Arab American University
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Public Diplomacy and its Role in Changing Foreign Policies and Convincing People, Case Study: Israeli Public Diplomacy "Hasbara" And How Israel Uses it to Cover Up its Crimes against Palestinians

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This thesis was submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master's degree in International Law and Diplomacy.

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Thesis Approval

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, am the researcher of the submitted dissertation entitled:

“Public Diplomacy and its Role in Changing Foreign Policies and Convincing People, Case Study: Israeli Public Diplomacy "Hasbara" And How Israel Uses it to Cover Up its Crimes against Palestinians”, declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation 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: 13.5.2026

Dedication

To beloved Palestine,

To my homeland that wakes and sleeps to tragedies and sorrows.

To Palestine, which taught me so much: patience, love, steadfastness, and resilience.

I dedicate this work to a homeland I dream of seeing free one day,

Free from every occupier and usurper.

To a homeland where all hopes and dreams are realized,

And where aspirations are neither buried nor die.

Palestine… You are in my heart today, tomorrow, and forever.

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I also express my deep gratitude to my dear family for their unwavering support and encouragement.

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Abstract

Over the years, and for a long time, Israel has tried to polish its image and present itself to the world as the only democracy in the Middle East by demonstrating its respect for human rights, women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and minority rights. It has achieved this through its laws and actions, gaining the support of many people around the world, especially in Western countries and America. However, the question remains—and I'm particularly concerned—how did Israel succeed in this?

As a Palestinian living in the West Bank, I witness Israel's racist practices and violations of international law and human rights. This question has arisen for me, especially since I witness these violations firsthand and experience them almost daily. However, when I examined Israeli public diplomacy, I discovered that Israel uses "hasbara" (Israeli public diplomacy) to present itself in the best possible light to the world by disseminating its narrative through cultural initiatives, student exchanges, education, art, and environmental conservation. While non-Palestinians might see all of this as an achievement for Israelis, Palestinians see only oppression, displacement, killing, violations, and the almost daily incursions into West Bank cities, as well as the ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip.

Through this research, the reader will understand the true nature of the Israeli government, which is based on self-promotion and portraying itself as the savior of the Palestinians and other oppressed peoples. The reader will see how Israel has succeeded in presenting Tel Aviv as a land of freedom, democracy, and security, especially for those in need of protection, based on the premise that Tel Aviv is their safe haven. On the other hand, Tel Aviv is an Israeli city built on the ruins of the lands of the village of Sheikh Munis in 1948.

My grandparents were displaced from the lands of the Palestinian village of Tira Dandan, located northeast of Lod, in 1948. No trace of it remains today as a Palestinian village; it is now an Israeli town called Givat Koach. None of the family has had the opportunity to return due to the Israeli occupation, which promised the displaced Palestinians the right to return to their villages in the Oslo Accords. Despite this, the world sees Israel as a country of equality, rights, and democracy.

Through this research, the reader will understand how the Israeli Hasbara (public relations apparatus) has worked to convince thousands of people worldwide of its narrative and present it in the best possible light. We will also see the methods Israel has used to succeed in its own narrative. On the other hand, I will expose the actions Israel has taken against the Palestinian people in recent years, actions that demonstrate grave and blatant violations of human rights, particularly the rights of the Palestinian people.

Finally, the reader will see how Palestinians can work to build their own narrative, with practical examples on the ground representing Palestinian public diplomacy. They will also see how Palestinians can refute the Israeli narrative by disseminating their own narrative to convince the world of its validity, thereby strengthening the resilience of the Palestinian people and revealing the true nature of the Palestinian cause from an ideological and intellectual perspective, rather than simply as a military conflict between two equal powers.

Table of Contents

Thesis Approval I
Declaration II
Dedication III
Acknowledgments IV
Abstract V
Table of Contents VII
Chapter 1: Theoretical and Methodological Framework 1
Abstract 1
General Introduction 2
Research Significance 4
Research problem 5
Research objectives 5
Research Questions 6
Definitions and concepts 6
Literature review 7
Research Methodology 7
1.2 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework 8
1.2.1Diplomacy, its roots and origins 8
1.2.2 Definition and Evolution of Public Diplomacy 10
1.2.3 Classical Vs. Contemporary Diplomacy 12
1.2.4 Soft Power and Communication 13
Despite the fact that soft power has measurable value, many countries still use soft power interactively with each other and do not use it as a strategy for addressing urgent political challenges. As a result, many leaders fail to seize opportunities to develop long-term soft power plans linked to their national brand strategy (Temporal, 2022).
1.2.5 The Mechanisms and Tools of Public Diplomacy 15
1.2.6 The Role of Perception and Media in Shaping Policies 16
1.2.7 Actors of Public Diplomacy 18
Chapter 2: Israeli Public Diplomacy (Hasbara): Historical and Institutional Overview 22
2.1 Literature Review 22
2.2 Origin and Evolution of “Hasbara” 24
2.3 Governmental Institutions Involved 25
2.4 Non-Governmental and Media Actors 28
2.4.1NGO’s role 29

2.4.2 Israeli Media 30
2.4.3 Ai platform 36
Chapter 3:Hasbara as a Tool to Cover Up Israeli Crimes Against Palestinians 38
3.1Conceptual Framework: Hasbara between Propaganda and Narrative management 38
3.2 Legal Context: Hasbara rule with the Israeli Crimes Under International Law 40
3.3 Mechanisms of Hasbara in Concealing Violations 45
3.4 Media and social media Framing Hasbara 48
3.5 The washing strategies and the Humanitarian branding 54
3.5.1 Pinkwashing 54
3.5.1 whitewashing 62
3.5.3 Greenwashing 65
3.6 Israel is a country of diversity and religions / Diversity and Religions 67
Chapter 4: The Palestinian Public Diplomacy 72
4.1 The Current Reality of Palestinian Public Diplomacy 72
4.2 Challenges Facing the Palestinian Public Diplomacy 76
4.2.1 The Absence of a Unified National Strategy 76
4.2.2 The Political Division 78
4.2.3 Economic Deficit of the Palestinian Government 79
4.2.4 The Weakness of Palestinian Media 81
4.3 the Palestinian Narrative: Conceptual Foundations and Discursive Structure 82
4.4 Building an Effective Palestinian Public Diplomacy Strategy 84
4.4.1 International Impact Through Objectives and Audience 84
4.4.2 Public Discourse Through International Law and Palestinian History 85
4.4.3 Investing in Digital Media and Modern Communication Tools 86
Conclusion 87
References 90
المخلص 150

Chapter 1: Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Abstract

Over the years, and for a long time, Israel has tried to polish its image and present itself to the world as the only democracy in the Middle East by demonstrating its respect for human rights, women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and minority rights. It has achieved this through its laws and actions, gaining the support of many people around the world, especially in Western countries and America. However, the question remains—and I'm particularly concerned—how did Israel succeed in this?

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occupation, which promised the displaced Palestinians the right to return to their villages in the Oslo Accords. Despite this, the world sees Israel as a country of equality, rights, and democracy.

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Finally, the reader will see how Palestinians can work to build their own narrative, with practical examples on the ground representing Palestinian public diplomacy. They will also see how Palestinians can refute the Israeli narrative by disseminating their own narrative to convince the world of its validity, thereby strengthening the resilience of the Palestinian people and revealing the true nature of the Palestinian cause from an ideological and intellectual perspective, rather than simply as a military conflict between two equal powers.

General Introduction

In recent years, public diplomacy here and after " PD " has become one of the most prominent tools used by countries to achieve their foreign interests, moving away from traditional diplomacy, which was limited to official communication between governments and did not involve the people. Public diplomacy has become directly directed towards global public opinion, targeting all different segments of society, whether the media, non-governmental organizations, academic and cultural institutions. This shift comes from governments and countries' awareness of the influence of the people on governments (Starr, 2010), which may open the way for indirect influence on decision-making, and that political legitimacy in the modern international system is no longer won only in official negotiations, but also in the media and cultural satellite channels (Ruth, 2022).

The growing interest in public diplomacy is due to the transformation in the structure of the international system and mass communication media. Technological development, the emergence

and widespread use of digital media and social media platforms have expanded the scope of influence, enabling countries to shape their narratives as they see fit and broadcast them directly to the public, thereby reaching a large number of people (Saliu, 2023). Furthermore, geopolitical competition in the twenty-first century no longer relies heavily on military and economic power alone, but rather on what is known as soft power. This term was coined by Joseph Nye (Smith et al., 2025) and is defined as the ability to influence other countries through persuasion and attraction rather than the use of force. This influence is rooted in culture, arts, and sciences, where soft power complements traditional diplomacy. While both focus on negotiations and governmental agreements, soft power lies in the ability to persuade, influence, and win people over. Hence, the role of public diplomacy has emerged as a strategic tool for achieving long-term goals.This influence is rooted in culture, arts, and sciences, where soft power complements traditional diplomacy. While both focus on negotiations and governmental agreements, (Policy, 2023). Soft power lies in the ability to persuade, influence, and win people over. Hence, the role of public diplomacy has emerged as a strategic tool for achieving long-term goals.

In this context, the Israeli case stands out as one of the most interesting and controversial models in the field of public diplomacy. Since the establishment of the Israeli state, the Zionist movement and the State of Israel have relied on what is called Hasbara, a Hebrew term meaning “explanation or clarification.” However, the meaning of the word Hasbara is not limited to providing information only, but rather represents an attempt to justify Israeli policy, especially towards the Palestinian people, to justify the violations it commits and to create different narratives to gain international sympathy and the sympathy of foreign peoples (Hamad, 2023).

Hasbra has employed various and intensive media campaigns through television channels, newspapers, multiple media outlets, and social media platforms, which have become a major tool in reaching everyone, especially the younger generation, worldwide. Hasbra has also played a role in employing cultural and academic tools through student exchange programs, cultural diplomacy and conferences that enhance the image of the Israeli occupation and reflect it as a state of peace and a democratic state that seeks to promote human rights and give everyone equal rights in the state and that all actions it takes towards the Palestinian people are self-defense and that the Palestinians are the savages or barbarians in the region (Ashraf, 2025).

The importance of this topic lies in the fact that it addresses a vital aspect of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which lies in what is called the conflict of narrative and legitimacy. The conflict is not limited to land or sovereignty, but rather includes a media and diplomatic battle through which Israel seeks to win Western public opinion and justify the continuation of the occupation and settler colonial project. Hence, studying Israeli public diplomacy provides a deeper understanding of the nature of its work, which opens the way for Palestinians to develop tools to deny and expose the Israeli narrative and enhance the presence of the Palestinian cause in international fora.

Despite the existence of specialized studies on public diplomacy in the West, the studies that talk about Israeli Hasbara as a phenomenon, definition or term are still limited and are often restricted to newspaper articles or in-depth political analyses. Therefore, the basic problem that the study seeks to address is represented by a main question: how is public diplomacy employed to influence foreign peoples and foreign public opinion, and specifically,how does Israel employ it to influence international public opinion in order to cover up its crimes against the Palestinian people?

Research Significance

The importance of this research stems from the rapid transformations in the definition of modern diplomacy, where diplomatic work is no longer limited to traditional official channels, but rather includes interaction between people and international public opinion using social media and various media outlets (Galvez, 2023). In this context, public diplomacy has emerged as one of the essential tools for influencing people's perceptions and changing their perspectives, making it a crucial element in shaping a state's foreign policy. Shedding light on one of the most controversial models in public diplomacy, the Israeli model known as Hasbara, which is an integrated system of propaganda and politicized media through which Israel seeks to polish its international image to justify its oppressive practices against the Palestinian people, as well as Tel Aviv’s attempts to change the global narrative by influencing the media, public opinion, decision-makers, and Western publics.

This research aims to uncover the methods Israel uses in its foreign policy to persuade other nations. It explains how tools supposedly intended for dialogue and rapprochement are employed by Israel for other purposes, such as justifying its occupation of Palestine and perpetuating its occupation through deception and misinformation. Through a study of Hasbara (Israel's public

diplomacy), the research offers a critical analysis of Israeli public diplomacy, exposing its criminal actions against Palestinians and how Israel uses various means, including media, cultural exchange, speeches, and other methods, to convince the world that it is a democratic state and does not practice any violence against Palestinians.

Research problem

Public diplomacy is considered one of the most important and prominent tools of soft power used by states to influence international public opinion and direct their foreign policies to serve their own interests by persuading public opinion in other countries. In this context, Hasbara, or Israeli public diplomacy, has emerged as a strategic tool through which Israel seeks to shape a specific image of itself among the global public, particularly in Western societies, by justifying its policies and aggressive practices against the Palestinian people and presenting a narrative that differs from the reality experienced by the Palestinian people.

The research problem revolves around the lack of academic analysis of Hasbara as a strategic tool used by Israel to construct its identity and portray the Palestinian reality in a different light. Despite the existence of thousands of news reports and documents that expose the truth about Israel, its criminal acts, and its occupation of Palestine, Israeli discourse often revolves around democracy, liberalism, and human rights. This raises questions about the mechanisms Israel uses for its propaganda and international perceptions, and for downplaying the Palestinian reality. Through this study, we will reveal the methods and strategic mechanisms used by Israeli Hasbara to communicate with other peoples and influence global opinion.

Research objectives

The study aims to understand public diplomacy and its history, including its development and emergence. It also explores the concepts of public diplomacy and Hasbara, their impact on promoting international narratives, and evaluates public diplomacy as a tool relied upon by states, particularly Israel, to craft their narratives. It also assesses whether these tools have influenced the positions of foreign States and decision-makers regarding the Palestinian question. Another no less important objective of this study is to reveal the success of Hasbara as an Israeli tool in constructing

a narrative, especially in light of growing international awareness of Israeli violations. Finally, it proposes practical strategies for developing Palestinian public diplomacy to strengthen the Palestinian narrative and refute the Israeli narrative.

Research Questions

Through this study, I will try to explain the theoretical and practical characteristics that distinguish public diplomacy from other tools of international relations. We will understand its historical roots and the historical roots of Hasbara from which it emerged, and how it has evolved over the decades. What are the most prominent tools used by Israel in its public diplomacy practice, whether through the media, cultural channels, or otherwise? How have these tools impacted Israel's image in the West and the positions of foreign countries toward Israel? Has Israel been able to convince foreign publics of its narrative against the Palestinian people, and to what extent has it been able to cover up its crimes against the Palestinian people? Finally, what strategies can the Palestinian government adopt to construct a narrative aimed at revealing the truth about the Israeli narrative**?**

Definitions and concepts

Public diplomacy is one of the most important soft power tools for nations, enabling them to communicate with foreign audiences, shape their policies and narratives in the eyes of other countries, and influence those countries' stances and foreign policies. According to Nicholas Cull, public diplomacy includes listening, debate, cultural exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting, all aimed at creating a positive image of the nation in other countries (Cull, 2025). Within this framework, the Israeli model of public diplomacy, also known as Hasbara (הסברה: a Hebrew term that means explanation), is formed. It is a strategic communication tool used by Israel to justify its occupation of Palestine and the operations of repression, displacement, and justified violence practiced against the Palestinian people. To counter international criticism directed at Israel, Hasbara also works through governmental and non-governmental efforts, including media campaigns, diplomats, and online solidarity with Israelis, to portray Israel as a democratic state acting in self-defense while minimizing global public awareness of its violations of international law, international humanitarian law, and human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories

(Gresh, 2024).Foreign policy refers to the set of principles and decisions through which a state interacts with other states and international actors to protect its national interests (Pfaltzgraff, 2025). Public diplomacy is considered an extension of foreign policy through its reliance on persuasion rather than coercion or the use of hard power. In this context, it is consistent with what Joseph Nye called soft power, which focuses on achieving policy goals through attraction, credibility, and persuasion rather than using military or economic force (Nye, 2017).

Literature review

Some books and articles are used in this paper to help understand the definition of public diplomacy and how diplomacy developed, and to explain pinkwashing and its effect on public diplomacy. While (Melissen, 2005, 16-27)focused on public diplomacy and the ordinary individuals effect, he mentions the importance of propaganda, nation-branding, and foreign cultural relations and how they are similar with public diplomacy, (Seib, 2013) shows how the media affects the public and how honesty is important to convince people with verified sources that can easily be trusted. (Steichen, 2009) introduced Public diplomacy and its evolution as a concept by delving into the core approaches of this medium. (Snow, 2020)explained how public diplomacy developed and how politicians were underestimating its importance and viewing it as an aid to the official diplomacy conducted by state actors.

Research Methodology

This study employs a descriptive-analytical approach to public diplomacy, focusing primarily on Israeli public diplomacy (hasbara). It relies on an analysis of academic literature, official Israeli government speeches, documents, media materials, and reports issued by Israeli and international organizations. To trace the evolution of propaganda, the research utilizes a historical approach, examining the development of Israeli propaganda from its inception to the present day, with a focus on political, institutional, and technological transformations. The research also employs a comparative case study methodology, comparing official Israeli discourse with the Palestinian narrative, international reports, and alternative media. Through this analysis, I will identify differences in narrative construction and representation, revealing how public diplomacy is employed to shape international perceptions and opinions.

1.2 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

1.2.1Diplomacy, its roots and origins

There are several definitions of diplomacy, but they can be summarized by saying it's the established method of influencing the decisions and behavior of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiation, and other measures short of war or violence (Freeman, 2025). Modern diplomatic practices are a product of the post-Renaissance European state system. Historically, diplomacy meant the conduct of official (usually bilateral) relations between sovereign states (Perraki, 2013). By the 20th century, however, the diplomatic practices pioneered in Europe had been adopted throughout the world, and diplomacy had expanded to cover summit meetings and other international conferences, parliamentary diplomacy, the international activities of supranational and subnational entities, unofficial diplomacy by nongovernmental elements, and the work of international civil servants.

The term diplomacy is derived via French from the ancient Greek diplōma, composed of diplo, meaning “folded in two,” and the suffix -ma, meaning “an object.” The folded document conferred a privilege—often a permit to travel—on the bearer, and the term came to denote documents through which princes granted such favors. Later, it applied to all solemn documents issued by chancelleries, especially those containing agreements between sovereigns. Diplomacy later became identified with international relations, and the direct tie to documents lapsed (except in diplomatics, which is the science of authenticating old official documents). In the 18th century the French term diplomate (“diplomat” or “diplomatist”) came to refer to a person authorized to negotiate on behalf of a state (Freeman, 2025)

The origin of diplomacy goes back to ancient civilizations, when it was called negotiation and the method was to negotiate stability and resolve conflict between countries (Langhorne, 1998). One of the oldest examples of diplomacy dates back to ancient Mesopotamia, where countries engaged in diplomatic exchanges and established trade agreements.

The term "diplomacy" is derived from the Ancient Greek term díplōma (δίπλωμᾰ), meaning a paper folded in two that acts as a license for one to carry out something specific. This was a common method of securing sensitive documents prior to envelopes or folders (English, 2023).

The greatest knowledge of early diplomacy comes from the Middle East, the Mediterranean, China, and India. Records of treaties between Mesopotamian city-states date from about 2850 BCE. Thereafter, Akkadian (Babylonian) became the first diplomatic language, serving as the international tongue of the Middle East until it was replaced by Aramaic. A diplomatic correspondence from the 14th century BCE existed between the Egyptian court and a Hittite king on cuneiform tablets in Akkadian, the language of neither. The oldest treaties of which full texts survive, from about 1280 BCE, were between Ramses II of Egypt and Hittite leaders. There is significant evidence of Assyrian diplomacy in the 7th century and, chiefly in the Bible, of the relations of Jewish tribes with each other and other peoples (Freeman, 2025).

Ancient diplomacy was characterized by personal diplomacy, as rulers and their envoys participated in direct communication to negotiate alliances and trade agreements with the other party. Ancient China used envoys known as “tributary missions” to maintain diplomatic relations with neighboring countries and distant civilizations (Freeman, 2025).

In the Middle Ages, formal diplomatic practices emerged, such as establishing embassies, codifying official protocols, and establishing permanent embassies. European powers, such as Venice and the Papal States, were pioneers in establishing modern diplomatic institutions, formalizing codes of conduct and establishing diplomatic immunity to protect envoys from harm (Saksena, 2016).

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed profound changes in diplomatic practices, supported by globalization and imperialism, to an extent that led to the rise of nation-states, the emergence of colonial empires, and the development of diplomatic networks. The Congress of Vienna in 1815 had diplomatic efforts to restore stability in Europe during the Napoleonic Wars (المطيري, 2018)

In the twentieth century, the world witnessed unprecedented challenges. The First and Second World Wars and the Cold War appeared, as did globalization. Diplomacy developed to address new issues such as terrorism and nuclear proliferation. The establishment of international organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union helped as platforms for diplomatic dialogue and the resolution of global conflicts (Stalin, 2025).

Many terms have appeared in the world of diplomacy, the most important of which is **new diplomacy**. This term has goals that are different from old diplomacy, whose goals were to defend the state's independence and territoriality (Editors, 2025). From this emerged the term "public diplomacy," coined by the thinker Edmond Guillaume, which we will discuss in detail in the next chapter.

