



#PalDigiDiplomacy: Palestinian online public diplomacy during Israel's 2021 attacks

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Introduction

On 10 May 2021, Israel began the bombardment of the Gaza Strip. The attack was the fourth large-scale military operation against the air, land and sea blockaded and densely populated Palestinian enclave in the last thirteen years. As Israel robbed Palestinians of their properties, denied them access to their religious sites and inflicted psychological and physical injuries on them, their plight became visible online. Social media allowed Palestinians and their international supporters to articulate and frame their stories within the historical and political contexts in which they develop. Consequently, they can challenge hegemonic media and political elites (Kuntsman and Stein, 2010; Tawil-Souri and Aouragh, 2014; Ward, 2009) and break away from the traditional coverage of mainstream media that misrepresents or ignores the Palestinian narrative and allows Israeli voices to speak unchallenged (Noakes and Wilkins, 2002; Philo and Berry, 2004, 2011).

Recent research has centred on the use of social media platforms by the Palestinian grassroots and the international solidarity network that supports them (Aouragh, 2012; Collins, 2011; Monshipouri and Prompichai, 2018; Siapera, 2013; Tawil-Souri and Aouragh, 2014). The present work is one of the first (Manor and Holmes, 2018; Yarchi, 2018) to look at the institutional efforts of the Palestinian leadership's use of social media platforms for public diplomacy. It analyses how the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (PMoFA) used Twitter and Instagram to articulate and advance strategic narratives during the Israeli attacks on the oPt and the Gaza Strip between 6 and 21 May 2021.

Examining Palestinian digital diplomacy is crucial because it provides a window into how the State of Palestine self-represents and how it uses social media channels to bypass negative and contentious portrayals of its cause and people while attempting to establish direct links with foreign governments and publics. The exercise of public diplomacy is one essential facet where public opinion can change in favour of the Palestinian cause on a global level. It is also a way to refocus international attention on the Palestinian plight during a time when the peace process went stale after the Oslo

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Accords' failure. Additionally, the complicit US–Israel relationship has furthered the occupation of Palestine with the establishment of more illegal settlements in the West Bank and the moving of the US embassy to Jerusalem. Moreover, it relocates Palestine as a central issue in the Middle East after Arab countries have abandoned their commitment to the Palestinian cause in exchange for economic gains by normalizing relations with Israel, more saliently with the Abraham Accords.

This chapter has four sections. First, it looks at the history of Palestinian diplomacy and the situation in which the PMoFA works, linking it to the current context of public diplomacy, particularly the emergence of digital diplomacy and its relation to soft power and strategic narratives. The second section explains the methodology used. The third section consists of the frame analysis of the PMoFA social media posts and how they function as strategic narratives aiming to advance the Palestinian cause. Finally, the conclusion highlights and reflects on the key findings.

From the PLO to the PMoFA: Palestinian public diplomacy and the use of soft power

Studies focusing on the history and structure of Palestinian diplomatic institutions and their work are scarce (Abusada, 2017; Hassan et al., 2021; Manor and Holmes, 2018; Rumley and Rasgon, 2016; Safieh, 2006; Segal, 1989; Yarchi, 2018) although there is a vast literature on the Palestinian-Israeli diplomatic peace process. In *Reviving a Palestinian Power. The Diaspora and the Diplomatic Corps*, Hassan and others (2021) outline the most recent and comprehensive report on the history of the Palestinian diplomatic structures.

The authors explain how Palestine's foreign diplomacy efforts emerged along the foundation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 and its strategy to establish representative offices in different parts of the world to build international support for the Palestinian cause (Hassan et al., 2021). These efforts accelerated in 1974 when the PLO was granted observer status in the United Nations (UNGA, 1974).

After the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, the PLO could operate in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). The Oslo framework meant that as long as the leadership of the PLO was the same as that of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), the organizations could be considered undistinguishable, which was the case with Yassir Arafat and his successor Mahmoud Abbas. As long as the PLO chairman is president of the PNA, the 'PLO primacy is ensured, and the redundant foreign relations structures existing between the PNA and the PLO are not in conflict' (Hassan et al., 2021:14). Nevertheless, there is a problem of representation because the PLO is the sole official representative of the Palestinian people, both the ones in the oPt and the diaspora. The PNA was supposed to be a transitional government that only represents Palestinians in the oPt but has effectively held power since 1994.

The PLO is responsible for the diplomatic capabilities of Palestine and is the only organization able to negotiate international agreements on behalf of the entire Palestinian people (Hassan et al., 2021). However, the gradual establishment of parallel

structures from the PNA has led to a vacuum within the PLO. Regarding diplomacy, the PLO's political bureau has been sidelined, first by the PNA's Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC) and since 2005 by the establishment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA).

The transfer of responsibilities has voided the PLO's diplomatic role and altered its activities' focus. One of its main interests was towards advancing the rights of the diaspora and refugees, but it has shifted towards the internationalization of the Palestinian cause and prioritizing 'symbolic victories over pragmatic ones' (Rumley and Rasgon, 2016), such as gaining international recognition for the State of Palestine and obtaining funding and support towards state-building (Hassan et al., 2021). Nevertheless, one of the main problems is that the transfer of power and responsibilities has not been complete. Thus, duplicating PLO/PNA structures make determining who is in charge confusing. There is also the infighting between Fatah and Hamas, which poses obstacles to the national liberation movement, undermines the grassroots Palestinian civil society advocacy, the international solidarity movement and the role of Palestinian diplomats.

