacy or public engagement initiatives that require collective credibility and collaboration.¹⁰²

Under these conditions, civil society organizations (CSOs) will disown identification with established institutions in order to remain independent and credible. Concurrently, and

⁹⁹ ICNL. n.d. Palestine – Civic Freedom Monitor. from <https://www.icnl.org/resources/civic-freedom-monitor/palestine>

¹⁰⁰ U.S. Department of State. 2023. 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Israel, West Bank and Gaza. <https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2107667.html>

¹⁰¹ ECFR. n.d. Mapping Palestinian Politics: Civil Society. European Council on Foreign Relations. https://ecfr.eu/special/mapping_palestinian_politics/introduction_civil_society/

¹⁰² Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. 2023. Public Opinion Poll No. 89: Palestinian perception of governance. <https://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/955>

working against collaborative efforts, CSOs are competing for the diminishing sponsor budgets, particularly large international sponsors which encouraged disjointed advocacy and cause activism⁴. Without any institutional structures for coordination, CSOs are functioning alongside their state institutions and engaging with them in a fragmented, parallel fashion, diluting the amalgamated effort of Palestinians diplomatic communications on the global platform.¹⁰³

Moreover, the absence of institutionalized coordination mechanisms between the government and civil society further exacerbates this schism. Instead of functioning as complementary arms of an integrated national diplomatic strategy, NGOs and official institutions too often work at cross-purposes, each facing variant donor agendas, political risk, and target publics.¹⁰⁴ Without trust and structural collaboration, Palestinian public diplomacy is highly disaggregated, undermining its extension, coherency, and strategic impact.

2.8 Analysis of Long-Term vs. Short-Term Diplomatic Impacts

Palestinian public diplomacy, especially after the 2023 Gaza war, operated across two distinct but interconnected timelines: short-term reaction plans and long-term diplomatic positioning. A recognition of the pros and cons of both modes are critical to understanding the cumulative impacts of Palestinian promotional engagement with the world public.

While short-term public diplomacy, as we observed with Palestinian [and pro-Palestinian] public advocacy and awareness-raising efforts—largely a function of grass roots movement, social media activism or crisis lawyering—achieved instant, concrete outputs. Within one week of the escalation of violence, the global #CeasefireNow and #GazaUnderAttack hashtags were trending and mass protests erupted across capital cities from London to New York, Berlin, Cape Town, and Kuala Lumpur.¹⁰⁵ All of them undoubtedly translated into pressure on governments to respond: a number of parliaments (e.g., Ireland, Belgium and Chile) voted motions of emergency or debated stopping arms sales to Israel.¹⁰⁶ In addition, the legal submissions prepared on behalf of Palestinian civil

¹⁰³ PCPSR. 2023. Poll No. 87: Trust in institutions and perceptions of governance. <https://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/938>

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Abouzzohour, Y. 2024. How Palestinian public diplomacy galvanized mass protests after Gaza. Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/palestine-and-public-diplomacy>

¹⁰⁶ European Parliament. 2024. Resolutions on the situation in Gaza. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news>

society organizations, like the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR), informed the proceedings of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), and were cited by United Nations Special Rapporteurs' calls for investigation.¹⁰⁷

However, these ephemeral gains often appeared reactive, emotive, and media-dependent, losing momentum as attention moved elsewhere. And without an overall strategic approach, Although these stories, when they were compelling, may not have had an overall connection or coherence on platforms, institutions, or diasporas.¹⁰⁸ Contrarily, the type of long-term diplomatic impact is a byproduct of intentional engagements and actions like a court case by International Criminal Court (ICC), cultural diplomacy, and structured lobbying in global institutions. These languorous, evidence-based, and institutional initiatives are the result of an overwhelming amount of planned efforts. For example, the case the South African state will bring before the International Court of Justice against Israel in 2024 that was framed around genocide charges illustrates how a longer-term legal framing promotes diplomatic alignments and reshapes a political narrative over time.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, the continued developments of long-term projects like youth diplomacy for an international audience, strategic diaspora mobilization, and the academic partnerships are all necessary to build new tools and narratives for diplomacy.