1.2.2 Definition and Evolution of Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy is generally a government-sponsored activity aimed at communicating directly with foreign audiences. Public diplomacy includes all official efforts aimed at persuading foreign audiences to support the government's strategic objectives. Methods used in public diplomacy include statements by decision-makers, targeted campaigns by governmental organizations that follow public diplomacy, and efforts to persuade international media to portray official policies positively to foreign audiences (CPD, 2025)

If we look at the development of diplomacy around the world, we see that it began in Europe in the late Middle Ages, where diplomats were considered messengers. The first records of diplomacy date back to China and India in the first millennium BC (Kurbalija, 2021). By the eighth century BC, the Chinese were conducting tournaments and missions between numerous warring states. As for the tradition that inspired the birth of modern diplomacy in post-Renaissance Europe and led to the current global system of international relations in ancient Greece, Greek diplomacy took many forms, with missionaries protected by the gods and enjoying immunity that other envoys lacked. Italy later entered the world of diplomacy, where its early economic activity, geographical location, and small size fostered the creation of a European State system in microcosm. Rome became the center of Italian diplomacy, conspiracies, intelligence gathering, and espionage. The first modern Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established in 1926 in France by Cardinal Richelieu (EBSCO, 2023), who viewed diplomacy as a continuous negotiation process, arguing that the

diplomat must have a single policy. He created the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to focus on policy and ensure the control of envoys while striving to achieve national interest (Marks, 2025).

Diplomacy in its multilayered meaning represents formulation and implementation of foreign politics, technique of foreign politics, international negotiations, and professional activity, which was merely performed by the diplomats. Public diplomacy today consists of educational or cultural exchange programs and radio and television broadcasts. All of these activities aim to improve the image and reputation of the sending country to achieve certain political aims (CPD, 2025).

We can identify public diplomacy as the practice of involving people from foreign countries to tell stories or build trust and promote cooperation. It is a key mechanism to build trust and good relations between countries, and it has also become crucial to building a secure global environment (CPD, 2025).

Diplomacy is defined as the method through which foreign policy is achieved and a natural means of communication in international relations, as public diplomacy works to expand its policy of practicing traditional diplomacy in various areas of life to target different individuals and groups and interact with them to win their hearts aspiring for public opinion to be reflected in foreign policy.

The most important characteristic of public diplomacy is that it is the opposite of secret/covert diplomacy. Public diplomacy aims to share with foreigners the story that the state wishes to export, an image in the best possible way. This goal cannot be achieved in the practice of secret diplomacy alone. One of the advantages of public diplomacy is that it is used as a means of pressure (United Nation, 1961). If we look at the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, the function of the diplomatic mission is to represent the sending state within the host state, protect the interests of the sending state and its citizens within the receiving state, and strengthen international relations (United Nation, 1961).

1.2.3 Classical Vs. Contemporary Diplomacy

Both Classical and modern diplomacy had different practical applications, especially in the political form, where they were often considered a binary understanding. Therefore, ancient diplomacy was viewed as a source of many of the problems of its time, unlike modern diplomacy, which was viewed as a future solution to many issues. Academically, the term ancient diplomacy was referred to before the years 1789 and 1914, while modern diplomacy was used in the analysis of historical reform programs in 1951 (Leira, 2018).

If we compare traditional and new diplomacy in terms of approach, traditional diplomacy is centered around the state, unlike new diplomacy, which includes several dynamic and unconventional methods. Traditional diplomacy is typically represented by government officials, while modern diplomacy involves various stakeholders, including civil society, NGOs, corporations, and academia. Traditional diplomacy relies on closed-door meetings, negotiations, and embassies, and is inherently confidential. In contrast, modern diplomacy utilizes social media and public engagement through conferences and digital communication tools. Traditional diplomacy is also characterized by its exclusivity, limited to government officials, thus restricting their participation in terms of perspectives. Modern diplomacy, on the other hand, is more inclusive, involving a wider range of stakeholders and fostering diverse viewpoints and expertise. Furthermore, traditional diplomacy adheres to formal diplomatic protocols, while modern diplomacy leverages modern technologies to achieve broader participation. (Bandaru, 2025).

In comparing old and new diplomacy from a geographical perspective, old diplomacy focused primarily on European powers, with their interests and relationships at the forefront of international affairs. New diplomacy, on the other hand, is globally oriented, recognizing interdependence, especially interdependence between countries on all continents. Modern diplomacy has also focused on interactions between multiple parties, such as international bodies concerned with addressing complex global issues that concern all countries. In contrast, traditional diplomacy dealt with bilateral interactions through formal negotiations and direct agreements between countries, taking into account strict procedures and protocols. This reflects the rigidity of traditional diplomacy. In contrast, modern diplomacy adopts a less formal approach, which

facilitates interaction between countries and makes it less formal, thus promoting openness and transparency. Diplomatic operations and decisions are often subject to public scrutiny and media coverage. Old diplomacy, as we mentioned, is characterized by great secrecy. Diplomatic discussions and agreements are always hidden from public opinion, which is what makes old diplomacy controlled by aristocratic circles or the elite, which makes it exclude public participation and oversight in diplomatic transactions, unlike new diplomacy, which reflects the principles of democracy with a greater focus on public opinion, inclusiveness, and accountability in diplomatic practices. Finally, public diplomacy relies heavily on propaganda and media tools to shape public opinion and exercise soft power locally and internationally, while old diplomacy focuses less on propaganda and focuses on correspondence and direct diplomatic negotiations, which are often secret (Bandaru, 2025).

1.2.4 Soft Power and Communication

When we think of the Cold War, the Soviet Union, the Berlin Wall, or even Jazz, what's the first thing that comes to mind? Jazz may not be your first association with the half-century-old conflict, but the US government used jazz as one of its methods of confronting communism in Russia. Starting in the 1950s, the US government promoted Jazz on goodwill tours around the world. Ambassadors of the music were a form of soft power, stationed in countries considered vulnerable to communist influence. Their primary mission was to improve the image of the United States in other countries, and the goal of the American government was to showcase its inherent creativity in jazz music and American society as a whole. The question here is, what is soft power and what is its definition?(Policy, 2023)

Political scientist Joseph Nye coined the term soft power and defined it as a country's ability to influence others without resorting to coercive pressure. In practice, this process entails countries demonstrating their values and culture across borders, fostering goodwill, and strengthening partnerships (Nye, 2017). Soft power typically arises outside of government in places such as schools, religious institutions, and charitable groups. It is also shaped by music, sports, media, and major industries such as Hollywood. However, this does not mean the absence of government or its lack thereof. Indeed, for example, if we look at the United States and the Soviet Union during

the Cold War, both powers used this form of influence as a non-violent method of promoting their cultural, economic, and political values. For example, Soviet leaders made great efforts to build a communist following abroad by investing in propaganda campaigns and socialist youth movements. They also supported scientific projects such as the Soviet space program, which launched the world's first satellite into orbit in 1957. At the same time, the U.S. government established a program. Sending a man to the moon by the National Space Agency. Washington also helped make Hollywood films like Patton and Top Gun, which portrayed the American military, and funded sports programs that aimed to overthrow Soviet champions (Policy, 2023).

The difference between soft power and hard power in international politics is power and its use. Soft power resources are the attractive features of a country, such as civil society, human rights, and individual success opportunities, which inspire other countries to seek the same goals. Hard power, on the other hand, compels compliance through incentives such as military force, economic sanctions, or export controls to force policymakers in other countries to accept. The Russian invasion of Ukraine, in which Russia successfully annexed Crimea, is a clear example of the use of hard power, which led to the largest territorial gain by force since the end of World War II. The US invasion of Iraq is also an example (Nevins, 2022).

Foreign exchange programs are one of the many ways in which soft power can be demonstrated. By encouraging knowledge between nations, these initiatives are among the best means for them to forge close bonds with one another. For instance, foreign educators are hired in order to gain firsthand cultural experience. This frequently occurs as a result of professional or educational placements, like the Japanese Schools program. By fostering enduring goodwill and strengthening international ties, these educators frequently act as unofficial ambassadors for the host nation after returning home with a firsthand understanding of Japanese culture. Hollywood films also have an impact that extends beyond simple amusement. The popularity of these movies has reached global levels and is one of the most powerful forms of soft power in the United States. Hollywood movies don't just tell stories, they convey values, lifestyles, and ideologies. Themes such as freedom, individualism, and democracy are often woven into plots, and Hollywood skillfully promotes these ideas to audiences around the world. Whether you work in media, advertising, or education, a deep understanding of the film can help you leverage similar narratives to shape how your message is perceived internationally. (Nye, 2024)

There are a number of terms that are comparable to soft power. One of these is branding, which places a lot of emphasis on how a nation's image affects its economy. It brings in talent and tourists while encouraging export growth and domestic investment. Conversely, soft power emphasises influence and persuasion, particularly in the global sphere, and can be a potent force behind a country's brand success on all fronts.(Temporal, 2022).

Despite the fact that soft power has measurable value, many countries still use soft power interactively with each other and do not use it as a strategy for addressing urgent political challenges. As a result, many leaders fail to seize opportunities to develop long-term soft power plans linked to their national brand strategy (Temporal, 2022).

1.2.5 The Mechanisms and Tools of Public Diplomacy

With the advancement of technology, it has become an alternative to many of the old traditional tools, especially those related to diplomacy. If we look at social media on the Internet, it creates content and interacts with people as if you are creating a community. And for public diplomacy, these platforms and tools are invaluable (Payne, 2011),Maester Johnson points out that without communication, there is no diplomacy. This may be somewhat true because without communication, diplomats will not be able to represent or negotiate their interests without the means to express them in a clear and understandable manner. Traditionally, foreign ministries were responsible for managing friendly and hostile relations with other countries, while diplomatic communications witnessed interactions between diplomats and foreign constituencies. Therefore, it was rare for diplomats to communicate with their national citizens. With the emergence of globalization and digitization, the world has become a small village. The challenges facing the world today are not only facing one person, but rather facing the world as a whole, such as terrorism, climate change, or even labor, which requires regional or global solutions. Thus, digitization creates new opportunities for diplomats to mobilize local public support for the implementation of foreign policy or influence public opinion in favor of a chosen policy (Bjola, 2019).

Public diplomacy takes several forms, including Cultural and educational exchange. Cultural exchange, by its very nature, is far from explicit political messages. However, these exchanges

convey a positive image of the country, whether in the form of high culture such as art, opera, dance, or even sports. This type of culture encourages countries and governments to engage in such exchanges ,seminars and conferences. Governments organize seminars and discussions on global issues that often concern humanity as a whole, such as climate issues or international conflicts such as the one between China and the United States. On the other hand, countries hold these seminars to organize international championships and competitions. Exhibitions can fall within public diplomacy, especially when the focus is commercial, where the messages are direct. Unlike cultural exhibitions, which can be effective in polishing the national image, countries compete to participate, as participating countries compete to showcase their commercial and scientific prowess. For the host country, exhibitions also present a challenge in their organization and in themselves. Time is an opportunity to impress ,Missions: Foreign and domestic missions are an essential element in promoting trade and investment. They involve sending messages aimed at building bridges between buyers and sellers and between potential investment partners (Hunt, 2015).

One of the tools of public diplomacy, especially the new ones, is the use of social media. As we can see now, the US State Department uses X for posting, has a Facebook account, and has launched a social networking site on its own web server. Despite the division among thinkers regarding the effectiveness of these tools as a tool for diplomacy, the question remains: how do you create a community and how do you build a community? These tools are extremely valuable, especially for those who have clear messages or problems they want to address, and certainly announcing them is one of the mechanisms (Schrage, 2009).

1.2.6 The Role of Perception and Media in Shaping Policies

The media is regarded as a trustworthy information source that has a significant impact on both individual and group viewpoints, and it has emerged as a key force in forming public opinion in modern society. The impact of the media is felt on a number of platforms, such as digital and social media, as well as radio, television, and newspapers. These effects are predetermined by agendas, framing, and the development of public narratives rather than occurring at random.(team, 2024).

Due to the democratisation of content creation and the growth of popular movements, social media's rise has changed the media's power. Platforms like Facebook and X contribute to the emergence of under-represented voices and counter-narratives, but they also present problems, such as the dissemination of false information. Thus, we observe social media's dual function of promoting false narratives and facilitating change, both of which have a big impact on public opinion.. We must not forget the media bias that reinforces the dissemination of narratives tailored to each side, meaning that each side is satisfied individually (team, 2024).

The best part is that the media is still growing and influencing our lives day after day. As we mentioned, the media plays a central role in informing the public about what is happening in the world. Anyone can know everything that is happening in the world with the click of a button. The role of the media is to convey reality and reveal the facts. However, it must be said that the media is not just an enemy, but rather has positive aspects. New media tools support the networked forms of society, encouraging the experience of building identity, whether religious or otherwise. In general, the media basically constitutes half (50%) in helping or harming the public, given that everything is available on the Internet and it is very difficult to hide information because people can now search for everything with ease. The media has a great influence on how people view things, especially with regard to religion and education. But in the end, we must understand that as long as the reader uses media and scientific sources, he must be able to formulate a rational opinion on a specific topic through the media (Editor, 2018).

In order to understand the impact of news or media on people's behavior and thoughts, it is also necessary to investigate how the public responds to these messages and news and gain insight into their attitudes. By gaining insight into the public's attitude, we understand whether they favor or oppose media coverage of charitable behavior and whether they are open to adopting such behavior. People form their own perceptions of media messages through exposure, social influence, and the credibility of these news and messages (Brida, 2011),If the public is constantly exposed to trustworthy news and media, their attitudes towards an issue will be positively affected (Liao, 2023).

From here we see and understand the power of propaganda. As we said about the positive side of propaganda, there is also a negative side through which the true power of propaganda appears.

This appears through the dissemination of misleading or deceptive information aimed at promoting a certain idea, policy or issue. This information is deliberately disseminated to influence public opinion in favor of certain people or certain agendas created by people in power. Such propaganda often contains false information, lies, and false or hidden assumptions. We see this in the past when the media repeatedly presented the Jewish question in Nazi Germany as a national issue (Chioma, 2024).

The matter began when the Jewish question began to flood German publications. At that time, the Nazi government used the media to persuade most Germans to think about what the Nazi government would do to the Jews in the country. Thus, the Nazis manipulated the content of the media, and this Nazi government created a false narrative that was in fact a special agenda that the Nazi government implemented. So what we notice here is that there is always a certain assumption in all propaganda, meaning that the question is never questioned. Therefore, the audience must always think about the process and the reasons that make something become an important national issue. Individuals must always examine whether a certain group has something to gain by creating a problem or issue, because this is what often indicates the source of the propaganda.The question here is who controls the media? The government does not have to directly control all media channels to control their content, as is the case in the former Soviet Union or China today. We must understand that if the government can shape public opinion through propaganda without directly controlling communication channels, it raises the question of how propaganda can spread widely, even when the media is privately owned (Nicholas, 2023).

1.2.7 Actors of Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy plays a significant role in the foreign policies of other countries, as we mentioned. But who are the real actors in public diplomacy? If we consider the tools that influence people and change their ideas, the first and most important is the media, including newspapers, television, radio, and the internet. The media can play a significant role in propaganda, sometimes through deliberately misleading information and creating narratives that frame the public perception of controversial issues, as is evident in historical contexts such as Nazi Germany or the portrayal of the Iraq War in the American media (Nicholas, 2023).

The primary goal of any country is to protect its national interests, and diplomacy is one of the tools it employs to safeguard and serve those interests. Through communication and the transmission of information, when someone conveys the message accurately and clearly, communication between parties becomes successful. This highlights the importance of public diplomacy. Through the media, a powerful tool of public diplomacy, governments and other actors communicate messages to their people. With technological advancements, the lives of many have changed, and human activities have been transformed. Technology now plays a role in all aspects of life, for both non-governmental and governmental actors. It allows for the expression of specific issues through the media or other communication channels. In the era of public diplomacy, the diplomat has also become a journalist and media professional, as their role is to communicate and shape public discourse (Lamsal, 2025).

States are no longer the sole determinants of international relations practice. Consequently, the international environment has been reshaped, impacting international relations and giving rise to public diplomacy. Public diplomacy engages governments on the international stage, as well as non-governmental actors and other stakeholders who influence a state's image. (Broś, 2017, 16-17)

Diplomacy in the classical sense was solely a reflection of states and their influence on other nations. States were the sole representatives of diplomacy, including public diplomacy. However, the new landscape of international relations has compelled the world to employ various methods for image building, achieving objectives, and conveying messages. Governments and their agencies are no longer the only actors constructing narratives and persuading others in diplomacy. Non-governmental actors have become active participants in shaping a state's image and crafting its own message by reaching a global audience (Broś, 2017).

Governmental and Non-Governmental Actors,Generally, governmental and non-governmental actors play a significant role in public diplomacy. It is important to note that local governmental actors play a crucial and strategic role in diplomatic activities. On the other hand, non-governmental actors include groups from academia, the media, NGOs, community events, the arts, filmmakers, youth, and individuals (Basnur, 2024).

Bansur mentions that every time he delivers a motivational speech to an audience of young people in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the United States, he asks them what first comes to mind when he mentions a number of countries. For example, Italy, Germany, Japan, and other countries. The students immediately respond by mentioning the best products and most prominent features of these countries, as well as everything related to technology, history, art, and social life. All these answers do not come from speeches by officials from these countries, or even ministers or diplomats, but rather from non-governmental actors such as the media, academics, and the actors we mentioned previously (Basnur, 2024).

Diaspora Communities play a vital role in disseminating their culture internationally, acting as active ambassadors and representing their countries through support networks and business ventures such as culinary arts and cultural initiatives. Diaspora members actively participate in soft power and smart power, building bridges that connect people and cultures. While narratives about mobile individuals often raise concerns about multiculturalism, public diplomacy views them as an investment opportunity for development. They promote positive narratives through concrete actions, fostering diversity and creating harmony between their home culture and their adopted country. Diaspora members also bring recognition to their countries through sports, business leadership, and diverse representation. According to UNESCO, the creative economy is poised for significant growth in the coming years due to the participation of these actors in cultural diplomacy across various creative sectors and industries (Venté & Messari, 2025).

Technology plays a crucial role in shaping global narratives. It gives individuals a global voice through social media platforms, and both governments and organizations recognize this and use it as direct channels to deliver messages to the public. Information technology has created a global environment characterized by the very rapid flow of information between individuals, and it has become borderless. Despite these advantages, there are still challenges, as the digital divide hinders equal access to technology and the internet, which limits the participation of some countries in digital diplomacy. The rapid spread of misinformation and fake news also poses a major challenge that requires individuals to scrutinize the information that is published, which is very difficult (Team, 2023).

In recent years, we have witnessed the widespread use of social media by official government representatives to achieve broad reach and disseminate any narrative they need to convey X (Ortutay, 2024) has emerged as one of the official platforms for heads of state and government representatives, where they tweet, and every tweet they post appears as a diplomatic statement addressed to countries, individuals, and government representatives.

Even some government officials use platforms like TikTok to promote their election campaigns. Last year, we saw US presidential candidates like Donald Trump (Vallance, 2024) and Kamala Harris (TikTok, N.D) post videos on TikTok to showcase their work and reach the largest possible audience, especially young people, who are the most active users of the platform. There are even polls that suggest Zahran Mamdani, the current mayor of New York, won his election campaign thanks to his use of social media platforms, including TikTok and Instagram (Gabbatt, 2025).

One of the tools of public diplomacy is the influence of celebrities on young people, particularly teenagers, through social media. Celebrities possess an immense ability to capture the attention and admiration of teenagers, becoming role models and sources of inspiration for them, whether through music, film, sports, or social media. Celebrities are seen as successful individuals who have achieved fame and wealth, making them aspirational figures for teenagers. Often, celebrities share similar experiences or struggles with teenagers, and in today's digital age, their influence through social media platforms is unprecedented.The influence of celebrities on individuals alters and shapes the narrative by encouraging participation in activities and highlighting important social, political, environmental, or humanitarian issues. Through this, they inspire young people and their followers. Furthermore, celebrities act as a voice and advocate for positive change, inspiring individuals to become champions of the same causes they champion (Academy, 2024).

Chapter 2: Israeli Public Diplomacy (Hasbara): Historical and Institutional Overview

2.1 Literature Review

Studies in the field of public diplomacy are increasing day by day, especially with the continuous development of media and communication channels to shape international perceptions and narratives.Gregory argues that public diplomacy is multidisciplinary in nature, as it includes culture, art, political communication, and several tools to influence foreign public opinion. Modern studies indicate that public diplomacy cannot be achieved without the media, which serves as a strategic channel enabling states to present their narrative and national identity to the public.(Gregory, 2014,282-286)

The book "Media and Public Diplomacy for International Connectivity " highlights the importance of media as a pivotal tool in the world of public diplomacy. As the author describes it, the media is not merely a communication channel but a strategic diplomatic tool that empowers states to construct their narrative, enhance their global communication with other nations, and shape foreign public perceptions. The book focuses on how traditional and modern media platforms facilitate interaction with foreign audiences outside of formal diplomacy, thus reinforcing the understanding of public diplomacy as media-driven diplomacy. The author argues that controlling narratives and media presence are essential elements in influencing states.(BASNUR, 2024)

Gullion moved to showcasing how soft power has begun to take its place in government policies in the form of soft diplomacy on the principle of shared value to the world, especially in countries that use art, sports, and culture as an essential part of the statecraft to reflect its civilized image to the outside world.(Gullion, 2022)

Golan emphasizes the growing importance of digital tools in the modern era, focusing on the use of digital platforms and websites to shape international image. This study is particularly relevant to this thesis as it contributes to clarifying how states employ digital communications to build reputation. However, while Golan analyzes digital diplomacy in general, this thesis expands to demonstrate the practical applications of digital tools, especially in the Israeli case, and how

Israel uses these tools in its discourse to the world within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.(Golan, 2019)

Stelowska contributes to understanding public diplomacy through art, culture, and other soft power tools. His analysis demonstrates how culture and art can be used to build a positive national image and strengthen emotional bonds with foreign audiences. This perspective supports the cultural dimension of his thesis by illustrating how non-political tools are used to achieve diplomatic goals. However, Stelowska did not address how cultural diplomacy intersects with human rights discourse and interstate conflicts. This thesis will analyze how Israel's strategy of hasbara and cultural representation are integrated, particularly concerning the rights of Palestinians and others.(Stelowska, 2015)

Bjolas study examines the impact of social media on public diplomacy, focusing on online platforms, interaction with them, and their ability to shape public opinion. His study is fundamental to my thesis because it contributes to understanding how online interaction, narratives, and audience engagement contribute to the success of public diplomacy. However, Bjola analysis remains largely descriptive and does not focus on contexts such as occupation or settlement. Through this thesis, I offer a critical analysis of how Israel uses social media to disseminate narratives that polish its image before foreign audiences and manipulate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to its advantage.(Bjola, 2019)

Elias describes the definition of pinkwashing and how Israel uses it with other terms like greenwashing, it also focuses on how Israel's public diplomacy changes from being the oppressor to being the savior. (الياس, 2019)

Not only individuals, but also organizations such as AlQaws focused on the Palestinian queers' life under the Israeli occupation while they face apartheid every day at Israeli checkpoints, it also shows the fact about the queer-friendly city (Tel Aviv). (AlQaws, 2020)

Shafiediscusses one of the most important techniques that Israel uses in the Pink Sage, which is rescuing Palestinian queers from their anti-gay families and societies by bringing them to live in Tel Aviv.(Shafie, 2015)

2.2 Origin and Evolution of “Hasbara”

The term Hasbara is a Hebrew term meaning “explanation.” Israel uses it to defend its narrative and convince the public of it. The Israeli occupation uses Hasbara as a tool to manage public perception and justify its actions. The origin of Hasbara goes back to the early twentieth century, when it was revealed by the Polish Zionist journalist Nahum Sokolow (News, 2025), Hasbara is a communication strategy that seeks to explain actions, whether justified or not. According to Sokolow, hasbara is a multifaceted process that approaches public relations through traditional media methods, social media, and educational initiatives. This perfectly reflects the cases in which the Israeli media is used, through which it seeks to distort the true reputation. The result is that Israelis are viewed as victims and Palestinians as perpetrators. This information is certainly pruned to a clear extent that it is no longer fundamentally true, and all of this occurs through false media campaigns (Suraya, 2024).

Hasbara is one of the most important fronts of Israeli wars, and many describe it as the art of deception that the occupying state is accustomed to. Some American military personnel, for example, point out that part of the hasbara strategy was during the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip in 2008, which aimed to justify the Israeli army’s operations in order to gain additional time to strike its targets (Khalidi, 2009). The occupation always sought to portray the army’s operations in a positive light in order to alleviate the anxiety and criticism that it would be exposed to from the international community and the Security Council. In 2012, we also saw how Gaza was rained with a torrent of ammunition (Israel, 2015). Hasbara made extensive use of communication channels at that time, exploiting browser functions, search engine algorithms, and mechanisms that control the content presented to viewers to convey the idea. This is what Israel does every time it launches a war to mitigate the anger of foreign public opinion (الخشن, 2024).

During Israel's last war on the Gaza Strip (the 2023-2025 genocide war), Israel secretly purchased a technology system capable of conducting online influence campaigns, according to Haaretz. Haaretz pointed out the dangers of developing influence technology systems, so Israel decided to purchase a pre-existing system capable of automatically creating websites, in addition to content tailored to specific audiences, and a social media monitoring system (الخشن, 2024).

If we look at non-Arab news, such as British news on BBC News recently, we see how the news is broadcast in a different way. For example, it shows the number of Palestinians killed the previous night by the Israeli army in a raid on the Gaza Strip, in refugee camps or the occupied Palestinian territories. But on the other hand, if we search American websites to find out more news related to Palestine, we will not see these atrocities (Benham, 2023).

However, we see waves of news related to the Russian Ukrainian war and the death of Ukrainian civilians. In addition, for example, we will not see in American news that in 2022 the Israeli army killed more than 170 Palestinian civilians, including 30 children, in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and since the beginning of 2023 the Israeli army has killed 158 Palestinians, including 26 children (Benham, 2023).Israel also killed more than 70 000 Palestinians in Gaza since October 2023 (cook, 2025).

Beyond that, Americans will never hear that Israel controls the lives, resources, and access to clean water, for example, of nearly 7 million Palestinians; that Palestinian cities, towns, homes, orchards, and businesses have been systematically destroyed and repopulated (Abu Samara, 2025), along with more than 750,000 illegal settlers living in the West Bank (OHCHR, 2025)that Americans will never hear about the 56 years of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the dispossession, home demolitions, curfews, checkpoints (Burke & Taha, 2025), sieges, incursions, targeted killings, military courts, administrative detention, thousands of political prisoners, tortured Palestinian children, and 56 years of oppression and humiliation (Benham, 2023).

2.3 Governmental Institutions Involved

The Hasbra website clearly states "Who We Are," where the site showcases students it describes as defenders of Israel and the Jewish people amidst what Israel calls rising antisemitism and anti-Israel propaganda on university campuses. If we browse the site and look at the heading "Why We Exist," the first thing Israel points to is its historically misunderstood reputation. The site refers to the attacks Israel has faced from all sides, which Israel terms military invasion or terrorism (hasbaraisrael, 2022).

In 2008, the Israeli government assessed a new strategy for the war on the Gaza Strip when the Israeli army employed cameramen within its units to produce operational footage. In a video released by the Israeli army titled "Weapons Horde in Gazan mosque" (TaoTaoLaoTzu, 2009)," an Israeli soldier shows viewers a mosque in Gaza and the weapons Hamas allegedly kept there, explaining to the audience why the IDF needed to bomb the mosque. This raises the question of whether targeting a mosque, which is generally considered unacceptable by the public, has become somewhat justifiable to individuals. (Jędrzejewska, 2020).This new tactic used by Israel involves presenting documented facts related to the wars to the public in real time to shape public opinion regarding the Israeli narrative.

The Israeli government did not stop at funding the Hasbara, but many Israeli institutions offered courses and programs about the Hasbara, where these institutions work to promote the policies of the State of Israel and whitewash its crimes. A group of Palestinian students in Israeli academic institutions dedicated to exposing discrimination within Israeli academic circles and their relationship to the Israeli occupation and apartheid policies presented the Academic Monitoring Project (Sa'di, 2013).

Israeli violence by the Israeli army has not stopped at Palestinian citizens in the West Bank, but has extended to the occupation army protecting settlers in the West Bank when they attack citizens in the West Bank. According to Haaretz newspaper, the Israeli Defense Forces receive support from Israeli leaders to create a permissive environment that enables settlers to act freely in the West Bank (Kubovich, 2025).

Settler violence in the West Bank has not been limited to burning or stealing Palestinian property, but has extended to murder. On Sunday, May 12, 2024, at approximately 2:00 AM, the Dawabsha family awoke to find their house, located west of the village of Duma, on fire. Family members managed to control the fire before it reached the third floor where they lived. During the firefighting efforts, two family members fell and sustained injuries (btselem, 2024).

This was not the only incident to befall the Dawabsheh family. In 2015, a Jewish settler attacked the village of Duma, killing 18-month-old Ali Dawabsheh. His parents also died from their injuries. Ali's four-year-old brother survived the fire but suffered severe burns. Following this attack, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed zero tolerance in the fight to bring the

perpetrators to justice (Agencies, 2020). It is worth noting here the clear discrepancy between the official Israeli rhetoric, which declares zero tolerance for individual acts of violence and promises to hold accountable all individuals who perpetrate violence against Palestinians ‘even though these individuals are usually not held accountable” (Btselem, 2017) and the reality and actual practices on the ground, particularly in the military operations in the Gaza Strip, the effects of which on the civilian population of the Strip have been documented in international reports.

The Gaza Genocide exposed much of what Israel calls the principles of human rights and the false democracy it has presented to the world over the past years. Israel tried to portray itself as humane as possible, justifying its failure to kill Palestinian civilians by claiming that all those killed in the genocidal war were terrorists (as it described them) and not innocent. According to the Israeli Defense Forces website, in a headline, it says, "How the IDF minimizes harm to civilians." (team, 2024) The occupation claims that Hamas is exploiting this situation and encouraging Palestinian civilians to ignore the IDF's warnings. The Israeli army contacts residents of the Strip and asks them to evacuate their homes under the pretext of protecting them, while at the same time bombing the homes of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza strip (Murray, 2025). How can the army protect civilians and reduce their exposure to danger while simultaneously displacing them from their homes, with no opportunity to return to them because the army essentially destroys them after the residents have left?

From my perspective, and the perspective of many others, the Israeli narrative that Israel has tried to construct for years has been demolished in less than two years because the genocide exposed Israel's true face, and the perception shifted from a democratic state that protects human rights to a genocidal state that kills civilians and expels them from their homes (٢١عربي, 2025).

However, Israel did not give up in defending its narrative. During its occupation of the Gaza Strip during the war of annihilation, one of the occupation soldiers posted a picture of himself on the ruins of destroyed Gazan homes, holding a rainbow flag with the words "In the name of love" written on it. This picture was published on X (Israel, 2023) from an official Israeli account, clearly demonstrating that Israel is officially sponsoring the defense of its narrative and that this tool (public diplomacy) is something Israel cannot do without،The tweet read, "The first Rainbow flag in the Gaza Strip," as if the Palestinians in Gaza need the Rainbow flag to fly there and have no

other needs like shelter, food, and protection. Has carrying the rainbow flag become more important than basic human rights? Or did Israel publish this image to attract Western and international attention, portraying itself as a force for love and peace, not killing and destruction (contrary to reality)?.I will address this topic (pinkwashing) in a spirit section to show how Israel used LGBTQ+ people to show itself as the only liberal country in the middle east and how it used them to justify their actions against Palestinians.

2.4 Non-Governmental and Media Actors

Many NGOs play a significant role in Israeli hasbara, focusing on demonstrating support not only for Israel but also for Jews as if they belong solely to the State of Israel, portraying Israel as the refuge and sanctuary for all Jews worldwide. Among these organizations is the organization of Hillel International (international, N.D),Hillel is considered the largest Jewish organization, but what is its connection to Israel if it only serves Jews? The organization has been operating for over 100 years, supporting Jewish students and strengthening their connection to Israeli identity. It strives to foster learning and build relationships with Israel, adopting a philosophy based on religious pluralism, meaning that each student has the right to express their identity in their own way. Israel benefits from the organization by reinforcing the Jewish people's connection to the Land of Israel, portraying it as the center of the Jewish world, as if Israel were a state solely defined by its Jewish population. The organization emphasizes that there is no difference between Jews, welcoming them regardless of their skin color, sexual orientation, or other characteristics (international, N.D).

This is what we call public diplomacy , a method Israel use to publish its image in the world by showing itself as a host for jews all around no matter what they are “ as long as they are jews “ as the same time where Palestinians “ the native people of the land “ are not welcome because they are jews”,as we said before about how Israel violate palestinians rights.

The organization's role wasn't limited to supporting Jewish students worldwide. On the one hand, we are all human beings, and everyone has the right to practice their religious rites and have their own social circle. But how did the organization focus on the State of Israel and suppress anyone

who opposed Israel? In 2016, San Francisco Hillel (Legal, 2016)hosted a talk with Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat, who at the time was planning to implement policies of demolishing Palestinian homes. When students protested the talk, they were accused of being antisemitic and physically threatening Jewish students. This led to widespread defamation and cyberbullying of the protesters, including death and rape threats (Legal, 2016).

Despite the organization's clear statement that it welcomes Jews regardless of their background, including gay people, in 2017 Hillel expelled a group of Queer students from Ohio State University because the group "B'nai Keshet" (“Rainbow Children”) co-sponsored a refugee fundraising campaign with another Jewish student group that supports boycotting Israel. Israel deemed this a violation of its principles, leading to their expulsion. The organization defended itself by claiming that it was "showcase" LGBT students in another way (Maltz, 2017).

2.4.1NGO’s role

Israel has not only disseminated its narrative through radio, television, and various other media outlets to garner more support and advocacy from around the world, but has also established non-governmental organizations to bolster this narrative. As previously mentioned, Hillel aims to unite Jews from all over the world and strengthen their ties to Israel by attracting them to the country. Here, I would like to mention the Hasbara fellowship (Fellowship, N.D).

This organization aims to empower Jewish and Zionist students by sending them to Israel for training. The organization brings hundreds of students to Israel every summer and winter, providing them with firsthand experiences that enable them to return to their university campuses as inspiring and confident Zionist activists and leaders. The organization also supports its staff and provides them with access to invaluable resources, as described on its website (Fellowship, N.D).

The organization's official website features a minute-and-a-half video showcasing Israel to the world and how the organization attracts students to visit Israel. However, upon closer examination of the video, we see that Israel is actually bringing these students from all over the world and giving them a tour of the occupied Palestinian territories (Fellowship, 2020) The video shows the Palestinian city of Rawabi, which the organization portrays as Israel, but in reality, it is occupied Palestinian territory. Israel has no connection to it; on the contrary, Israel occupies this land and presents it to the world as Israeli territory, not Palestinian.

As one of the girls in the video says, visiting Israel through this organization is the way to learn the truth (Fellowship, 2020). But what truth is she referring to? The truth is that it is in the occupied Palestinian territories, and that the land Israel is trying to portray is actually the West Bank, which is supposed to be under Palestinian sovereignty. Israel has no claim to it because the world and the international community have recognized the West Bank and Gaza Strip as Palestinian territories (Nation, 2025).

If we look at another organization's website, we see the headline "Think Green, Think Blue," (Fellowship, n.d)indicating that Israel is conducting campaigns aimed at protecting the environment in the Middle East and raising Israeli environmental awareness to improve the world through sustainability projects. This presents the global impact of Israeli initiatives and the mutual benefit of using Israeli environmental initiatives, as if Israel truly cares about the environment in the Middle East. However, if we consider Israel's environmental crimes in the Palestinian territories, we find that environmental apartheid in the Palestinian territories refers to Israel's systematic exploitation of the environment in Palestine and the discriminatory system through which Palestinians are prevented from accessing their land and natural resources and are disproportionately affected by the environmental damage caused by Israel (IMEU, 2022).

For example, Israel systematically denies Palestinians access to clean and safe drinking water it engages in "**greenwashing**," promoting itself as an eco-friendly country even as its policies and actions cause tremendous harm to the environment and to Palestinians In the West Bank, Israel steals and confiscates water and gives it to settlements and settlers (international, 2009). Due to Israeli restrictions, Palestinians are prevented from installing water pumps and drilling water wells. Israel also denies Palestinians the right to access the Jordan River, preventing them from collecting water. Therefore, Palestinians are forced to live on an average of 19 gallons, which is the minimum amount declared by the World Health Organization (International, 2017).

2.4.2 Israeli Media

Israel began its digital diplomacy efforts in 2011, coinciding with the Arab Spring uprisings. The Israeli occupation saw an opportunity to penetrate Arab public opinion and effect political change in the region, despite maintaining diplomatic relations with some Arab rulers at the time. Israel attempted by all means to win over the Arab population to its narrative. Through media channels, Israel aimed to influence Arab public opinion regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. With the emergence of social media, Israel adopted its "Hasbara" (Israeli public relations) strategy, which became its soft power tool in combating opposing

narratives and disseminating its own. This created a new channel for connecting Israelis and Arabs, fostering dialogue while continuing to influence perceptions of the conflict (Yaqub, 2025).

Israel uses the media extensively to shape its narrative. Through several channels, such as Channel 12 and Channel 14, it broadcasts content, particularly when discussing Israeli military operations. This content typically aims to justify Israeli actions against Palestinians, specifically against Hamas, following the events of October 7th. Channel 14, considered the second most-watched news channel in Israel and a staunch supporter of Netanyahu, promotes incitement against the Gaza Strip and calls for its destruction (Krifcher, 2025).Many media platforms also play a role in portraying the Israeli image in the best possible light, including The Times of Israel, Haaretz magazine, The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews, +972 magazine, and others.

However, with Israel's image tarnished globally following the war in Gaza, the Israelis have been paying to improve its image. For example, it is reported that the Israeli Foreign Minister paid up to $7,000 per post to promote pro-Israel content on platforms like TikTok and Instagram (MEM, 2025). The Israeli government also awarded a $6 million contract to a company called Clock Tower to disseminate pro-Israel messages to Gen Z users through platforms like TikTok and Instagram.Israel didn't stop at these platforms. It also contracted with Chatcpt (World, 2025)to launch a network of pro-Israel websites and to package their content in a way that shapes how artificial intelligence models frame specific topics. This means that if someone asks a question about Israeli foreign policy, the AI is likely to repeat pro-Israel talking points, not because they are actually true, but because the internet has been strategically designed to reflect this perspective (MEM, 2025).

Israel also uses X (formerly Twitter) as part of its public outreach strategy. As I mentioned earlier, it's considered a semi-official platform for presidents to address the public. On the Israeli side, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the Lebanese people in a live video message in English, urging the IDF to take action. He stated that the army was prepared for a military operation against Hezbollah, emphasizing that the most important aspect of the plan was that Israel would wage war on Hezbollah, not the Lebanese people (Netanyahu, 2024). He indicated that this operation was for the Lebanese people to reclaim their country from Hezbollah, which he claimed

was occupying Lebanon, and that Israel would liberate Lebanese territory from Hezbollah (MATTA, 2025).

The cinematic influence is one of the strongest things that shapes perceptions in favor of Israel, and here I am not only talking about Israeli films produced by Israel, but it extends to films produced by Hollywood in influencing the image of Israel and Palestine in the world.

The Zionist beginnings in the Jewish roots of Hollywood were deep, and there were very active pioneers in the field, including Barney Balaban and Arthur Krim, who played an active role in establishing major studios and promoting Zionist ideals through films. The first Zionist films, which were often funded by organizations such as the Jewish National Fund, focused on the idea of the establishment of Israel and portrayed it heroically while downplaying the importance of the Palestinian narrative. Palestine did not exist as a land or as a people. For example, the 1960 film "Exodus" is a prime example of romanticizing the establishment of the State of Israel and greatly marginalizing the Palestinians (Santis, 2024).

Moreover, Hollywood has portrayed Arabs and Muslims specifically over the years as irrational terrorists, reinforcing negative stereotypes and images of Arabs to the world. This contrasts sharply with the sympathetic portrayal of Jewish victims of the Holocaust, as seen in the influential 1978 series "Holocaust." (McGuinness, 2019) These narratives directly linked Jewish suffering to the establishment of Israel, thus bolstering Israel's image as the savior of the Jewish people and portraying Arab evil as the norm (Santis, 2024)

Zionism has worked to cultivate a stereotypical image of the male in Israeli cinema, portraying him as strong, healthy, hardworking, and seemingly ideal, a stark contrast to the traditional image of Jews as weak. Through this cinema, Israel has attempted to construct and promote this national, masculine identity, while simultaneously marginalizing the existence of others, such as women, LGBTQ+ individuals, Mizrahi Jews, and even Palestinian Arabs. Some Israeli films even raise questions about nationality and true masculinity, aiming to understand or, conversely, distort it (Suissa, 2010). It's as if Israel is attempting to reshape its image by presenting itself as a democracy that accepts all differences, particularly LGBTQ+ individuals, whom Israel uses as a bargaining

chip to attract attention and cultivate a more positive image. I will address the topic of LGBTQ+ individuals in greater detail in later chapters.

One of the cinematic works produced by Israel is the series "Tehran," which portrays Israel as a professional spy and how it outmaneuvered Tehran (IMDP, 2020). It also depicts Iran in a negative light, showing it detaining Israelis the moment they enter Iranian territory. Here, as a master's student in international law and diplomatic relations, I would like to add that if the scenario had actually involved Israelis landing on Iranian soil and being detained by Iran, diplomatic channels would have resolved the dispute, and it wouldn't have escalated into the problem the series portrays between Iran and Israel. Diplomatic relations can resolve such issues, especially with the mediation of various countries, such as the United States. This reminds me of the Iran-US incident in 1979 when Iranians stormed the American embassy and held its staff hostage for a year. Ultimately, the issue was resolved through the intervention of the former US president Jimmy Carter (CNN, 2025).

The question here is, when the director produced this series, what did he base his portrayal of Iranian society on, especially since neither the director nor the crew had ever lived in Iran, not even for a single day? The series was filmed in Athens, certainly not Tehran. Furthermore, the series focused on daily struggles in Iran, such as economic inequality, while simultaneously ignoring the economic suffering endured by many Palestinians due to Israeli policies in Palestine (SAKHA, 2020).