Nonetheless, long-term strategy has some significant issues like the limits of resources, internet censorship, and fragmentation of institutions that make organization of the transition from solidarity as an emotion to solidarity as a vehicle for policy change difficult. Long-term diplomacy, in the absence of planning roles and coordination of state and non-state actors, is more likely to vanish.

Briefly, short-term diplomacy is founded on visibility, empathy, and proximity; while long-term diplomacy is founded on credibility, precedent, and long-term global harmonization. Both are unavoidable and must be built to complement, but not substitute for one another in practice; only when they are consciously coordinated can Palestinian public diplomacy transition from reaction to influence.

¹⁰⁷ UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). 2024. UN experts call for investigations into war crimes in Gaza. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases>

¹⁰⁸ Fakhreddin, R. 2024. Fragmentation in Palestinian digital diplomacy. Al-Shabaka Policy Brief. <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/>

¹⁰⁹ International Court of Justice. 2024. South Africa v. Israel: Provisional Measures Request. <https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/192>

2.9 Conclusion and Strategic Recommendations

2.9.1 Key Findings Summary

The thesis speculated on the evolving role of public diplomacy in mobilizing international and social support for the Palestinian cause following the 2023 Gaza war. The thesis assessed the way in which Palestinian public diplomacy from state to non-state actors has been able to adapt in order to stay relevant in the midst of challenges and opportunities brought by contemporary times, more particularly the more globalized world of today's digital age.

The thesis established that public diplomacy was an effective, though awkwardly coordinated, tool in shaping worldwide perception, legal case, and popular mobilization. From the staged public narrative (built through activists livestreaming their narratives on the web), global bodies establishing legal action/study, and popular mobilization through social media platforms, the level of exposure and worldwide mobilization experienced unprecedented numbers. However, structural conditions like fragmentation of institutions, coordination failures between the state and civil society, and censorship of the web rigidly limited the long-term impact of people and public diplomacy.

Furthermore, the research illustrated a two-way dynamic: short-term public diplomacy activity generated intense visibility and emotional participation, while long-term impact rigidly depended on infrastructure within legal reasoning, politics, and culture (that remains underdeveloped). Palestinian public diplomacy that succeeds to enable thereby depends not only on the power of the narrative, but also on the imagination at work behind it, the institutionality that comes together to unite the different layers of the state and the civil society, as well as sustained international attention.

This can be summarized in the following points:

- Public diplomacy was central to articulating global action in response to Palestine following the 2023–2024 Gaza conflict.
- State and non-state actors innovated in realigning their activities to the internet, using digital tools and platforms in different combinations.
- Live-streamer activism, NGO legal activism, and social media activism all deepened global engagement.

- Structure flaws such as institutional disaggregation and online censorship countered the potential for enduring consequences.
- Short-term action was performative-emotive but strategically uncoordinated to have a lasting impact.
- Effective long-term diplomacy is constructing narrative, legal and cultural strategy in proportion to institutional positioning.

2.9.2 The Power of Synergy between Public and Official Diplomacy

The greatest of these observations is possibly the gap between official diplomatic action in the service of the state and public diplomacy at the people's level. While both official and civil society actors played important roles in advocacy, they often found themselves in solo or redundant acts. Lack of synergy detracts from narrative consistency, limits policy clout, and creates missed opportunities in overseas advocacy.

Public diplomacy is most effective when it merges the emotional authority of grassroots mobilization with the strategic leverage of formal diplomacy. Formal institutions give the law's sanction, diplomatic access, and policy continuity, while civil society offers authenticity, adaptability, and inventiveness in narratives. Bridging the two is important in developing an effective diplomatic framework.

2.9.3 Strategic Recommendations

In response to the critical role of public diplomacy in mobilizing support:

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs should institutionalize public diplomacy within its foreign policy apparatus so that all embassies have a career public diplomacy officer to support national messaging abroad.

In response to digital platforms adoption by actors:

- The Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology, along with youth organizations and media faculties at universities, should provide training programs in online campaigning, digital content generation, and data protection.

To counter the role of real-time activism and legal campaigning in raising international awareness:

- There ought to be an official process of coordination between legal NGOs (like Al-Haq and PCHR) and public media units in the Prime Minister's Office to

ensure sharing, simplification, and international media publicity of legal documents.