One of the series I personally watched before I understood Israeli propaganda and public diplomacy was "The Good Cop" in Hebrew “Hashoter Hatov“ This series showcases Israeli comedy, and throughout its episodes, an Arab policeman is shown working normally at his station, portraying Israel as a pluralistic country where Arabs are an integral part of the state and have equal rights and responsibilities with Jewish citizens (IMDb, 2015). However, in reality, Israel does not treat Arabs the same way it treats Jews, whether through laws or racist practices against Arabs in Israel (הכנסת, 2018). In fact, they are second-class citizens (Maizland & Robinson, 2023).

Another well-known Israeli production is the series "Fauda," (Tassa & Sakharof, 2015)filmed in Israel and some Palestinian territories. The series portrays Israel as a hero in the fight against Palestinian terrorism, as depicted in the show. Through "Fauda," Israel attempts to portray the

Israeli occupation as humane and morally motivated. For example, it presents Israeli characters like Doron as suffering from psychological disorders and violence, employing a "kill and cry" tactic. This portrayal suggests they are in pain despite the horrific acts they commit. This approach aims to elicit sympathy for Israeli soldiers, thus justifying Israeli violence as defensive, regrettable, but necessary because Israel is a state dealing with threats, and its challenges are presented as humanitarian (Press, 2023).

The series focuses primarily on emotional manipulation, pity, and fear to sway viewers toward a particular viewpoint. Instead of portraying the occupation as it truly is, the series concentrates on personal stories and the characters of its protagonists. This diminishes critical understanding in favor of emotional support for the Israeli perspective. A key element of the series is its emphasis on fear and threats from Palestinians, suggesting that Palestinians are a constant danger to one another. This reinforces the audience's perception of the need for security repression against Palestinians in the region, contributing to the perpetuation of a discourse that serves the Israeli colonial mindset and justifies Israel's actions against Palestinians (Press, 2023).

Israel has relied heavily on cinema to project and polish its image, and it hasn't stopped there. It has also attempted to distort the image of others, such as Palestinian society, which it consistently portrays as barbaric and dictatorial. In 2012, Israel released the film "Out in the Dark," (Atlas et al., 2012) which tells the story of a Palestinian and an Israeli who fall in love when the Palestinian travels to Tel Aviv—a city the film describes as a land of freedom and safety, especially for gay Arabs. Through this film, Palestinian society in the West Bank is depicted as a terrorist society. This portrayal goes beyond simply rejecting homosexuality; it suggests that Palestinians kill gay people in the West Bank, which is untrue. There are no reliable sources reporting the killing of gay Palestinians in the West Bank, and homosexuality is not criminalized there. This is simply Israeli propaganda, presented to the world to tarnish the image of Palestinians and portray Israel as the savior and protector of LGBTQ+ individuals in the region.

Since Israel always claims that Palestinian law punishes homosexuals for being homosexual, if we look at the Palestinian Penal Code of 1960, we will not find a single article criminalizing same-sex sexual activity. The only article that criminalizes any act, whether between heterosexuals or homosexuals, is Article 320, which criminalizes any act deemed indecent in public (مقام, 1960).

This is based on the customs and traditions of Palestinian society. However, within the home, Palestinian law does not interfere with what a person does sexually or with whom. Here, I would like to add that while Palestinian society may not be the most accepting of homosexuals—and this has nothing to do with the law but rather with customs and religious beliefs—I believe that Palestinian society is becoming more accepting of homosexuals and other groups every day. The United States and many other countries were once intolerant of homosexuals, but today there are laws protecting them. Similarly, in Palestinian society, it will take time for people to accept this, and I personally don't see it as being far off. But the most important point I want to emphasize for the reader is that Israel uses homosexuals as a winning card, protecting them to gain the sympathy of others in the world, as if all her crimes in the Palestinian territories will be covered up by the world because of her protection of homosexuals or others.

Israeli media is not the only entity shaping Israel's narrative and supporting it; Israel also exploits Western media to gain biased support. CNN, the BBC, the New York Times, and other major Western media outlets have faced widespread criticism for their one-sided coverage, selective terminology, and lack of balance, particularly when discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The United States, regardless of whether Republicans or Democrats support Israel, is the biggest media backer of Israel (Ghani, 2025).

This wasn't limited to biased news coverage favoring Israel; we can also witness it in misinformation. For example, on October 10th in Lebanon and October 11th in Gaza, the Israeli army used white phosphorus shells (Watch, 2023), which are prohibited under international law. Israel claimed this was false; however, after investigating video footage, Human Rights Watch (Watch, 2023) confirmed the use of these shells, as did Amnesty International (International, 2023). Further investigation documented the presence of white phosphorus at an Israeli army base in southern Israel, near the Gaza Strip (Ristić, 2023).

Israel consistently supports its narrative with baseless claims. During the genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, the false narratives propagated by Israel were exposed. One of the arguments used by Israel was the claim that Hamas beheaded Israeli children in October 2023. The Israeli army and Prime Minister Netanyahu's office claimed that Hamas fighters beheaded up to 40 children during the attack on the town of Kfar Aza on October 7th. This claim spread so rapidly that even American

media outlets relentlessly reported it, and former US President Joe Biden falsely claimed to have personally seen photos of the beheaded children. However, Israeli journalists themselves saw nothing of the sort, and the Israeli army presented no evidence to support this claim (Speri, 2023).

Israel's false claims against Palestinians are not limited to Palestinians alone, but extend to Palestinians who hold other nationalities. On May 11, 2020, the Israeli occupation army killed Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh by shot in the neck with a bullet fired by an Israeli sniper in the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank (Ebrahim, 2022), even though she was not near the fighting and was wearing her vest clearly marked "Press". The Israeli army and the prime minister at the time blamed Palestinian resistance fighters for her killing and planted a video unrelated to the incident to deflect blame from themselves and place the blame on the Palestinian resistance fighters (Bennett, 2020). After investigation by several independent bodies such as The Washington Post, CNN, New York Times (Abdulrahim, 2022), and Amnesty International (international, 2022), they all concluded that Shireen Abu Akleh was killed by an Israeli soldier. Later, the Israeli army indicated that Shireen's killing "may have been at the hands of one of the soldiers" (Rubin, 2020).

2.4.3 Ai platform

Israel has not ceased spreading false narratives globally, but realizing that this alone would not suffice, it has also sought to keep pace with technological advancements, particularly in artificial intelligence. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched one of its largest public diplomacy campaigns in the United States since the start of the war on Gaza. Israel contracted with FARA to register foreign agents to influence online discourse, including ChatGPT platforms. The campaign focused on Generation Z across digital platforms, with the Ministry of Justice aiming to ensure that at least 80% of content produced for this generation was targeted through platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.The Israeli government allocated 545 million shekels to its public diplomacy efforts for 2025 (Edelson & Kahan, 2025), including a national campaign in the United States to combat antisemitism. When asked at a meeting why international support for Israel had declined, Netanyahu replied, "We must..." "We must resist, we must fight the influencers; they are very important." (Tasnim, 2025) Netanyahu described the online arena as

Israel's eighth front, alongside political, economic, and military challenges (Edelson & Kahan, 2025).Israel built their own AI platform to support its narrative (Talking, N.D)

Israel didn't stop there, not only because of the hatred it received globally and its inability to control all social media platforms, but also because individuals' minds were manipulated and they enjoyed free access to information. Instead, Israel found a solution: the "digital Iron Dome" (a play on the Israeli Iron Dome missile defense system). When Israel realized that the traditional "hasbara" (public relations) wasn't the most reliable way to promote its narrative, instead of waiting for false narratives to take root globally, targeting the wrong audience, and then distributing advertisements and videos based on what Israel claims are facts, the digital Iron Dome took several steps, including Web scanning: The digital Iron Dome constantly scans websites to monitor everything written about Israel. If it detects headlines like "Israel is committing genocide in Gaza," it measures their impact on public opinion using a smart dashboard and tracks how these narratives spread. The Iron Dome also creates counter-content. For every claim it detects, it generates compelling counter-articles refuting the claims critical of Israel. The Iron Dome also collects videos related to the anti-Israel content, analyzes what works and what doesn't, and creates digital content to counter it,Finally, the digital Iron Dome employs targeted responses, conducting campaigns to reach specific individuals and launching paid advertisements to reach the same people who accessed the "misleading" content, as Israel calls it. For example, when someone finishes reading an article about Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip, the Iron Dome might show them an article or video depicting Israel providing aid to Gaza, or it might place an advertising slogan directly next to the anti-Israel article (The times of Israel, 2025) if we go to Youtube we can watch the video of how this digital Iron Dome work (The Jewish Leadership Project, 2025).

The Israeli government also took some direct actions, targeting public opinion, legislators, and Democrats in the United States to garner support for Israel during the Gaza war. The Israeli Ministry of Diaspora Affairs funded a consulting firm called STOIC to create fake websites and accounts to spread pro-Israel and sometimes anti-Islamic content, aiming to influence individuals, especially young people, and create divisions within American society (Jingnan, 2024).

Chapter 3:Hasbara as a Tool to Cover Up Israeli Crimes Against Palestinians

3.1Conceptual Framework: Hasbara between Propaganda and Narrative management

Discourse is considered one of the most important tools that countries rely on to shape their external image and influence international public opinion, especially in the context of conflicts of interest. In the Israeli-Palestinian case, the conflict is not limited to military or legal operations, but extends to include a conflict of narratives and stories presented to the world. Hence, this section seeks to clarify the concept of Hasbara and deconstruct its position between public diplomacy on the one hand and political propaganda and narrative management on the other, in preparation for understanding how Hasbara is employed in the service of Israeli policies towards the Palestinians.

When we talk about Hasbara, we are referring to a strategy Israel uses to shape its international image. Therefore, it must be clarified that the term Hasbara does not automatically fall under the concept of public diplomacy, as there is a difference between public diplomacy and propaganda. In this context, it is important to focus on Hasbara as an Israeli tool for media influence, not merely a passing term within the theoretical framework discussing tools for shaping public opinion.

As (Jowett & Donnell, 2006) defined Propaganda **"the deliberate and systematic attempt to influence perception and affect behavior in ways that further the desired objectives of the propagandist."** Public diplomacy reflects a state's vision and its genuine foreign policy, even if it appears otherwise, thus encouraging understanding and dialogue between nations. Propaganda, on the other hand, imposes a specific message on the public through the repeated dissemination of rumors, which distinguishes public diplomacy from propaganda, characterized by deception. (Brown, 2008). So, is Israel practicing public diplomacy or propaganda under the guise of Hasbara? This is what we will explore in this chapter.

Propaganda relies on manipulating ideas, not just spreading misinformation. Propagandists use familiar concepts like democracy, security, and freedom while ignoring other negative aspects of events, creating the impression that the language is acceptable to the public. The author points out that using terms like democracy to justify practices that contradict true democracy distorts the public's understanding of politics and makes spreading lies, fabrications, and manipulation easier.

Presenting a partial truth maintains credibility, even if the story contains a false element. For example, propaganda works to reduce empathy for victims, especially in wars, making it easier to accept the official narrative, even if that narrative conceals part or all of the truth. This is reflected in exploiting emotions rather than facts.(Stanley, 2015).

Israel relies heavily on propaganda to construct its narrative, but it doesn't explicitly use the term "propaganda." Instead, it employs the concept of strategic narrative management, known as "Hasbara," in its foreign policy. So, what is narrative management? It essentially revolves around crafting the story itself—specifically, the story being promoted by a particular entity—and how it is formulated, evaluated, and repeated in a way that influences public opinion. This involves not only addressing allegations against the state but also crafting a coherent and convincing narrative for the international community to counter potential accusations. The political elements of narrative construction are: a) Defining the narrative by identifying existing stories and perceptions about organizations; b) Defining the objectives: what goal is to be achieved through the narrative, such as building trust or raising awareness; c) Developing the message through its correct formulation; and d) Choosing the appropriate channel for disseminating the message. In the current era, it is best to focus on social media and utilize applications like Instagram and TikTok.(ESG, 2025).

If we examine the Israeli narrative, particularly regarding Palestinians, in Gaza for example, when the Israeli occupation kills a Palestinian child, the Israeli narrative often revolves around whether there was a militant nearby. The loss is then mitigated through suspicion. Israel also uses phrases like "buildings collapsing" in Gaza, transforming Israeli violence in the Strip into a negative tragedy (Zreiq, 2025).Israel exploited the narrative on October 7th by accelerating the pace of news dissemination at the expense of the historical context. Events related to October 7th that were biased towards Israel spread very quickly in the media, briefly giving viewers news against Israel without presenting the history of the Palestinian issue. This serves the Israeli narrative by confining the discussion to those events only. Viewers were not shown the events that the Palestinian people went through, from the Nakba (Nation, 2025) and the Balfour Declaration (Project, n.d) to the Naksa (Washington, 2020)and other massacres against the Palestinian people. (Hajji, 2025) Or are

the Israeli people the only ones who have the right to present their narrative and portray themselves as victims?

Narrative plays a crucial role in how societies understand and respond to conflicts. It not only reflects events but also shapes the framework through which those events are interpreted. Manipulating narratives can attract the attention of the international community by promoting one-sided views of causes and effects; conversely, complex narratives can facilitate dialogue and a deeper understanding of the conflict (IFIT, 2021). From an Israeli perspective, the Hasbara (public discourse) works to simplify and reiterate narratives in order to solidify a singular viewpoint and deepen the divisions in understanding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

3.2 Legal Context: Hasbara rule with the Israeli Crimes Under International Law

After analyzing Israeli discourse, this chapter moves to the legal dimension of the conflict by examining Israeli actions in the Palestinian territories in light of the rules of international humanitarian law and international criminal law. The effectiveness of discourse and propaganda cannot be understood apart from reality and the violations committed. This chapter aims to assess whether Israeli practices and policies against Palestinians constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity according to the Geneva Conventions and the Rome Statute.

War crimes can be defined as violations of international humanitarian law committed during armed conflict, including acts prohibited by international treaties and conventions (LII, n.d), including the Geneva Conventions (ICRC, 2014) and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Court, 2021) which according to the Rome statute article 8 war crimes includes:

(i) Willful killing

(ii) Torture or inhuman treatment, including biological experiments;

(iii) Willfully causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or health;

(iv) Extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly;

(v) Compelling a prisoner of war or other protected person to serve in the forces of a hostile Power;

(vi) Willfully depriving a prisoner of war or other protected person of the

rights of fair and regular trial;

(vii) Unlawful deportation or transfer or unlawful confinement;

(viii) Taking of hostages.

Did Israel commit war crimes according to Rome statutes?

In a recent report, the UN Commission of Inquiry stated that Israel committed genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the war (Morgan, 2025). Israel caused the killing of members of the group and inflicted serious bodily and mental harm on them, deliberately and systematically inflicting damage intended to destroy the group. According to statements by Israeli leaders, these statements reflect the deliberate intent of Israel and its leadership to perpetrate this genocide. At least 64,964 people were killed in the Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip, most of the population was displaced, and more than 90% of homes were damaged or destroyed (Gritten & Foulkes, 2025).

Israeli violence has not been limited to the West Bank; we have witnessed the ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip since October 2023 (Nation, 2025). Despite UN Security Council resolutions calling for a ceasefire in Gaza (Council, 2025), Israel has not adhered to any of them. In fact, it has violated the ceasefire at least 875 times between October 10th and December 22nd (Al Jazeera Staff, 2025). The last ceasefire in Gaza was on October 10th. Despite this, Israel has killed at least 406 Palestinians and injured 1,118 (Najar, 2025).

Israel has not ceased committing war crimes in Palestine, particularly in the Gaza Strip. Moreover, Israel commits crimes against humanity against Palestinians almost daily in the West Bank as well. Crimes against humanity can be defined as crimes committed on a widespread basis against civilians, regardless of their nationality. These crimes include murder, torture, physical violence, exclusion, persecution, enforced disappearance, and so on. Crimes against humanity first appeared in the Nuremberg Charter of 1945 at the end of World War II (Project, n.d), and since the 1990s, crimes against humanity have been codified in various international treaties, such as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICRC, 1993), among others.

Israeli crimes against humanity are not limited to the Gaza Strip or the last sixty years, but extend to previous decades in which Israel committed many crimes against Palestinians. In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the demolition and displacement operations have not stopped to this day. In 2009, the Palestinian community witnessed the highest number of demolitions of 1,763 buildings and the permanent displacement of about 4,500 Palestinians due to the Israeli occupation policy (NEWS, 2010), which has become clear as "apartheid".

Israel has established 43 new settlements in the West Bank since October 7 (Peace Now, 2024), in addition to the 330 settlements previously established. Approximately 2,400 hectares of land in the West Bank were declared Israeli territory (OCHA, 2024), marking the largest land confiscation operation since 1992.

However, within Israel, the Ministry of National Security announced in November that there had been a 400% increase in demolitions in the Bedouin community located in the Negev region (in southern Israel) (Frankel, 2024). Thus, the systematic violence and forced displacement are not limited to those who hold Palestinian citizenship, but are racist against Arabs in general and against anyone who does not adhere to the Jewish religion.

Regarding freedom of movement, permits for approximately 400 children from Gaza suffering from chronic illnesses, who were scheduled to receive treatment in the West Bank after October 7, 2023, have been revoked (children, 2023). Furthermore, movement within the West Bank itself is deteriorating daily. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has counted 793 checkpoints and roadblocks in the West Bank, hindering the movement of Palestinians between their cities and villages and delaying the arrival of emergency services (OCHA, 2024). Even Palestinian farmers face extreme difficulty accessing their agricultural lands due to the cancellation of the military permits previously granted to them for access to their own land.

As for the unlawful killings that largely target Palestinian journalists, Israeli attacks have killed more than 260 Palestinian journalists in In the Occupied Palestinian Territory (United Nation, 2025)

. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, approximately 487 Palestinians, including 90 children, were killed during Israeli military raids in West Bank towns such as Jenin, Tulkarm, and Tubas. The Israeli army is investigating these unlawful operations (Samra, 2024).

Israeli violence is not limited to the army; settlers also perpetrate acts of violence against Palestinians in the West Bank on a near-daily basis. Settlers have killed at least six Palestinians and wounded 356 in rural areas. This violence has also contributed to the forced displacement of many Palestinians (OCHA, 2024).

Israel arrested more than 10,000 Palestinian citizens and subjected Palestinians from Gaza to enforced disappearance and solitary confinement (Hussein & Haddad, 2025). It also detained 5,262 Palestinians without charge or trial and held 3,376 Palestinians under administrative detention. Conversely, Israel did not issue administrative detention orders against any settlers or Jews (International, 2024).

According to the fourth Geneva convention article 49 " Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive" (ICRC, 2025)

Systematic Israeli violence is not limited to the Israeli government or army; the Israeli government supports this violence through settlers who carry out acts of violence and rioting in the West Bank. In Deir Dibwan in the West Bank, there is a Jewish settlement outpost located on a hill overlooking Route 60, the main road that bisects the West Bank. Over time, this settlement outpost has transformed into Israeli housing projects, part of a plan implemented by members of the Israeli cabinet to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state. Settlers in this area throw Molotov cocktails and expel Palestinians from nearby areas, preventing their return. Settlers also celebrate on platforms like Telegram the harassment of Bedouin shepherds (Magid, 2025). This year, 2025, was the most violent on record for Israeli civilian attacks against Palestinians in the West Bank.

According to UN data, there were more than 750 injuries, and settlement outposts are rapidly spreading throughout the Palestinian territories (Magid et al., 2025).

The Israeli cabinet recently approved the construction of 19 new settlements, according to an Israeli organization (Khalil, 2025). The non-governmental organization Peace Now stated that Finance Minister Smotrich said the goal of building these settlements is to obstruct the establishment of a Palestinian state. Israeli settlements in the West Bank are considered illegal under international law, and the entire international community recognizes this (with the exception of the United States under Trump) (Magid, 2025).

Through cultural appropriation, settlers promote themselves as the rightful owners of this land in the West Bank. Recently, videos circulated of an Israeli female settler living in the West Bank herding sheep like a Palestinian farmer, wearing clothes closely resembling those worn by Palestinian peasant women, and living a Bedouin lifestyle similar to that of Palestinian Bedouins (Palestinenews, 2025). She lives the lifestyle of a Palestinian farmer in an illegal settlement in the West Bank, and certainly, the Palestinians did not allow her to live there or enter Palestinian lands. However, Israel supports these individuals under the pretext of religion and the promised land (Btselem, 2002).

The question is where is Israel with all these crimes? According to Yesh Din, an organization that documents settler violence in the West Bank, since 2005 it has recorded 1,701 police investigations into crimes committed by settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank (Din, 2025). Approximately 94% of these cases ended without indictment, and only 3% resulted in convictions. During 2023 and 2024, the organization documented 328 incidents of settler violence against Palestinians. In most cases, individuals cited a lack of trust in the Israeli government, and some expressed fear that filing a complaint would lead to the revocation of their work permits in Israel (Din, 2025).

Israel is accountable for all actions it has taken in Palestine, whether in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip. For eight decades, Israel has denied the right to return to the Palestinians who fled their lands in 1948 when Israel occupied historic Palestine (Nation, 1978), resulting in the Nakba (IMEU,

2023)—the same day Israel celebrates the establishment of its state. The right of return is a historical right of the Palestinian people and a principle of international law guaranteeing refugees the right to return to their homes from which they were displaced. The United Nations has recognized this right of individuals to return to their homes from which they were displaced in 1948 (Watch, 2024).

3.3 Mechanisms of Hasbara in Concealing Violations

Israeli practices are not limited to physical actions on the ground, but are accompanied by a process of legal and linguistic reframing aimed at legitimizing the use of force through the employment of concepts such as "the right to self-defense," "security," and "counterterrorism." This chapter seeks to clarify how Israel uses these concepts to justify its crimes in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Israel uses various terms to justify its crimes against Palestinians in the West Bank or Gaza Strip. It does this by using terms such as the right to self-defense. What is the right to self-defense and what are its conditions? Self-defense under international law is the use of force to repel an attack or imminent threat of attack directed against oneself, others, or an interest protected by law, according to Article 2 (4) (Nation, 1945) of the UN Charter and customary international law. This attack must originate from one state against another (not from armed groups) (ICRC, 2025).

Under international law, the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been recognized as militarily occupied territories since 1967 by Israel (Nation, 1982). Israel is considered the occupying power and has the right to defend itself against Palestinian attacks. However, Israel also has a responsibility to maintain law and order in the occupied territories and ensure the security and well-being of the occupied population, as stipulated in Article 43 of the Regulations Concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land (ICRC, 1907). This law grants the right to use force for enforcement purposes but emphasizes the need to prioritize the safety of the civilian population.

Israel has the right to defend itself against attacks by Palestinians or resistance movements like Hamas. However, Israel must respect international humanitarian law and the principle of proportionality (Kretzmer, 2013), a fundamental concept in international law that stipulates the

permissibility of using force, but only to achieve objectives and in proportion to the force used (which Israel fails to do in both the Gaza Strip, through its genocidal actions, and the West Bank, as evidenced by the previously mentioned casualty figures). There are two interpretations of self-defense: first, the availability of non-coercive means to counter an armed attack; and second, the rational link between the force used and the legitimate aims of self-defense (Gupta, 2023). What Israel has done in its war of genocide is not proportionate to the events of October 7th, when tens of thousands of civilians were killed in the Gaza Strip and displaced from their lands and homes (BTSELEM, 2025).

Israeli discourse relies on manipulating terminology to serve its narrative. Instead of using terms like "war crimes" or "human rights violations" under international law, Israel employs phrases such as "right to self-defense," "security measures," (state, n.d) or "counterterrorism" (BYMAN, 2006) to present its actions as legitimate and acceptable to the international community. This manipulation of language misleads the international community because it provides a legal cover that obscures the fact that the act constitutes an international crime, thus shifting public opinion from viewing it as a necessary or understandable response within the context of what Israel calls "national security." (المومني, 2023)

Israel does not use the term occupation in the Security Cabinet, but rather uses the term control (Btselem, 2011). This is a step taken by Israeli legal analysts with the aim of evading international legal responsibilities towards Palestinian civilians. This distinction has a major impact on international humanitarian law because the word occupation obliges Israel, according to the Geneva Conventions, to provide services and bear full responsibility for harm to civilians, which opens the door to international accountability and prosecution before the International Criminal Court (Amouri, 2025).

Does Israel really occupy the Gaza Strip? Israel previously claimed that it withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005 when it withdrew its army and Israeli civilians from the Gaza Strip (assembly, 2022). According to international law and the legal definition of occupation, Israel ended its occupation of the Gaza Strip. According to many international institutions such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC, 2024), the General Assembly (Assembly, 2021), and Amnesty

International (International, 2017), Israel occupied the Gaza Strip since 1967, but Israel disengaged from the Strip. There is no actual control after the disengagement and the military presence from the Strip. However, Israel maintained control over the Gaza Strip in other ways with the help of technology, as Israel claims. It is important to know what the status of the Israeli occupation is from a legal standpoint because this determines the legal obligations that Israel owes towards the Gaza Strip. The United States emphasized these obligations due to concerns that Israel might commit war crimes in the Strip (Baker, 2023), or cause famine (Dannenbaum, 2023), or deny humanitarian aid (Marsi et al., 2025).

According to Article 42 of the Fourth Hague Convention (ICRC, 1899):

> **"Territory is considered occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army".**
>
> **"The occupation applies only to the territory where such authority is established, and in a position to assert itself".**

Israel is not a party to this convention (ICRC, 1907), but this does not absolve it of its obligations under it, as this convention is considered customary international law (ICJ, 2004). Therefore, Israel is bound by it. Although the military occupation ended in 2005, legal experts today believe that occupation is not necessarily limited to military action (ICRC, 2012). Israel maintains effective control over the Gaza Strip in many areas, including airspace, territorial waters, land and border crossings, infrastructure development, water and electricity supply, and government functions such as the Palestinian Civil Registry. This control extends to other forms of force, including military incursions and rocket fire (Wilde, 2022).

Although Israel does not directly manage the border between Egypt and Gaza, it exercises complete control over it (Bashi, 2007).Israel monitors passenger lists entering and leaving Gaza, determines who is allowed to cross, oversees operations, and can withhold approval or cooperation to keep the crossing open (Kmiotek et al., 2023).

Israel consistently justifies its crimes by using the media. When it feels it cannot control all media outlets, it resorts to alternative methods. For example, Israel banned media outlets like Al Jazeera and closed its office in Ramallah in the West Bank for 45 days (Saleh, 2024), after the occupation

army stormed the building and ordered its evacuation. In Gaza, unable to control the media or close journalists' offices, Israel resorted to killing journalists. The number of journalists killed by Israel in Gaza has reached more than 260 since October 7th (United Nation, 2025). Israel has also arrested 54 journalists in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, subjecting them to torture and detention (CPJ, 2024).

3.4 Media and social media Framing Hasbara

Media and social media play an important role in managing narratives, as Israeli discourse no longer relies on traditional diplomacy or official tools, but has expanded to include Western media and digital platforms as a result of their powerful effectiveness. Therefore, this section aims to analyze the mechanisms of content and emotion manipulation through different media and the impact of this on the marginalization of the Palestinian narrative.

When we talk about media and social media in Israel, 99% of Israeli propaganda is directed towards the West (Communications, 2023) It is therefore clear that Western media outlets were influenced by the Israeli narrative. During the genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, Western media faced widespread criticism for failing to report on the Gaza crisis accurately and with genuine impartiality, due to their bias towards the Israeli narrative at the expense of the Palestinian one, especially when relying on official reports from the Israeli side without conducting the necessary fact-checking investigations (Khamis, 2024).

Israel derives its popularity from the Western world in particular more than the Arab world, by describing itself as belonging to them and resembling them more in culture and civilization and it considers itself part of the European (Europe, 2010), However, studies now show that public support for Israel is at its lowest point, and that individuals in Europe and the United States sympathize more with Palestine than with Israel for the first time since 1998 (Henley, 2025). In the last year, we saw the recognition of the State of Palestine from the UK, France, Canada, Australia, Portugal, Belgium, San Marino, Andorra, Malta and Luxembourg (WAFA, 2025) . All of this came as a result of popular pressure on governments (Choi & Kent, 2025).

When Israel finds itself in this position, it looks for ways to rally Western support for it. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with a number of pro-Israel influencers last month (Arab, 2025) and paid $7,000 for each social media post on behalf of Israel (Cleveland, 2025). Records submitted to the Justice Department show that Israel hired a company called Partner LLC whose job is to help promote cultural exchange between the United States and Israel. Contracts show that the amount reached $900,000 to cover the influencers' fees (BARSHAD, 2025).

Hasbara can be likened to a political communication system used by Israel, especially in armed conflicts, to manage global public opinion regarding Israeli narratives. Hasbara does not fall under the category of traditional public diplomacy but rather intersects significantly with propaganda by employing Israeli discourse that serves Israeli security and image. This aims to frame Israel's violations of international law and international humanitarian law as defensive measures or security necessities to protect Israel's security. Hasbara relies on multiple mechanisms, including reframing discourse, selectively using legal concepts, and intensifying its digital and media presence, particularly through the use of social media algorithms. This creates a kind of legal and cognitive ambiguity for the viewer, affecting their understanding of international law and weakening international accountability for Israel. Within this framework, Israel plays a significant role in the media, especially in the West, by aligning its discourse with prevailing concepts such as security. The fight against terrorism redistributes roles in public discourse by transforming the victim (the Palestinian) into the accused or the terrorist, thus allowing Israel to re-legitimize its actions within a politically and morally acceptable narrative (Personal interview, Professor of International Relations, An-Najah National University, Nablus, 24 January 2026)

Part of this strategy used by Israel involves negatively portraying Muslims to promote Israeli propaganda, which in turn works to delegitimize pro-Palestinian protests and replace them with pro-terrorism protests (Shehadi, 2024).

Even when Israel distributes aid in the Gaza Strip, which it does not necessarily do, the Israeli Ministry of Diaspora Affairs has paid American and Israeli social media influencers to film humanitarian aid distribution sites in the Gaza Strip (Staff, 2025). At the same time, more than 1,000 people have been killed since May, and aid seekers have been shot directly (Shehada, 2025).These influencers entered the coastal areas near the Gaza Strip despite many people being

barred from entering or leaving the Strip. Israel also banned foreign journalists from entering and demanded they reveal the truth about the distribution of humanitarian aid (xaviaer, 2025).

Israel's main argument for its narrative is its existence as a small state surrounded by enemies in the Middle East who are constantly trying to overthrow it, and its heavy reliance on aid and military support from the United States (Mahajan, 2023), but why? Why does Israel have more enemies in the Middle East than relatives or neighbors? Israel was founded in 1948 on land that was part of the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate for Palestine. Thousands were displaced from Palestine because of the establishment of the State of Israel, which caused the Nakba. Israel also occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which caused the Naksa, as I mentioned earlier. So, does Israel claim that it has more enemies because of anti-Semitism, as it claims, or was it the reason for the displacement of thousands of Palestinians in the Nakba and made them lose their homes and all their possessions?

This argument has helped Israel, which considers itself in constant conflict with neighboring countries it deems enemies, to make this a pivotal factor in shaping its global security system. After Israel's independence in 1948, it found itself in a turbulent regional environment surrounded by Arab states.In various military conflicts such as the wars of 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973, Israel grasped the idea that it was always under constant threat, and as a result, Israel developed its military capabilities to confront existential threats from neighboring countries, regional militias, or even Iran. (Tomé, 2025). This allowed Israel to acquire a nuclear reactor (Ican, 2025), which it sees as necessary to deter any potential danger, given its constant state of vulnerability. Conversely, Iran cannot possess such a nuclear reactor because it is considered a threat to the democratic world, represented by Israel and the United States. Every time Iran attempts to acquire this nuclear reactor, the United States launches a war against Iran to prevent it, fearing its use against them (House, 2025). Has the threat become solely from an Islamic state like Iran because it is Muslim, while other countries, like Israel, are not? She killed and displaced thousands of Palestinians from their homes and carried out a war of extermination in Gaza. There is no danger from her side because she protects human rights and cares about democracy in the Middle East?

If we look at the genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, Israel used Hasbara extensively through the media to justify its crimes in the Gaza Strip. For example, Israel showed a 47-minute film entitled “October 7:Bearing witness to the mascara” (IMDb, 2025) which was produced by the IDF Spokesperson’s Unit. The film shows footage of what Hamas did on October 7, including scenes of torture and mutilation (Krupnick, 2023). This particular film was shown to leaders and international media to arouse sympathy and justify the military actions in the Gaza Strip. In addition, Israel launched the Israeli kidnapping campaign to humanize the Israeli victims and gain international support (Bedrosian, 2023).

Israel employs narrative simplification and evasion of knowledge, which simplifies its communication approach to binary narratives, making it difficult for the international community to understand the true nature of the conflict. For example, Israel portrays Palestinians as a homogeneous group of aggressors and Israelis as a unified group of victims, reducing the multifaceted nature of the conflict to a simplistic binary one (Massad, 2025).

A clear example we can use to expose the truth behind Israeli lies is the claim that Hamas beheaded Israeli infants in the October 7th attack (Forey, 2024). This claim was disseminated by Israelis and world leaders, as I mentioned earlier. Later, the truth was revealed: this news was false and baseless. Despite this, the continued circulation of this story and similar ones distorts the image of Palestinians, portraying them as barbaric and inhumane (Berlinger, 2023).

Israel relies on a strategy of spreading myths to portray Palestinians as aggressors while evading its responsibility. In other words, Israel blames Hamas and shows the world that Hamas was responsible for the killing of all innocent people in the October 7th war. In October 2023, the Israeli Defense Forces launched a channel on the Telegram application entitled "72 Virgins - Uncensored".(Now, 2024) which circulated anti-Islamic images and graphic content designed to dehumanize Palestinians, portraying them as monsters intent solely on killing Jews (STAFF, 2024). Israel has also used the term "Bollywood propaganda" to accuse Palestinians of fabricating their suffering for propaganda purposes. For example, an Israeli diplomat named Ofir Gendelman used a clip from a Lebanese film as evidence that Israel is always the victim.(BULLENS, 2023).

Israel manipulates public opinion, where emotions sometimes overshadow facts and accurate information. Through media and digital campaigns and documentaries, Israel plays on emotions and portrays itself as a victim at the expense of accuracy and analysis, with the aim of controlling public opinion and presenting itself in a certain image. Israel attempted this through Netanyahu's meeting with Elon Musk, hoping to promote Israeli propaganda and the Israeli narrative on social media and gain international support through diplomatic methods (Toh & Izso, 2023).

In an attempt to connect with public opinion and convince them of their narrative, Israel launched the Act-IL campaign with the aim of communicating with global public opinion. The campaign is based in Britain and highlights the Israeli children imprisoned by Hamas. Israel used a comparison between the Israeli children and the missing British girl, Madeleine McCann. (Shamir, 2015). Through these strategies, Israel focuses on appealing to people's emotions and engaging directly with international figures who have political influence over them.

Through the narrative of the chosen nation and the sole victim, Israel diminishes the Palestinians and ignores their suffering. For example, Israeli officials described the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip as "children of darkness" in the October 7th attack, contradicting the Israeli narrative that portrays Israelis as children of light, reflecting Israel's perception of itself as a morally superior victim (Sheth, 2023).

Israel continues to portray itself as special and deserving of attention, claiming that God promised it the land of Palestine thousands of years ago and that only Jews have the right to self-determination (Questions, 2022). In 2018, Israel passed the Nation-State Law for the Jewish People, which further marginalized the rights of Palestinian citizens and reinforced Israel's narrative as a chosen nation (הכנסת, 2018BASIC-LAW: ISRAEL - THE NATION STATE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE).

Israel uses inhuman language to dehumanize Palestinians and suppress the Palestinian point of view. Israeli officials have likened Palestinians to pests that must be eradicated, using terms like "cockroaches" and "microbes." (Baroud, 2023) Through animal metaphors and comparisons to animals, Israel describes Palestinians. Menachem Begin described Palestinians as "walking beasts"

in a speech he delivered in the Knesset (Aktas, 2023). It's worth noting that Nazi propaganda historically portrayed Jews as subhuman, using animalistic language (Fatima, 2023).

In the South Africa v. Israel case, the Supreme Court relied on statements by Israeli officials as evidence of degrading and inhumane rhetoric against Palestinians. In summary, the court cited statements made by Defense Minister Yoav Gallant on October 9, 2023, President Isaac Herzog on October 12, and Minister Yisrael Katz on October 13, which reflect their criminal intent to commit genocide in the Gaza Strip (ICJ, 2024).

Israel has focused primarily on protecting its narrative by labeling anyone who criticizes its crimes in the Gaza Strip as anti-Semitic in order to do so (Well, 2025). Israel has described human rights groups such as Amnesty International (Dallison & Wilke, 2023), Human Rights Watch (Committee, 2021), and even the United Nations as antisemitic, according to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition. Through this strategy, Israel seeks to delegitimize criticism by presenting it as stemming from hatred of the Jewish people (Alioglu, 2025).

Despite the global solidarity with the Palestinian cause, Israel has portrayed this solidarity as a sectarian Islamic issue. For example, the Israeli Foreign Minister used social media to target countries that have recognized Palestine in recent years, and Israel has published videos linking cultural figures in countries such as Spain, Norway, and Ireland to Hamas in an attempt to undermine their support (Staff, 2025).

Social media platforms suppress pro-Palestinian discourse under the guise of content moderation, using methods that restrict freedom of expression and hinder global awareness of the reality of what is happening in Palestine, which in turn reduces users' ability to share narratives and document human rights violations (العربي الجديد, 2023). One of the most common strategies is deleting any post that mentions Palestine or expresses support for the Palestinian cause. Usually, when such posts are deleted, there is no clear reason; the platforms simply state that it violates their guidelines (Watch, 2023).

The platforms also alter their algorithms to flag or prioritize Palestinian content, reducing its visibility to the outside world and restricting pro-Palestinian profiles, thus suppressing freedom of expression and the ability of activists to document what is happening in Palestine (Shankar et al., 2023). In contrast, Israeli propaganda campaigns, especially during the war on the Gaza Strip, always have a better reach (Economist, 2023).

Hasbara goes beyond public diplomacy and is used by Israel as a form of propaganda, especially in armed conflicts. Its goal is not dialogue but rather to legitimize systematic Israeli violence against Palestinians,Through digital platforms, Israel relies heavily on hasbara. It uses influencers and social media to marginalize Palestinians and incite hatred against them, portraying them as the aggressors (Amiaz,2026, Personal interview. Israeli freelance journalist documenting occupation-related practices. Online interview).

According to Ido, the majority of Israeli society is strongly influence of the Israeli narrative that Palestinians are the aggressors, and they are often framed as being under threat from these Palestinians. This stems largely from the influence of social media and Israeli media outlets.

3.5 The washing strategies and the Humanitarian branding

Israel uses several methods to justify its violations in Palestine or in any country with which it wages war. Among these methods are washing strategies, including pinkwashing, whitewashing, and greenwashing, which I will discuss in detail in this section. In my view, these methods are the most dangerous of all because they attract significant support and sympathy for Israel and portray Palestinians as the party that does not deserve to live, while the Israeli side is the better and more deserving party.

3.5.1 Pinkwashing

The term "pinkwash" is divided into two parts: "pink" and "washing." It refers to the strategic use of LGBTQ+ rights to present a comprehensive and inclusive image, often used to deflect criticism or boost reputation without a genuine commitment to supporting the LGBTQ+

community (Listek, 2023).The term "pinkwashing" was first coined by academic and writer Sarah Schulman to refer to Israel's strategy of using LGBTQ+ rights to divert attention from and justify its violent treatment of Palestinians. Israel also uses Pinkwashing as a form of propaganda (Schulman, 2020).

Israel used the term "pinkwashing" in the aftermath of the Second Intifada (BDS, 2024), After Israel expanded its settlement activity in the West Bank, it found itself subject to international accountability for its violations against the Palestinians (BTselem, 2017). In response, Israel launched the "Brand Israel" campaign in 2006 to improve its image globally (Popper, 2005). Through this campaign, it sought to transform Israel's image from that of a militaristic state associated with violence and human rights abuses to that of a modern, relevant state by attracting tourism, economic investment, and political support under the banner of enhancing security and self-defense, and by promoting Israel as the only democracy in the Middle East (White, 2010). The Israeli brand campaign gradually and strategically began to utilize state-sponsored LGBTQ+ rights (guide, n,d), promoting Tel Aviv as a "gay Mecca," (Peratis, 2006) offering sponsored trips, and inviting LGBTQ+ celebrities in exchange for positive publicity for Israel. Efforts were also made to include Israeli soldiers to encourage them to be more open to the LGBTQ+ community.

Pride Month is the month when LGBTQ+ people around the world celebrate their freedom of sexual orientation. In Israel, thousands of people march in Pride Week in June, and tourists come from all over the world to watch and participate (Schwartz, 2015). But what about the Palestinians living in Israel? A gay Palestinian citizen writes that Pride Week is anything but a celebration of freedom. The truth is that Israeli LGBTQ+ pride is a reminder of Israel's questionable human rights record and its mistreatment of Palestinians, both within Israel and in the territories it has illegally occupied since 1967 (Khoury, 2017).

Israeli public diplomacy portrays Tel Aviv as the gay capital of the Middle East, while simultaneously witnessing the ethnic cleansing of the village of Sheikh Munis, whose inhabitants were displaced in 1948 (الفلسطينيه, n.d). The village's lands now fall within the boundaries of Tel Aviv University and Jaffa, and it's also part of the Jewish town of Ramat Aviv (عواودة, 2012). Israel conveniently omits the fact that these celebrations are taking place on the site of a depopulated

Palestinian village, instead claiming it was once a desert and that Tel Aviv was built on Israeli land.