To respond to structural challenges like fragmentation and cyber censorship:

- There must be a cross-sector coordination council chaired by the PA with representatives from CSOs, universities, and digital rights organizations to plan unified campaigns and speak as one body to resist online repression.

To address the lack of short-term coordination:

- There must be a national digital diplomacy team under the Palestinian Academy of Public Diplomacy that handles the quick-response messages and unifies grassroots and official voices during high-pitched events.

In alignment with the need for long-term diplomatic integration of law, culture, and diplomacy:

- The Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Culture should fund long-term partnerships with international academic and cultural institutions for the purposes of placing Palestinian narratives within international scholarly and artistic contexts.

2.9.4 Suggestions for Future Research

Even if this study focused on the Gaza war and its diplomatic repercussions, subsequent research can explore different subjects:

Comparative analysis of Palestinian public diplomacy with other similar movements (e.g., Ukraine, apartheid South Africa)

Role of gender and young people in Palestinian digital diplomacy

Effectiveness of cultural diplomacy in transforming mainstream media discourses

Long-term examination of how Palestinian public diplomacy has influenced target nations' foreign policy choices.

In conclusion, public diplomacy is one of the most potent tools that Palestinians have in order to achieve rights, dignity and international legitimacy. The impact of public diplomacy will be determined as much by any tactical requirement of urgency as well as any underlying strategy. The efficacy of Palestinian public diplomacy will depend on breaking down silos, being trial and error, experimenting, and developing a collective people-centered approach that includes law, narrative and culture.

The Gaza war established the global strength of Palestinian voices. These institutions and communities have a now responsibility to ensure that these voices are heard, protected, and put into a reliable durable diplomacy meaning a campaign that seeks freedom and justice.

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دور الدبلوماسية الشعبية في حشد الدعم الدولي للقضية الفلسطينية بعد العدوان على قطاع غزة

محمد محمود جاموس

أسماء لجنة الإشراف:

الدكتور يعقوب الحلبي

الدكتور مرسي صالح

الدكتور محمد ظرف

ملخص

تركز هذه الأطروحة على الدور الجوهري للدبلوماسية العامة في تقديم الدعم الدولي للقضية الفلسطينية عقب العدوان الإسرائيلي على قطاع غزة عام 2023. وتتناول كيف وفرت الدبلوماسية العامة وسيلة بارزة لتعبئة المواقف السياسية الدولية تجاه فلسطين من خلال الجهات الفاعلة غير الحكومية، والمنصات الرقمية، والمبادرات الثقافية، والحركات الشعبية. تعتمد الدراسة على تصميم بحث نوعي يعتمد على دراسات الحالة، وتحليل محتوى الإعلام، والمقابلات شبه المنظمة، لدراسة ديناميكيات الدبلوماسية الرسمية والشعبية، ودراسة نجاحها في إعادة هيكلة الروايات الدولية حول الصراع. وتظهر الدراسة المساهمات البارزة للصحفيين الفلسطينيين، ونشطاء وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، والمنتجين الثقافيين في دحض الروايات الإسرائيلية السائدة، وإضفاء طابع إنساني على معاناة النضال الفلسطيني من خلال السرد الرقمي وتمثيله في الإنتاجات الثقافية. وتسلط الدراسة الضوء على التحديات التي تواجه استراتيجية الدبلوماسية العامة الفلسطينية، بما في ذلك محدودية الموارد والتمويل، والرواية الإعلامية المتحيزة، والتشرد التنظيمي. تظهر النتائج أنه في حين لا تزال الدبلوماسية الرسمية محدودة بالسياسات والقيود الهيكلية، فقد أثبتت الدبلوماسية العامة قدرتها على إيصال أصوات الفلسطينيين، وتسهيل التضامن الدولي، والتأثير على الاستجابات الإنسانية والسياسية على المستوى العالمي. ويختتم البحث باستراتيجيات وتوصيات مقترحة لتحسين التنسيق بين مؤسسات الدولة والمجتمع المدني.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الدبلوماسية العامة، القضية الفلسطينية، عدوان غزة، القوة الناعمة، الجهات الفاعلة غير الحكومية.