Israel convinced the foreign public, specifically the West, of Pride Month and what Israel is doing in Tel Aviv through digital diplomacy and the offers that Israel presented to these people only to come from all over the world and participate in Pride Month. For example, Israel invested about $88 million to launch an international marketing campaign to name Tel Aviv the international destination for gay holidays (Sadeh, 2010). The campaign focuses on Western countries, including England and Germany, due to the presence of a large gay community there. The campaign includes creating pages on Facebook and the X website to promote Tel Aviv as the new capital of gays. The website GayTlv was created The campaign begins with a phrase that encapsulates its essence:

> **"Rising from the golden shores of the Mediterranean, stands one of the most intriguing and exciting new gay capitals of the world." (Steiner, 2016)**

The Israeli Ministry of Tourism and the Tel Aviv Municipality have also invested approximately $44 million in the VisitTLV project to promote Tel Aviv from all walks of life and to enjoy the city, in an attempt by the Israeli government to demonstrate the freedoms and rights of small and diverse groups (Sadeh, 2010).

However Same-sex marriage and civil marriage remain prohibited in Israel due to the presence of the extreme right wing in the Israeli government (B'nefesh,n.d). Even so, Israel claims to welcome same-sex couples from abroad. The Israeli Knesset voted against a 2012 bill that would have legalized same-sex marriage, with the bill failing by 11 votes (HARKOV, 2012). This means the majority in the government remains opposed to such legislation. To date, no other bill has been considered, and this particular bill has not been reintroduced to the Knesset, especially given the current, more right-wing government.

Marriage in Israel is conducted exclusively through religious institutions (Aharon, n.d). Therefore, Jewish couples must marry through rabbis, while other religions, such as Islam and Druze, marry according to their own laws (Cortellessa, 2015). Consequently, Israel prohibits marriage between

individuals of different faiths under Israeli law, as marriage in Israel is solely performed by religious institutions. If Israel continues to prohibit civil marriage between men and women, whether of the same or different religions, is it conceivable that Israel would allow same-sex marriage? In a state like Israel, founded on Judaism, which considers Jews superior to any other group and discriminates against non-Jews (הכנסת, 2018 BASIC-LAW: ISRAEL - THE NATION STATE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE), this is highly unlikely, especially given that Judaism forbids same-sex relationships and even relationships outside of marriage, also with the very right government they have now in Israel that committees and support all the violence that is happening in the West Bank and Gaza this is impossible (Fiennes, 2025).

Certainly, Palestinians cannot reach Tel Aviv whenever they want. They need an entry permit to Israel, which is a somewhat complex security procedure that requires procedures and can only be obtained by those who have a reason to enter Israel, such as going for medical reasons or to visit lands behind the annexation and apartheid wall. Even gay Palestinians cannot visit Tel Aviv to participate in the Pride Month that Israel holds annually (Btselem, 2017).

In the Gaza Strip, the Israeli government has always claimed that homosexuals in Gaza are being killed or thrown from buildings to their deaths (Nation, 2022). Thus, Israel portrays itself as the party protecting homosexuals. But how can Israel protect homosexuals in the Gaza Strip after the genocidal war it waged? Israel killed approximately 70,000 people in the Gaza Strip, including children, youth, and women, among them at least 20,000 children (Ali et al., 2025). According to recent studies, approximately 9% of young people in the world are LGBTQ+ (Moreau, 2023). Therefore, Israel may have killed approximately 4,500 homosexuals out of 50,000 adult men and women. Did Israel differentiate between heterosexuals and homosexuals when it killed civilians in the Gaza Strip?

On the other hand, in order to portray itself as a supporter of LGBT rights, one of the occupation soldiers appeared holding the Israeli flag and the Pride flag together, and the picture was published on the official State of Israel’s Instagram account only about one month after the start of the war of extermination, and the post was written “The first Pride flag raised in Gaza.” At the time when the soldier was taking the picture, the war of extermination was still ongoing, and civilians in Gaza,

including LGBT people, were being bombed and killed (Israel, 2023). So how can Israel protect Palestinian LGBT people?

Why is pinkwashing dangerous? Although it may reflect Israel's protection of Queer people in Israel, the result of pinkwashing is the devaluation of Queer people and their long history of struggle for their rights in the world. Queer people have faced many difficulties in order to obtain their rights in the world (Miller, 2023), but Israel uses them as a political game, which creates artificial dichotomies for the United Nations and institutions: either friendly to LGBT people or hostile to them. Governments assume that what LGBT people have in common is only sexuality, ignoring sexual and ethnic diversity and social and economic factors (Bhattacharya, 2025). In the Israeli-Palestinian case, Israel ignores the existence of Palestinian LGBT people living under its occupation and oppression and simply says that Palestinian LGBT people can flee to Tel Aviv to protect themselves from their homophobic societies. But where can a Palestinian LGBT person flee from the oppression of the Israeli occupation?

To understand the pinkwashing in the Palestinian-Israeli reality, I interviewed three gay Palestinians. Some had faced problems in Palestinian society and sought refuge in Israel, while others had encountered difficulties with the Palestinian police. Through these interviews, I understood that the gay community in Palestine is relatively large, but they don't dare to be seen openly for fear of society and the Palestinian government, even though homosexuality is not criminalized under Palestinian law, as I mentioned earlier.

These interviews addressed Israel's role in protecting gay Palestinians, but they also revealed Israel's colonial face through its exploitation of them. Furthermore, even among gay Palestinians who seek refuge in Israel, not all receive the same level of protection; each case is unique.

In my interview with a Palestinian girl who asked me not to mention her name, so I will use Fatima instead, in 2022, Fatima was subjected to domestic violence by her father, who discovered she was a lesbian. Fatima went to Beit Eil "בית אל" (Il, n.d), the Palestinian-Israeli liaison office. Palestinians go to this place to obtain Israeli approval for any transactions or permits they need.

The Israeli government transferred Fatima to Tel Aviv and placed her in a shelter for LGBTQ+ people. She told me that what the Israeli government did was wonderful and that she felt safer in Tel Aviv. About a year later, the Israeli occupation army stormed a number of Palestinian cities in the West Bank (News, 2026), including Jenin, Tulkarm, and Al-Far'a, and ordered the residents to evacuate their houses in the camps (Badarneh, 2025). That evening, I received a message from Fatima saying that the Israeli army had ordered her family of six members to evacuate their home. Fatima's family had no other home or shelter to go to, and they have not returned to their home to this day. When I spoke to Fatima, she told me that everything Israel does from the aid provided to LGBTQ Palestinians is a facade, intended to show the world that Israel protects minority rights. In reality, however, it continues to occupy Palestine and displace Palestinian residents from their homes, as it did to my family. It makes no distinction between LGBTQ Palestinians and non-LGBTQ Palestinians when it carries out displacement, killing, or human rights violations. When I asked Fatima why she refused to give her name, she simply told me, "They will revoke my residency permit if I say a single thing against Israel." (Anonymous, 2026)

In another interview with a 25-year-old Palestinian man, who declined to give his name (I will call him Khaled), I met him by phone on January 20, 2026.In January 2024, when the Palestinian-Israeli situation was at its most tense due to the genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, Khaled faced problems with his family after they discovered he was gay. Khaled sought help from an Israeli website, the name of which he refused to give me due to its strict confidentiality. However, according to what he described to me, it was a shelter in Tel Aviv for gay people, housing many Palestinians and even Israelis who were fleeing their families who did not accept homosexuality. Khaled went to Ramallah after his family discovered his sexual orientation, considering Ramallah to be the most open and accepting city for gay people in the West Bank. However, as Khaled described it, it is not New York or Paris in terms of gay acceptance. Homosexuality is still considered wrong in Palestinian society, and it is almost impossible to disclose one's sexual orientation in Palestine. After obtaining approval to apply for a permit to enter Israel, Khaled, with coordination between the Israeli army and The shelter, met with the Civil Administration in the city of Qalqilya (Eyal Crossing) to conduct an interview with the Israeli army. Khaled tells me, an hour after the interview, when the Israeli soldier was asking him about his sexual orientation, there was suspicion on the Israeli side, despite the existence of real threats from his father to kill him.

Khaled was describing to the soldier the extent of the danger to his life, but the soldier did not pay much attention to Khaled. And when Khaled asked the soldier why he did not believe that he needed protection! The soldier replied, "Look at your clothes; they're clearly designer brands." This was a clear indication that Khaled was financially secure and could live independently, away from his father. Despite Khaled's attempts to explain that money wouldn't eliminate the danger to his life, the soldier told him he could go and they would get back to him later.

Khaled now lives in the West Bank with only his mother after his parents separated. He told me that the Israeli army hasn't contacted him again and that the danger to his life still exists, but he feels safer because he's no longer living with his father. According to Khaled, age plays a significant role in whether or not one is protected by Israel. He told me that the Israeli soldier told him, "You're 25 years old, so you can travel to another country or live independently from your family." (Personal interview, anonymous Palestinian interviewee, January 20, 2026)

In a third online interview, another young man, now living in the United States, told me that in 2022, his father revealed his homosexuality through someone who had informed him. According to the young man, his family works for the Palestinian government (specifically in the military sector). When his father found out, he went to his brothers and relatives and told them. That night, the young man was arrested by members of the Palestinian intelligence service. According to him, the soldiers entered the house and arrested him in front of his family, meaning that his family was aware of the arrest. He was placed in a political prison because there were no charges against him and he had not committed any actual crime. He remained in prison for about seven days without being shown to a lawyer or being formally charged. According to him, he told me that he was tortured by the officers, subjected to insults, slander, and humiliation, and called a homosexual, among other degrading terms. After being presented to the public prosecutor, he told me that the charge against him was drug possession, since Palestinian law doesn't criminalize or punish homosexuality. After one of the young man's friends learned of this, he told me that another friend of his, a lawyer working for an international organization, immediately went to the Israeli security services and told them the story. The young man told me that a group of lawyers took on his case and managed to get him out of there. A car with a yellow license plate (Israeli plates) arrived and took him directly from the West Bank to Jerusalem, where he was placed in the home of a family

who took him in. After about six months, the Israeli authorities offered him the opportunity to travel to New York, which he accepted, and he now lives in America.

In this young man's story, Israel might appear as his savior from the suffering of the Palestinians. I understand that Palestinian society still suffers from homophobia, and that what he endured was extremely difficult. However, according to the young man's account, Israel told him that if he went to the United States, his Palestinian citizenship would likely be revoked upon obtaining American citizenship, and that his return to Palestine would then be virtually impossible.

The guy refused to give me further information about whether he still held his Palestinian passport or if it had been revoked, saying that providing more information would certainly put him in danger from the Israelis (Personal interview, 2026).

The three interviews I conducted confirm that the protection offered to LGBTQ Palestinians by Israel is merely part of an Israeli Hasbara strategy aimed to Pinkwashing the Occupation by exploiting the suffering of Palestinian minorities to construct an international narrative that Israel respects the rights of minorities and LGBTQ people. The protection provided by Israel is conditional and subject to political and security considerations. Although there are humanitarian and individual cases, Israel does not clearly differentiate between gay and straight Palestinians with regard to displacement, repression, or violation of basic human rights.

In other interviews, Palestinian LGBTQ+ individuals were subjected to blackmail and exploitation, whether through threats of residency revocation, intimidation, or by linking the protection granted to them to political interests. This reflects the inhumane nature of the protection Israel offers to Palestinian LGBTQ+ individuals; it is merely a propaganda tool. Israel also exploits the principle of "rescue," which it promotes, a concept completely at odds with the reality of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. The long-term goal is to sever Palestinians from their national identity and bind them to the occupation regime by restricting their freedoms and linking them to relinquishing their rights or remaining silent about the occupation's crimes.

In conclusion, we see that this "pinkwashing" is not only a form of Israeli propaganda aimed at polishing Israel's image globally, but also aims to transform Israeli violations into a marketable minority rights issue, regardless of the violations, killings of Palestinians, and settlement construction taking place in the Palestinian territories.

3.5.1 whitewashing

According to Merriam-Webster, Whitewashing is defined as lightening or covering, and this is what Whitewashing does; it is a form of discrimination against Black people, Native Americans, Asians, Latinos, and other non-white minorities (Helligar, 2024). Israel employs whitewashing tactics against Palestinians in various ways. According to Joseph Sport, Israeli supporters systematically whitewash Palestinian culture by ignoring, concealing, or denying its aspects, or by labeling it as Islamic and anti-Semitic, with the aim of diverting attention from the undemocratic or illiberal aspects of Palestinian society while obscuring the reality of Israel and its actions (Spoerl, 2014, 73)

In the genocidal war waged by Israel in the Gaza Strip, the truth about Israel's whitewashing of its actions was revealed, as the Strip witnessed unprecedented destruction, the killing of thousands of innocent Palestinians, and the complete destruction of its infrastructure. The Strip also witnessed an unprecedented famine.(Nation, 2025). This sparked criticism against Israel for violating international humanitarian law and the laws of war (AOAV, 2023). Israel responds to these accusations by claiming that it operates in accordance with the laws of war, including investigating suspected war crimes (Din, 2024).

In 2024, the Israeli army stated that it had opened dozens of investigations into incidents committed by occupation soldiers, in addition to hundreds of incidents referred to the General Staff for investigation. According to the Yesh Din organization, the credibility of the Israeli law enforcement mechanism is questionable and unpredictable. Given the various outcomes of this mechanism, the organization states that Israel rarely opens investigations against junior soldiers and completely refrains from investigating decision-makers at the highest command levels (Din, 2024).

Israel claims to always respect the laws of war and to hold its soldiers accountable for any violations committed during wartime. According to B'Tselem, Israel consistently states it will investigate any violations committed by its soldiers in Gaza or the West Bank, but in some cases, it ignores these violations and hands down very lenient sentences that are disproportionate to the crimes committed. For example, during Operation Cast Lead 1,400 Palestinians were killed, including some 300 children, and hundreds of other unarmed civilians, including more than 115 women and some 85 men aged over 50 (INTERNATIONAL, 2009) , Israel determined that legal standards were met in all but three cases. One of these cases involved an Israeli soldier convicted of the lawful use of firearms to kill two Palestinian women (a mother and her daughter), yet he received a sentence of only 45 days in prison! (B'Tselem, 2021). It should be noted that Israeli law stipulates a 20-year prison sentence for murder (Levush, 2019).

If we examine official Israeli discourse, which is essentially a tool of Israeli public diplomacy, we see that Israeli leaders and diplomats consistently reiterate the claim that the Israeli army is the most moral army in the world (Palestine, n.d). This claim is based on the legal mechanisms the army imposes on its soldiers in cases of crimes or violations of international law (IL, 2021). Even when Israel appeared before the International Court of Justice, the Israeli team repeatedly asserted that even if Israel committed war crimes, the Israeli system is capable of investigating them independently. Furthermore, the magazine +972 revealed that the Israeli intelligence agency monitors the activities of the International Criminal Court to identify incidents referred to the Office of the Prosecutor. Consequently, Israel can retroactively open investigations into these same cases and thus reject the ICC's jurisdiction based on the principle of complementarity (Abraham, 2024).

Over the past ten years, 600 incidents in Gaza have raised suspicions of violations of international law and the laws of war, yet only three have been investigated. This reflects the reality of the lack of enforcement of Israeli law and the intentions of senior leaders who were primarily responsible for targeting civilians and restricting humanitarian aid, without any of them being held accountable (Owen, 2024).

One of the most egregious violations committed by Israel against the Palestinians is apartheid and racial segregation. Israel consistently uses pretexts to justify this segregation to the world. In 2002, the Israeli cabinet decided to build the separation wall (Kittaneh, 2015), claiming that there had been numerous attacks by Palestinians against Israelis in recent years (ICRC, 2004). The stated purpose of the wall was to prevent Palestinians barred from entering Israel from doing so. However, the unstated purpose remains unclear and serves other objectives (BTselem, 2017).The foundations of the wall were laid to annex most of the settlements in the West Bank and seize a large part of Palestinian land. The wall covers about 10% of the area of the West Bank, preventing many Palestinian families from accessing their lands located between the Green Line and the wall (Abheis et al., 2012). These people need a permit from Israel to be able to enter their lands located behind the wall, where Israel restricts their movement in order to seize more land. About 85% of this wall is not located exactly on the Green Line, but rather falls within Palestinian lands in the West Bank (BTselem, 2017).

The issue of the wall and its legality was referred to the International Court of Justice in 2003 (ICJ, 2003). The International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion on the separation wall at the request of the General Assembly. The Court ruled that the wall is illegal because it confiscates large areas of Palestinian land and restricts Palestinians' access to their lands located behind the wall. The Court affirmed its jurisdiction and rejected Israeli claims questioning its authority. The Court held that this violation cannot be justified by military necessity, as Israel claims, because it violates peremptory norms of international law. Although the Court ordered a halt to construction, the dismantling of existing sections, and compensation for Palestinians, Israel has not complied with this decision, and the wall remains standing to this day, preventing Palestinians from accessing their lands (OCHA, 2022) (ICJ, 2024).

Israeli violations on Palestinian land are not limited to the areas along the wall but extend to Palestinian villages. In September 2024, occupation forces destroyed agricultural land in the village and uprooted approximately 200 trees, including 135 ancient olive trees.(Human Rights, 2025). The Israeli occupation forces built a 1500-meter-long iron wall separating the village from bypass road 60 (T, 2025), Which serves the settlers in the West Bank and is used as a tool for settlement expansion in the West Bank and the annexation of more Palestinian land.

The wall is 4.5 meters high and confiscates 30 dunams of village land, Israel claims to have built the wall for security reasons, pursuant to an Israeli military order (PIOPH, 2024). However, the wall's true purpose is to impose new realities on the ground, reinforcing Israeli control over Palestinian land and completely isolating the village's residents from their agricultural lands, which extend beyond the wall and cover an area of approximately 8,000 dunams (Human Rights, 2025).

3.5.3 Greenwashing

In general, greenwashing is a practice that involves pretending to be environmentally friendly in order to divert attention from criminal activity (Lindwall, 2023). In the Israeli case, greenwashing began decades ago. In 1948, when the State of Israel was established and more than 700,000 native Palestinians became refugees, Israeli claims began through rhetoric that "Israel made the desert bloom (Pappe, 2007, 21)." But how true is this claim?

This claim benefits Israel in two ways. First, it erases the fact that Israel expelled thousands of Palestinians from their land by showing that Palestine was a deserted and uninhabited land. Second, it reflects that Israel is a technologically advanced country that cares about the environment and can quickly turn the desert into a green land (Palestine, n.d).

Here are some facts about Palestine before 1948. Palestine is distinguished by its geographical location, as the entire northern half of Palestine enjoys a Mediterranean climate (الفلسطيني, n.d). Palestinians have cultivated the land for centuries, and by 1930 all the arable areas in Palestine were already cultivated, especially in areas such as Gaza, Jaffa, Hebron, Nablus, and others, which are heavily cultivated and famous for many varieties of citrus fruits, grapes, watermelons, and others (Kamel, 2015, 77).

What about now? Is Israel really environmentally friendly and trying as much as possible to preserve it, or is it practicing greenwashing to whitewash its image in front of the world? Israel has one of the largest carbon footprints in the world, ranking first at 10% and 20% respectively (Print, n.d), causing climate change. Israel also uses unsustainable agriculture, as it uses pesticides

on a large scale, which pollutes groundwater and soil, causing harm to animals, especially birds (Gisha, 2025).

In the West Bank, Israel has launched and continues to launch a massive and systematic campaign of tree destruction. To this day, Israel has uprooted hundreds of thousands of trees, and this attack on trees is often carried out by settlers (Staff, 2025).

According to the UN Rio Declaration, Israel is one of the top 20 arms exporters and importers in the world, reflecting Israel's reality and its role as a contributor to wars. The war industry causes 6-10% of air pollution and 10-30% of total environmental damage (Justice & Middle East, 2018). For example, during the 2014 war, Israel bombed Gaza's only power plant and ignited approximately two million liters of diesel fuel without cause, leading to severe air pollution (Watch, 2014).

Israel continues to promote itself as environmentally friendly, participating in environmental conferences to portray itself as concerned about the environment and the climate and factors affecting climate change. In its environmental discourse, it consistently emphasizes its environmental friendliness (نصار, 2021). However, Israel's practices that harm the environment and the Palestinians completely contradict its rhetoric. For example Israel is exploiting Palestinian lands, natural resources, oil, quarries, and mineral extraction in the Dead Sea, depleting Palestinian resources, especially since Palestinian communities depend on agricultural lands and nature for their livelihood, particularly in Bedouin communities (AL HAQ, 2021). Speaking of exploitation, 14 years of siege in the Gaza Strip, about 97% of Gaza's water is unfit for drinking due to the war (HRC, 2021), and more than 60% of families in Gaza are suffering from food insecurity (FSC, 2021).

In addition, apartheid contributes significantly to the impact on the environment and climate in Palestine. The settlements in the West Bank are illegal and do not have suitable waste treatment facilities. Untreated sewage is often discharged into Palestinian valleys and onto Palestinian agricultural lands (Hareuveni, 2009), leading to soil destruction and changes in its biological

composition, which promotes the spread of diseases and the extinction of Palestinian livestock and wildlife (Hamad, 2023).

Israel also designates Palestinian land as landfills, illegally transporting waste (Palestine, 2020), including hazardous waste (AL HAQ, 2016). There are approximately 15 Israeli waste disposal facilities in the West Bank, in addition to the dumping of solid waste by illegal settlers, which accounts for twice the amount of solid waste generated per capita by Palestinians (Palestine, 2020).

Even if Israel does not directly exploit Palestinian land to destroy the environment, it targets sites that are already harmful to the environment. For example, in May 2021, Israel targeted the main landfill in Gaza Strip, causing a major health crisis (AL HAQ, 2021). It also launched another attack on a chemical warehouse containing more than 50% of the agricultural supplies in the Gaza Strip, creating a chemical cloud that spread chemical waste into the environment, poisoning the population (AL HAQ, 2022).

3.6 Israel is a country of diversity and religions / Diversity and Religions

The idea of Hasbara and the Israeli narrative are based on the premise that Israel is a country of religious and cultural pluralism. This is what it promotes and uses as one of the most prominent tools to polish its image before the international community. Israel relies on this discourse to present itself as a democratic country for different religions and identities in an attempt to hide the legal and political structure based on discrimination between different groups. Therefore, this section aims to compare the Israeli discourse on diversity and equality among citizens in Israel with the actual practices on the ground to reveal the Israeli contradictions.

It is well known that Israel always markets itself as a country of diversity and religions (A, 2016), as it includes Arabs, Druze, Muslims, Christians, Jews, atheists, and LGBTQ+. Israel portrays everyone as living together in peace and love, and it portrays the participation of people of different religions in the Israeli occupation army in order to show that it is a country protected by everyone, whether Arab Muslims, Jews, or Christians (DefAviation, 2023).

Legally, as we mentioned earlier, Israel passed the Nation-State Law in 2018 (הכנסת, 2018BASIC-LAW: ISRAEL - THE NATION STATE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE), which stipulates that Jews are the foundation of the state and that the State of Israel is primarily a Jewish state, with Hebrew as the official language. This places Arabs and other religions in a subordinate position to Jews. Going back to 1950, the Israeli Knesset passed the Law of Return, which grants every Jew in the world the right to settle in Israel (B'Nefesh, 1950). This law came only two years after the establishment of the State of Israel, and Israel began receiving a huge number of Jews from all over the world. In 1948, the number of Jews was approximately 716,000, while in 1955, the number of Jews in Israel reached 1,590,500, even though the percentage of Jews in Israel before its liberation in 1947 was only 32%, while in 1948, the percentage of Jews reached 82% due to Israel's displacement of Palestinians from Palestinian lands (Rabinovich & Reinharz, 2025).Thus, ethnic cleansing became evident in Israel's replacement of indigenous Palestinians with Jews from around the world.

If we look at Israel’s Declaration of Independence, it clearly recognizes equality among all residents, including Arabs (الكنيست, n.d). But is this reflected in the Israeli Basic Laws, which are supposed to be a reflection of the constitution? Human rights advocates argue that dozens of these laws discriminate directly or indirectly against Arabs (The Kneest, n.d). For example, Israel grants Israeli citizenship to anyone who marries someone of another nationality, whether male or female. (مور, 2011) This is how Israel presents itself to the world as a democracy that grants citizenship through marriage. However, according to the Israeli Family Reunification Law, Israeli citizenship is granted to every citizen through marriage, with the exception of those from the West Bank or Gaza Strip, in addition to Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. The racist Israeli law also specifies who among the Palestinians cannot be granted Israeli citizenship: a) individuals with an identity number from the Palestinian Ministry of the Interior; b) foreigners (regardless of their nationality) who have previously lived or resided in the West Bank. As for residents of the Gaza Strip, it is impossible to grant family reunification to a spouse from Gaza except in humanitarian cases where the address is changed from Gaza to another location in the West Bank only, and not to Israel (سانت ايف, n.d).

In Israel, there is a land law that largely prevents Arabs from obtaining land or building on it. You always need a building permit, and if you are an Arab, you will most likely not get this permit to

build. According to the Israeli Land Law of 1960 (Kneest, 1960), 93% of Israel's land is under the ownership of the Development Authority or the Jewish National Fund. Therefore, its ownership cannot be transferred by sale or in any other possible way (HRW, 2008). However, there is an exception that allows institutions to transfer ownership of land among themselves, but the Jewish National Fund requires that the land it owns be allocated to **Jews** only (Kneest, 2003).

With this racist law, Israel did not stop at preventing Arabs from owning property in Israel, but used a racist majority law to prevent Arabs from living in Jewish areas under the pretext that they are unsuitable for social life in the community. In 2011, Israel passed the Admissions Committees Law, which grants admissions committees made up of people who select candidates to buy housing in residential units and plots of land for building (عدالة, 2011). These committees, which consist of five people, include a representative from the Jewish Agency or quasi-governmental bodies that publicly declare that they work clearly to serve the Jewish people. Although the law contains clauses of equality and non-discrimination, the law gives the committees the power to reject candidates (جمعية حقوق المواطن في اسرائيل, 2011). Thus, the law gives the committees the right to exclude entire groups, including Arabs. Although a petition was filed with the Israeli Supreme Court to repeal the law on the grounds that it was based on discrimination and increased apartheid in the country, this petition was rejected by a majority of the judges (عدالة, 2011).

Israel has ratified numerous international treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which it ratified in 1991 (United Nation, n.d); the Four Geneva Conventions of 1949; the Convention against Torture (also ratified in 1991) (ICRC, n.d); and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (also ratified in 1991) (United Nation, n.d). These treaties share a common prohibition against arbitrary arrest or administrative detention in all its forms. Israel's ratification of these conventions obligates it to refrain from arresting or detaining anyone without trial (B'Tselem, 2009). However, administrative detention is a key component of Israeli occupation policy. Israel uses this practice to detain Palestinian civilians without charge or trial. Detention orders typically range from one to six months and are frequently renewed. Israeli military and civilian courts acknowledge the use of torture to extract confessions from detainees. Approximately 71 Palestinians have died in Israeli prisons since 1967 (الضمير, 2014).

Is administrative detention in Israel legal? Administrative detention in Israel is governed by the Emergency Regulations of 1979, which apply when a state of emergency is declared by the Knesset. A state of emergency has been in effect in Israel since its establishment in 1948 (عدالة, 1992). This law applies to everyone, whether they are Israeli citizens or Palestinians in the Palestinian territories. Although this law is Israeli, Military Order No. 1651, Article 273, grants the military commander of the region the right to detain a person or persons for up to six months (المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الانسان, 2020).

Today in Israel, the number of Palestinians held in administrative detention has reached 3,474. The number of detained minors aged 16-18 is approximately 100 (Btselem, 2025).

This chapter sought to analyze the concept of Hasbara as an Israeli strategic colonial tool, demonstrating how Hasbara methods are systematically employed to justify Israeli violations against Palestinians. It also aimed to reframe Israel before the international community as a democratic state and a victim in a hostile environment. Through its conceptual framework, the chapter showed that Hasbara is not limited to defending the state but also manipulates language, facts, and concepts such as security and self-defense, leading to the deception of the media and global public opinion.

This chapter clarifies Israeli propaganda ("hasbara") and how it intersects with Israeli crimes under international law. It reveals that Israeli discourse has been, and remains, an integral part of Israeli policy, particularly during Israeli wars. In the genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, propaganda constituted a significant part of Israel's campaign, attempting to deny the occupation and justify its actions under the pretext of self-defense.

Israeli propaganda is not limited to diplomats or official politicians; it extends to various media outlets and social media platforms. These tools play a crucial role in producing an Israeli narrative that supports Israel and marginalizes the Palestinians. Israeli media outlets rely heavily on simplifying the conflict and reducing it to a false moral dichotomy, portraying Israel as defending itself against the Palestinians while simultaneously dehumanizing them and presenting them as a

security threat. Any publication or media outlet containing pro-Palestinian content is immediately labeled by Israel as anti-Semitic.

This chapter also focuses on various whitewashing mechanisms, such as pinkwashing, whitewashing, and greenwashing, as tools of Israeli hasbara aimed at improving Israel's moral image in the eyes of the world. Israel employs these policies to divert attention from its crimes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, serving its political objectives of land confiscation, settlement expansion, and apartheid against the Palestinians.

In conclusion, this chapter reveals that hasbara is not merely Israeli rhetoric intended to persuade foreign audiences, but rather a strategy. These tactics are carefully crafted from linguistic, legal, advertising, and cultural perspectives to help Israel escape punishment for its crimes against Palestinians, thereby weakening global awareness of the Palestinian cause. Understanding these Israeli mechanisms is crucial to exposing the contradiction between Israeli rhetoric and actual practices on the ground.

Chapter 4: The Palestinian Public Diplomacy

4.1 The Current Reality of Palestinian Public Diplomacy

The methods of public diplomacy and the approaches used by the Israeli government and non-governmental organizations have proven somewhat successful (Halper, 2024), given their impact on the Israeli economy through tourism and the global support that Israel received from the foreign public (Jewish Link Staff, 2025) in its narrative that reflected Israel's democracy and liberalism compared to neighboring countries and Arab countries (Hermann, 2026).

Events in Gaza have complicated Israel’s security-based national narrative by exposing contradictions between military strategy and humanitarian outcomes (SCHLANGER, 2024). With the killing of Palestinians in Gaza (Burke et al., 2025), According to UNICEF (2026), as of 3 February 2026, 71,803 Palestinians, including 44,500 children, have been killed in Gaza (UNICEF, 2026) on the other hand the support from different countries in the world for Palestinians increased. Several reports indicate that international demonstrations and protests everywhere in the world are supporting the Palestinian cause. All of this has had a positive impact on the Palestinian cause and reflected the awareness of the international public in support of the Palestinians and the understanding that these events have contributed to international criticism of Israeli policies and increased global support for the Palestinian population (Murillo & Paris, 2025).

However, if we look at the concept of public diplomacy as we mentioned earlier, it is the way in which countries can reach the foreign public and convince them of their narrative through various means (CPD, 2025). Therefore, the global support for Palestine in the past two years was not due to a real effort by Palestinian public diplomacy, but rather to the sympathy of the foreign public with the residents of the Gaza Strip and the Palestinians because of the brutality of the Israeli occupation and its killing of thousands of innocent Palestinians, children and women in the Gaza Strip and even in the West Bank, for the past 2 years of Genocide Israeldidn't just kill more than 70,000 Palestinians, indeed according to Save the Children, a Palestinian child is killed almost every hour in the Gaza Strip, where the number of children killed has exceeded 20,000. At least 21,000 children have suffered permanent disabilities, in addition to thousands of missing children presumed to be still buried under rubble.

Among them are 132,000 children under the age of five suffering from acute malnutrition (Sedghi & Graham, 2025). Famine was declared in the Gaza Strip on August 22, 2025, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza (Save the Children, 2025).

According to a United Nations report assessing the damage inflicted on the Gaza Strip, approximately 81% of buildings in the Gaza Strip were damaged, meaning that nearly 320,000 housing units were affected (The United Nation, 2025),According to a UNRWA report, approximately 78,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are living in UNRWA emergency shelters and surrounding areas. There are 83 displacement sites managed by UNRWA (UNRWA, 2026). The number of displaced people in the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the war is estimated at approximately 1.9 million, all of whom have had their homes destroyed and are now displaced or homeless (IRC, 2025).

On the other hand, Israel faced a legal case against it from South Africa, which filed a lawsuit before the International Court of Justice on December 29, 2023, accusing Israel of committing genocide in the Gaza Strip (ICJ, 2024). Fourteen other countries have expressed their intention to join the lawsuit in support of South Africa and the Palestinian cause (Unric, 2024).

The United Nations also criticizes Israeli actions in the Palestinian territories. At its 60th session, the Human Rights Council concluded that Israeli authorities and security forces had committed and continue to commit acts of genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Israel has caused the killing of members of the community and inflicted physical and mental harm on others. The Council recommended an end to the perpetration of genocide in the Gaza Strip (the United Nations, 2025).

If Israel had not committed the genocide in Gaza, would the world have sympathized with the Palestinians and stood with them, especially given the success of Israeli public diplomacy before the war on Gaza and the booming tourism in Israel? It's impossible to definitively say yes or no, but the Palestinian cause would likely not be as prominent on the international stage as it is today.

Despite growing global support for the Palestinian cause, governments continue to maintain diplomatic, economic, and military relations with Israel, despite accusations that Israel has committed genocide in the Gaza Strip and crimes against humanity. These countries maintain their relationships with Israel due to shared strategic interests, such as arms trade and military alliances, which often outweigh humanitarian considerations.

Unfortunately, global support for a cause does not necessarily translate into a change in a country's foreign policy. Consider governments in various countries that support the Palestinian people but also strongly support the Israeli state. For example, Germany has not recognized the Palestinian state yet (Reuters, 2025), despite numerous demonstrations and widespread public support for the Palestinian cause. Germany maintains good diplomatic relations with Israel (Solanki, 2025).

Ireland is also considered a major supporter of the Palestinian cause and recognizes Palestine, expressing full support for the Palestinian people (Frayer & Al-Kassab, 2024). However, Ireland is also complicit in the genocide committed in the Gaza Strip by facilitating the passage of American military aircraft carrying weapons. Weapons for Israel pass through Irish airports without inspection (Dolan, 2025).

The reasons behind the continued relations between various countries and Israel are political. Shared interests, including military alliances, trade relations, and other ties, all contribute to these countries' inability to sever relations with Israel.

Therefore, the Palestinian government must develop its public diplomacy, particularly since it doesn't rely heavily on public diplomacy and instead practices traditional diplomacy through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to communicate with other countries (وزارة الخارجية و المغتربين, n.d.). Although there is the Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy (PIPD, n.d) a Palestinian non-governmental organization, and several examples of influencers and pages on various social media platforms, there is no clear example of an organized effort by the Palestinian government to support Palestinian public diplomacy. This contrasts sharply with Israel, which supports numerous institutions and entities through the Hasbara, backed by the Israeli government.

The Palestinian government may coordinate with non-governmental organizations to collaborate in supporting these institutions (Shalabi, 2013), but this is insufficient for successful Palestinian public diplomacy, especially when compared to the Israeli situation. The goal is to learn from the Israeli experience, not to imitate it, because the Palestinian experience is based on the reality that Palestine is an occupied territory, unlike Israel, which is the occupying power and perpetrates violence against Palestinians.

A significant portion of the weakness in the Palestinian public diplomacy stems from internal shortcomings within the Palestinian Authority and the Fatah movement. Although numerous opinion polls, according to the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR, 2023), 80% of Palestinians expressed dissatisfaction with the PA's performance over the years, beginning with the Oslo Accords. These Palestinians believe the PA has failed to represent them and their national aspirations, which reveal a clear and marked decline in popular support for the Palestinian authority. This directly impacts the erosion of Palestinian legitimacy and hinders the development of a unified and credible Palestinian narrative, both nationally and internationally, to convey to the world.

Unfortunately, despite the presence of Palestinian actors in the world who may be influential (Humaid & Hawari, 2022), the clear absence of a unified strategy will not serve the Palestinian cause well, as Palestinian public diplomacy activities are distributed among several different entities, but there is no single entity overseeing the unification of the discourse or setting priorities.

On the other hand, Palestine faces many internal problems in political, economic and other areas that prevent the development of public diplomacy and the Palestinian government's lack of focus on it. On the one hand, there is the Israeli occupation of the land and on the other hand, Israel's withholding of Palestinian funds (حباس, 2025), which prevents the Palestinian government from developing and its ability to spend money on public diplomacy projects.

However, this is not the only factor affecting the development of a comprehensive and integrated national strategy. Is there mismanagement by the Palestinian Authority in allocating its annual budget? The Palestinian Authority's general budget is based on allocations across several sectors,

including security, education, and health, among others. Unfortunately, the security sector receives a disproportionately high percentage of the Authority's general budget, with allocations for the security sector reaching approximately 20%, which is higher than for health, education, and other sectors (Miftah, 2025). A portion of this budget could be allocated to raising awareness of the Palestinian narrative or to supporting initiatives that serve a unified Palestinian narrative in the field of public diplomacy.

In addition to these restrictions imposed on Palestinians, it is worth mentioning the Palestinian International Cooperation Agency (PICA) (Mofa Palestine, 2019), which is affiliated with the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. PICA plays a role in public and development diplomacy in Palestine. The agency aims to strengthen Palestinian public diplomacy and project soft power through international cooperation and humanitarian aid, although its activities remain somewhat limited. Similarly, the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs makes efforts to engage in diplomacy, but these efforts remain somewhat traditional and lack a strategic or institutional foundation. Therefore, the political, economic, and financial environment for Palestinians continues to hinder the development of an effective and comprehensive public diplomacy strategy (وزارة الخارجية و المغتربين, n.d).

4.2 Challenges Facing the Palestinian Public Diplomacy

The weakness of Palestinian public diplomacy stems largely from the challenges facing the Palestinian government and the Palestinians. The absence of a unified national strategy (مدوخ, 2023), the political division (Garber, 2022), the economic deficit of the Palestinian government (الجزيرة, 2025)،The weakness of Palestinian media compared to the media power of Israel and other countries (شلش, 2021) ,the allegations of corruption and lack of transparency within the Palestinian Authority (Aman, 2024), which could weaken Palestinian public diplomacy. All play a pivotal role in weakening Palestinian public diplomacy.

4.2.1 The Absence of a Unified National Strategy

The war waged by the Israeli occupation against the Palestinians is no longer confined to the geography of the land or the missiles Israel fires at Palestinians. Israel has now begun to fight

the Palestinian narrative, erasing posts related to Palestine and closing accounts supporting Palestine on social media. In recent months, we have witnessed the deletion of numerous posts concerning Gaza or anything related to Israeli violations against Palestinians, using pretexts such as "violent content," "hate speech," or "support for banned organizations." This hinders the accurate dissemination of the Palestinian narrative, just as Israel does in disseminating its own (شهاب, 2025).

According to the Arab Center for the Advancement of social media (7amleh), a report reveals clear violations during the war on the Gaza Strip by the Israeli government and technology companies that monitor digital content. There were approximately 5,100 instances of digital censorship on platforms such as Meta and X between October 7, 2023, and September 2024, aimed at removing pro-Palestinian content. The report also revealed the exploitation of some platforms for harmful advertising, such as ads inciting violence and forced displacement. Furthermore, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported YouTube campaigns with a budget of $7.1 million in the two weeks following October 7. In addition, the internet and wireless communications were cut off in the Gaza Strip (7amleh, 2024). All these factors impacted the dissemination of facts about the situation in Gaza and the crimes committed by Israel against Palestinians.

The digital space plays a crucial role in shaping global narratives, so much so that digital diplomacy, a branch of public diplomacy, primarily focuses on exerting influence through social media and digital platforms (JABBARLI, 2023). However, in the Palestinian context, the occupation imposes control over social media, whether in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, or even within Israel itself, targeting Arabs (Tawfic, 2025). Israel arrests anyone who posts anything related to the Palestinian cause on social media, even if they are Arab citizens of Israel or Palestinians in the West Bank (Monetta, 2023). All of this hinders the dissemination of a strategic narrative and deprives Palestinians of a clear strategy.

Israel bases its arrests on political opinion on laws; it does not arrest Palestinians without legal justification. Although Israeli law protects the right to freedom of expression, the situation changes when that expression involves criticizing Israel's policies toward Palestinians.

The 2018 Jewish Nation-State Law explicitly enshrines the racial supremacy of the Jewish people by stating that the Land of Israel is the historical homeland of the Jewish people, and that the State of Israel was established on this basis (הכנסת, 2018BASIC-LAW: ISRAEL - THE NATION STATE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE).

Israel also utilizes the 2016 Counter-Terrorism Law, which contains hundreds of clauses and provisions that provide Israeli authorities with tools to suppress Palestinian resistance, whether by Palestinian citizens in the West Bank or in the Palestinian territories (عدالة, 2016).

One manifestation of the absence of a Palestinian public diplomacy strategy is the lack of a clear central body responsible for formulating and managing public diplomacy. Even with the existence of the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Palestinian diplomatic missions (Wafa, n.d), Palestinian public diplomacy remains undefined by institutional action or a clear strategic framework. Furthermore, it lacks long-term plans to define objectives and target audiences.

The weak coordination between official institutions and other institutions, including civil society organizations (وزارة شؤون المرأة, 2024), leads to fragmented discourse and a lack of oversight of the institutional role in this discourse. The Palestinian government must focus on empowering institutions to conduct the evaluation and follow-up processes currently lacking in measuring the impact of Palestinian discourse on public opinion. Palestinian political discourse remains somewhat traditional, relying on conventional diplomatic tools with limited investment in digital diplomacy and direct engagement with civil society.

4.2.2 The Political Division

One of the threats to Palestinian public diplomacy is the Palestinian political division: the West Bank, led by Fatah and administered by the Palestinian Authority, and the Gaza Strip, which is governed by Hamas (شعبان, n.d), This led to a split in the Palestinian narrative, with the Palestinian Authority's discourse focusing on the liberation of the West Bank and emphasizing the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, while stressing the unwillingness to reclaim the lands occupied in the Nakba (وفا, 2020). The Palestinian Authority also emphasized diplomatic engagement and the implementation of international and multilateral agreements such

as the Oslo Accords, which include provisions regarding refugee compensation and return (الشوملي, n.d). In contrast, Hamas's narrative used to focus on liberating the land from the river to the sea (المركز الفلسطيني للاعلام, 2020) but this changed with the genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, and the movement began to declare its desire to liberate Palestine within the 1967 borders, which is consistent with the Palestinian Authority's narrative (Sbeih, 2024) However, the continued division between the two movements and the lack of a unified Palestinian narrative among the various Palestinian factions weakens Palestinian public diplomacy.

Consequently, the Palestinian narrative is divided internationally, leading the international public to ask: What are the Palestinians' demands? What are the boundaries they are resisting for? Is Palestine a secular or Islamic state? There is no single answer to these questions because the political division in Palestine is clear and difficult to unify, despite the efforts of many countries to achieve reconciliation and unify the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Most of these attempts have failed.

4.2.3 Economic Deficit of the Palestinian Government

The Palestinian economy faces increasing challenges from the Israeli occupation. On the one hand, settlements stifle the Palestinian economy (Israel Policy Forum, n.d), and on the other hand, Israel withholds Palestinian clearance revenues (Wafa, 2025). Israel plays a significant role in hindering the development and growth of the Palestinian economy, which in turn affects Palestine's ability to invest in its public diplomacy. All public diplomacy tools require financial resources to be effective.

The settlement project has had a significant negative impact on the Palestinian economy. Israel's control over water and land in the West Bank has contributed to reduced agricultural productivity and a decline in GDP (الجهاز المركزي للإحصاء الفلسطيني, 2014). Furthermore, Israel disposes of solid waste and sewage from settlement industrial zones in occupied Palestinian territory, exacerbating pollution (PCBS, 2010).

The restrictions imposed by Israel on access to mines and quarries in Area C hinder Palestinians' ability to extract gravel and stone. The Palestinian economy loses an estimated $575 million annually in the quarrying sector. It is also estimated that restrictions on access to Area C and on production activities there cost the Palestinian economy approximately $3.4 billion (World bank, 2013).

Israeli settlements now control about 58% of the West Bank (Peace Now, 2026). These settlements are located in Area C, which constitutes 60% of the West Bank and is rich in natural resources. Israeli settlement activity in Area C is concentrated in the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea region, where Israeli settlements control about 85% of the land (Btselem, 2017). This area is considered among the most fertile in the West Bank due to its abundant water resources, favorable climate, and ideal conditions for agriculture. It produces 40% of Israel's date exports. Meanwhile, Palestinians are prevented from living, building, or even grazing their livestock there, under pretexts such as the land being designated as state land, a military zone, or a nature reserve (Melon & Jarrar, 2018).

Moreover, Israel's revenue from exploiting Palestinian land in the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea region is estimated at around $130 million (BTselem, 2011), At the same time Palestinians are prohibited from using, developing, purchasing, or investing in this land.

As for clearance revenues, they are considered a major tool of pressure on the Palestinian economy. Clearance revenues are taxes that Israel collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, including customs duties, purchase taxes, and value-added tax on imports from Israel and other countries (قزمار, 2024). This is based on the 1994 Paris Protocol, which allows Israel to suspend or deduct funds as it sees fit (موسى, 2021).

Over the past two years, Israel has partially withheld Palestinian tax revenues for more than two years, and in recent months has completely withheld these funds. This has led to delays in salary payments to Palestinians, non-payment of dues to the private sector, and the cessation of essential services to citizens, resulting in a state of financial paralysis (الجزيرة, 2026).

Reports issued by the World Bank (The World Bank, 2023) and the International Monetary Fund indicate that this withholding of clearance revenues has escalated significantly in recent months. Clearance revenues constitute approximately 65-70% of the Palestinian Authority's total revenues, and withholding these funds has led to severe financial pressures resulting in interruptions and delays in public sector salaries and a contraction of basic services (IMF, 2023), (سلطة النقد الفلسطينية, 2023).

The direct impact of Israel's withholding of tax revenues is concentrated in a severe liquidity crisis and an inability to pay salaries. Since 2021, the Palestinian Authority has been paying its employees reduced salaries and has resorted to borrowing from local banks, leading to an accumulation of debt and threatening the banking sector (أبو عيد, 2025).

4.2.4 The Weakness of Palestinian Media

Palestinian media faces many challenges. If we want to talk about official media, since the beginning of the launch of private Palestinian media, licenses were given excessively to media institutions, which resulted in an over proliferation of media channels. Without real competencies (زماعره, 2024). As for official media, Palestine TV is considered the official channel of Palestine (تلفزيون فلسطين, n.d), which broadcasts the Palestinian narrative and other news, but the channel suffers from certain limitations. as it is not translated into any language other than Arabic. Consequently, its reach is limited to Arabic-speaking audiences around the world, unlike many channels that often broadcast news in English to reach the largest possible number of audiences.

The Israeli occupation has played a significant role in suppressing or targeting. Palestinian media. With the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000, the occupation began attempts to destroy media outlets, bombing the Voice of Palestine radio transmission towers in Ramallah (نزال, 2025). In 2002, the Israeli occupation targeted Palestine Radio and Television in Ramallah with airstrikes (Kuna, 2000), rendering them inoperable. In Gaza, during its four major military operations in 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2021, the Israeli occupation bombed the Al-Jalaa Tower, which houses several foreign media offices, including Al Jazeera and the agency's headquarters(نزال, 2025).

With the advancement of the internet and technology, audiences increasingly rely on news provided by individuals on social media, including influencers, rather than official media outlets. However, the Palestinian Authority provides limited or no direct support or pages disseminating the Palestinian narrative on social media. This makes individuals the primary source for conveying the Palestinian narrative globally. The impact of individuals became evident during the TikTok saga, when the platform became a major source for reporting on events in the Gaza Strip and raising global awareness about the situation there (CSIS, 2023). This prompted some countries, including the United States, to discuss banning the application (Jamali, 2025), a move described as contradicting the principles of freedom of opinion and expression. This underscores that the Palestinian narrative is disseminated through digital platforms like social media, rather than through organized institutional and governmental support.

4.3 the Palestinian Narrative: Conceptual Foundations and Discursive Structure

The Palestinian narrative did not emerge solely in 1948 and the displacement of Palestinians from their villages and cities. In the years preceding the Nakba, numerous events impacted the Palestinian cause, from the Balfour Declaration to the beginning of Jewish immigration and the attacks on Palestinians by Zionist militias (الموسوعة التفاعلية للقضية الفلسطينية, 2023). All these events shaped Palestinian identity and the narrative that has been passed down from ancient times to the present day.

The Israeli side, or parties not supportive of Palestine, consistently attempts to cast doubt on the reality of Palestinian history, claiming that these events are inaccurate and that Palestinians have no right to this land (Abdul, 2024). However, international support for the Palestinian cause has been multifaceted. International laws and rights have been enacted in support of the Palestinian cause, including the right to self-determination (Gros, 1979) which is considered a fundamental principle of international law. United Nations resolutions concerning the Palestinian issue, such as Resolution 194 on the right of return and the resolution demanding an end to the occupation of the 1967 territories, have also played a crucial role (the United Nations, 1978). Furthermore, the

political developments on the ground since the establishment of the Israeli occupation have all contributed significantly to shaping the Palestinian narrative.

The daily lives of Palestinians constitute their narrative. On the one hand, Israel exerts economic pressure on Palestinians, imposing economic, social, and political restrictions that make their lives increasingly difficult (OHCHR, 2025). The report reveals the impact of the occupation on various aspects of Palestinian life, such as education, health, culture, work, and even social relations. Through confronting these daily challenges, Palestinians demonstrate their resilience and ability to persevere on their land, reflecting the depth and impact of the Palestinian narrative on the international community. This narrative not only portrays the suffering of the Palestinian people but also their methods of preserving Palestinian identity despite the Israeli occupation and the difficult circumstances.

The Palestinian narrative encompasses these aspects, focusing on the language of international law and the realities on the ground (Erakat, 2019). It portrays the Palestinian people as resilient and steadfast on their land. Despite facing daily occupations, they remain on their land. Even Palestinians living outside Palestine contribute to conveying this narrative by sharing it with people abroad, especially with the development of social media and digital platforms, which have facilitated faster and easier dissemination.

There is a critical need to organize the Palestinian narrative across official and unofficial institutions to strengthen it and make it more compelling. The current Palestinian narrative lacks coherence and a unified strategy, which limits its effectiveness in influencing international public opinion. By organizing a more cohesive and systematic narrative, the Palestinian story can become a clearer account reflecting daily resilience and the legal, social, and cultural dimensions of the occupation. This will increase global understanding and support, leading to genuine advocacy for the Palestinian cause on the international stage.

4.4 Building an Effective Palestinian Public Diplomacy Strategy

Building an effective Palestinian public diplomacy strategy is essential, especially given the escalating conflict between the Palestinian and Israeli narratives and the global shift towards soft power to influence public opinion and decision-making. This cannot be achieved without moving from scattered individual efforts to institutional action based on a clear national vision and long-term strategic planning.

Institutional establishment is considered one of the most important pillars of successful public diplomacy. In the Palestinian context, public diplomacy is characterized by a kind of fragmentation among official bodies, with a difference in approach between institutions. This affects the coherence of the Palestinian narrative and the effectiveness of diplomatic efforts. The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs plays a role in coordinating between diplomatic missions and official media outlets, but the difference in diplomatic practices in official institutions indicates challenges in achieving long-term goals in public diplomacy.

4.4.1 International Impact Through Objectives and Audience

To build effective public diplomacy, the strategic goals that Palestine seeks to achieve at the international level must be clarified. These goals include presenting the Palestinian cause clearly and improving its image, raising awareness of the Palestinian cause, and building Palestinian public diplomacy on the foundations of the Palestinian cause, its history, rights, facts, and why the world should stand with the Palestinian cause. Finally, the goal of Palestinian public diplomacy should be to influence public opinion and decision-makers regarding Israeli occupation policies.

To achieve these goals, the target audience must be precisely identified. The discourse directed at political decision-makers differs from the discourse directed at the media and public opinion. Consideration must be given to the cultures, politics, and societies of the people being addressed. For example, as I mentioned earlier, Israel's discourse is directed at everyone, including the LGBTQ+ community, even though the Israeli government does not approve of same-sex marriage and they are persecuted in Judaism. However, in order to succeed in its Hasbara (public relations

campaign), Israel has directed its discourse to them, addressing them as if they were an integral part of Israeli society. In my view, the Palestinian government should direct its discourse to the LGBTQ+ community. Her narrative is for everyone, regardless of religion, gender, race, or color, without compromising the prominence of the Palestinian cause and focusing on the Israeli public because it is the primary factor influencing the Israeli government and pressuring it to change its policies towards the Palestinians.

4.4.2 Public Discourse Through International Law and Palestinian History

International law is considered one of the most important foundations supporting the Palestinian narrative in public diplomacy. It provides a shared legal and ethical language among states and the international community. Framing the Palestinian issue within the framework of international humanitarian law, human rights, and international resolutions, including those of the Security Council and the General Assembly, focuses the discourse on the legal dimensions of the Israeli occupation, such as settlement construction, forced displacement, apartheid, and the use of force against civilians. Through this discourse, the Palestinian issue is transformed from a political or ethnic conflict, as Israel attempts to portray it in its narrative, into a legal discourse that emphasizes the systematic violations of binding international standards.

Integrating the historical and contemporary aspects of the Palestinian struggle within a legal framework strengthens the Palestinian narrative. The concept of resistance, enshrined in international law as a fundamental part of self-determination in its various forms, and presenting it based on its essential elements within its legal and historical context, refutes the portrayal of Palestinian actions as illegitimate or terrorist, which is how Israel presents them.

The Palestinian discourse exhibits a fragmentation between political and media communication, which undermines its credibility. Before the international community, coherence between political and media channels, along with a balanced legal argument, enhances the clarity and professionalism of the narrative and improves its resilience against other narratives based on denial, distortion, and lies.

Finally, translating complex legal concepts into accessible language strengthens public engagement with the issue, highlights the resilience and experiences of Palestinian communities, and focuses on their achievements even under occupation. This helps shape perceptions, reveals the multifaceted nature of Palestinian society, and shifts its status from victim to survivor.

4.4.3 Investing in Digital Media and Modern Communication Tools

Digital diplomacy has emerged as a branch of modern public diplomacy, particularly in contexts where actors, both governmental and non-governmental, seek to reach global audiences outside of traditional or formal diplomacy. In the Palestinian case, the Palestinian cause has been able to disseminate political discourse, the Palestinian issue, and human rights concerns in Palestine through digital platforms and social media, unlike traditional diplomacy, which is conducted through embassies and formally between states.

The nature of digital content plays a pivotal role in the clarity and reception of political discourse. Content that integrates political, human rights, and cultural dimensions helps to build a clearer image of society, which in turn influences international engagement and perceptions.

Using multilingual content broadens the target audience and unifies the message between official spokespeople and media outlets, resulting in a more credible discourse. Conversely, disparate narratives are weaker.

Journalists, academics, and civil society organizations also play a role in shaping how a state's narrative is received. In the Palestinian case, this involves highlighting the role of Palestinians in the diaspora in conveying the Palestinian political, cultural, and social narrative.

Engaging digital platforms through a unified narrative, diverse actors, and diaspora participation constitutes a sound approach to influence and action in public diplomacy. This interaction on digital platforms demonstrates that it is no longer the sole domain of state institutions but rather stems from an interconnected network of actors and communication practices.

Conclusion

This thesis sought to analyze the concept of public diplomacy in general and Israeli public diplomacy in particular, as an important tool in contemporary international relations. By focusing on Israeli public diplomacy, it revealed the emergence of Hasbara as an Israeli tool for managing narratives, polishing Israel's image globally, and covering up the grave violations committed by Israel against the Palestinian people. The study also aimed to deconstruct the mechanisms of public diplomacy and link them to soft power, media, and legal and humanitarian narratives, while highlighting the reality of Palestinian public diplomacy, the challenges it faces, and ways to develop it.

Through reviewing the theoretical and methodological framework of the research, the study examined the evolution of diplomacy from classical to modern, analyzing soft power and the role of communication and media in shaping international image and policies. The first chapter demonstrated that public diplomacy is not a complementary activity but has become a crucial strategic tool in the world of diplomacy, exerting a powerful influence on political decision-making.

This thesis examines the historical origins of Israeli public diplomacy (hasbara), highlighting its evolution from traditional propaganda to a comprehensive system encompassing governmental and non-governmental institutions, traditional and digital media, and the exploitation of digital platforms and artificial intelligence. It explores how Israel has successfully built effective institutions that utilize public diplomacy across various fields, capable of producing a coherent narrative and promoting it globally.

The thesis also discusses Israel's use of hasbara as a tool to cover up its violations against Palestinians by framing them within the context of international law. It analyzes the mechanisms used to conceal violations and re-present them globally in a way that serves the Israeli occupation. Through various whitewashing techniques, most notably "pinkwashing," Israel has exploited individual rights, such as LGBTQ+ rights, to improve its global image, portraying itself as the

savior of Palestinian LGBTQ+ individuals while simultaneously perpetrating occupation and settler colonial practices against Palestinians. Furthermore, Israel has exploited global environmental concerns to present itself as environmentally friendly while dumping harmful waste in Palestinian territories with impunity.

Israel's superiority in public diplomacy is not solely explained by its material and technological capabilities, but rather by a cohesive Israeli political system capable of formulating and consistently implementing long-term strategies across governmental and non-governmental institutions. The Israeli public diplomacy apparatus (hasbara) focuses on decision-making, unifying the narrative, and coordinating between various political, military, and media entities to reinforce its unified narrative.

In contrast, the limitations of Palestinian public diplomacy extend beyond technical gaps to encompass several larger political shortcomings. From the internal division between the West Bank and Gaza Strip to the rivalry between authorities and conflicting priorities, several different, and sometimes contradictory, narratives of the Palestinian cause have emerged. This division weakens institutional planning and the ability to develop a communication strategy and a long-term narrative, hindering the emergence of a unified Palestinian voice capable of countering the coherent and unified Israeli narrative machine. Therefore, discussing Palestinian public diplomacy without considering these political realities will undoubtedly present an incomplete picture of the larger challenges.

Consequently, efforts to develop public diplomacy for the Palestinian cause should not be a choice but a strategic necessity, shaped by external pressures and internal constraints. The Palestinian issue continues to be framed globally through an Israeli narrative that dominates the Palestinian narrative, exploiting internal Palestinian divisions. This makes the construction of a unified Palestinian narrative, based on international law and universally understood international language, essential. This narrative should not merely counter the Israeli narrative but must transcend internal Palestinian political divisions and other factors that weaken the Palestinian narrative.

In conclusion, this thesis affirms that narrative and storytelling are forms of power no less important than military force. A unified and coherent Palestinian narrative, supported by coordination between governmental and non-governmental institutions, can become a cornerstone of the modern Palestinian struggle. Furthermore, a unified Palestinian narrative will open the door to further scholarly research, such as developing new tools for public diplomacy, particularly for Palestinian diplomacy, which can enhance the Palestinian narrative on the international stage. Ultimately, Palestinian public diplomacy needs to confront the various challenges posed by the Israeli occupation and the internal political division that severely limits the development of a Palestinian strategy. By addressing these obstacles and problems, a sustainable and influential Palestinian narrative can emerge on the international stage.

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المخلص

على مرّ السنين، ولزمن طويل، سعت إسرائيل جاهدةً لتحسين صورتها وتقديم نفسها للعالم باعتبارها الديمقراطية الوحيدة في الشرق الأوسط، وذلك من خلال إظهار احترامها لحقوق الإنسان، وحقوق المرأة، وحقوق مجتمع الميم، وحقوق الأقليات. وقد حققت ذلك عبر قوانينها وأفعالها، وكسبت تأييد الكثيرين حول العالم، ولا سيما في الدول الغربية وأمريكا. ومع ذلك، يبقى السؤال مطروحًا - وهو ما يُقلقني بشكل خاص - كيف نجحت إسرائيل في ذلك؟

بصفتي فلسطينيًا أعيش في الضفة الغربية، أشهد ممارسات إسرائيل العنصرية وانتهاكاتها للقانون الدولي وحقوق الإنسان. وقد تبادر هذا السؤال إلى ذهني، خاصةً وأنني أشهد هذه الانتهاكات بشكل مباشر وأُعايشها يوميًا تقريبًا. ولكن، عندما درستُ الدبلوماسية العامة الإسرائيلية، اكتشفتُ أن إسرائيل تستخدم "الدعاية" (الدبلوماسية العامة الإسرائيلية) لتقديم نفسها بأفضل صورة ممكنة للعالم، وذلك من خلال نشر روايتها عبر مبادرات ثقافية، وتبادل الطلاب، والتعليم، والفنون، وحماية البيئة. بينما قد يرى غير الفلسطينيين كل هذا إنجازًا للإسرائيليين، لا يرى الفلسطينيون سوى القمع والتهجير والقتل والانتهاكات، والاعتداءات شبه اليومية على مدن الضفة الغربية، فضلًا عن الإبادة الجماعية المستمرة في قطاع غزة.

من خلال هذا البحث، سيفهم القارئ حقيقة الحكومة الإسرائيلية، القائمة على الترويج الذاتي وتصوير نفسها كمنقذ للفلسطينيين والشعوب المضطهدة الأخرى. سيرى القارئ كيف نجحت إسرائيل في تقديم تل أبيب كأرض للحرية والديمقراطية والأمن، لا سيما لمن يحتاجون إلى الحماية، انطلاقًا من فرضية أن تل أبيب هي ملاذهم الآمن. من جهة أخرى، تل أبيب مدينة إسرائيلية بُنيت على أنقاض قرية الشيخ منيس عام ١٩٤٨.

نُزح أجدادي من أراضي قرية طيرة دندان الفلسطينية، الواقعة شمال شرق اللد، عام ١٩٤٨. لم يبقَ لها أثر اليوم كقرية فلسطينية؛ فهي الآن بلدة إسرائيلية تُسمى جفعات كواح. لم تُتح الفرصة لأي فرد من أفراد العائلة للعودة بسبب الاحتلال الإسرائيلي، الذي وعد الفلسطينيين المُهجّرين بحق العودة إلى قراهم في اتفاقيات أوسلو. ورغم ذلك، ينظر العالم إلى إسرائيل كدولة للمساواة والحقوق والديمقراطية.

من خلال هذا البحث، سيفهم القارئ كيف عملت الدعاية الإسرائيلية (الهاسبارا) على إقناع آلاف الأشخاص حول العالم بروايتها وعرضها بأفضل صورة ممكنة. كما سنرى الأساليب التي استخدمتها إسرائيل لترويج روايتها. من جهة أخرى، سأكشف عن الإجراءات التي اتخذتها إسرائيل ضد الشعب الفلسطيني في السنوات الأخيرة، وهي إجراءات تُظهر انتهاكات جسيمة وصارخة لحقوق الإنسان، ولا سيما حقوق الشعب الفلسطيني.

أخيرًا، سيتعرف القارئ على كيفية بناء الفلسطينيين لروايتهم الخاصة، مع أمثلة عملية على أرض الواقع تُجسّد الدبلوماسية العامة الفلسطينية. وسيرون أيضاً كيف يمكن للفلسطينيين دحض الرواية الإسرائيلية من خلال نشر روايتهم الخاصة لإقناع العالم بصحتها، وبالتالي تعزيز صمود الشعب الفلسطيني وكشف الطبيعة الحقيقية للقضية الفلسطينية من منظور أيديولوجي وفكري، بدلاً من اعتبارها مجرد صراع عسكري بين قوتين متساويتين.