Despite these problems, the PMoFA has become the organism in charge of Palestinian public diplomacy, which consists of creating a positive climate amongst foreign publics to facilitate the acceptance of another country's foreign policy (Kampf, Manor and Segev, 2015). It relies on activities such as information, education, tourism and cultural events that help improve the image of a country, position it vis-à-vis the rest of the world and advance its reputation and foreign policy goals (Bollier, 2003).

In the twenty-first century, the internet and social media platforms gave way to a new type of public diplomacy: digital diplomacy. This phenomenon refers to the use of social media networks to foster dialogue with online publics (Duncombe, 2019; Kampf, Manor and Segev, 2015; Olubukola, 2017). It is a practice that co-exists with traditional diplomatic channels and can implement public diplomacy's objectives – inform, educate and project a positive image – in a fast, low-cost and global way. Digital diplomacy also aids states and non-state actors in gathering and processing large amounts of information for traditional diplomatic activities and providing consular services and emergency assistance to its citizens abroad (Olubukola, 2017). It is a tool for public engagement (Kampf, Manor and Segev, 2015) that has transformed the role of public diplomacy to go beyond the mere transmission of information and towards the building and leveraging of relations with other state and non-state actors and with foreign publics (Hayden, 2012).

The internet allows countries, non-state actors, diasporic communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and interested individuals to partake in foreign policy discussions and, for these discussions, to be a two-way communication system instead of a monologue. As Bollier (2003: 12) highlights, in this new media ecology, the marginalized and powerless are able 'to bypass traditional intermediaries whose power revolved around the control of information'. In the case of the PMoFA, engaging in digital diplomatic practice lets it bypass negative mainstream media coverage and framing and challenge the postures of hegemonic state powers and international organizations vis-à-vis Israel and the Palestinian question.

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Another element of digital diplomacy is that it allows for knowledge construction (Bjola and Holmes, 2015). Using information communication technologies (ICTs) as public diplomacy tools means that countries, international organizations and NGOs can develop and share information to advance their objectives. Therefore, digital diplomatic practice creates and strategically controls the information output, making knowledge and cognition available to a global public. For Palestinians, a systematic and encompassing digital diplomacy allows them to tell their story and articulate their narrative, silenced for more than seventy years. It also provides them the possibility to engage foreign audiences who are interested or learning for the first time about the Palestinian plight. Thus, the digitalization of diplomacy permits the diffusion of power that facilitates bottom-up change for grassroots activism and the less powerful countries and non-state actors, as is the case of Palestine, while making soft power a sought-after commodity able to shape global outcomes (Bjola and Holmes, 2015).

Soft power is central to understanding public and digital diplomatic practice. The term developed in the 1990s refers to 'the ability to get preferred outcomes through the co-optive means of agenda-setting, persuasion and attraction' (Nye, 2011: 16). It is the ability to use ideology, values and culture as opposed to military and economic might (hard power). In what Nye (2009) has defined as 'smart power', international actors often use hard and soft power to achieve their means. Recently, not only states but also individuals and non-state actors have implemented hard power, that is, through terrorism. Consequently, soft power, often used by NGOs and civil society, has now become of utmost importance for governments (Bollier, 2003) because, as Nye (2013: 3) argues, in the information age, 'it is not just whose army wins it is also whose story wins'.

Roselle et al. (2014: 71) explain that strategic narratives are 'soft power in the 21st century'. Strategic narratives focus on how persuasion and influence work and in which contexts and conditions they would be successfully implemented. They are a way of developing, crafting and diffusing ideas in the international system. Soft power and strategic narratives attempt to build shared meanings by using culture, values, policies and affective components to persuade and attract foreign publics. In more complex media environments, strategic narratives are a relevant element of contestation used by international actors to sway target audiences into their camps (Roselle et al., 2014).

Duncombe (2019) furthers the idea of using affect and emotion in digital diplomacy. She highlights that this is key to understanding the power of using social media in public diplomacy. Ideology, culture and values are assets for persuasion and elements that help construct the state identity that governments want to use to represent and advance on the global stage. The way states portray themselves – the ideas they support and the emotions they mobilize – speak to the policies and interests they want to legitimize.

Consequently, emotion helps construct national identity frames that aim to make the country, its values and its culture attractive while also creating and spreading state identity knowledge that can further foreign interest. Additionally, using emotion in social media allows for building trust that can help solidify diplomatic relations and increase public opinion support. This is enhanced by what Duncombe (2019: 104) calls 'emotional contagion', which is the idea that emotions can spread from one person

to another and that social media, particularly Twitter, facilitates this. Polleta’s (2002) and Papacharissi’s (2015) works further elaborate this by arguing that emotive frames appeal to people’s passions and can help mobilize support.

While Polleta (2002) and Papacharissi (2015) look at emotion and affect within social movements, their work can help look at how public and digital diplomacy use soft power and strategic narratives to advance a state’s policies and reputation in the international arena. For Polleta (2002), one of the main ways to increase support is through storytelling, which allows for the narration of a coherent event where emotions, even when not explicitly articulated, can be elicited by the severity of that event and lead to action. Additionally, stories are ‘persuasive rhetorical devices’ (Polleta and Chen, 2012: 487) because they can change people’s opinions, particularly when they are not fully informed or cognizant of an issue. In her research on storytelling on digital media platforms, Papacharissi (2015) speaks of ‘affective publics’ as those publics that are mobilized through and mobilize affect. Saliently, Papacharissi found that hashtags on Twitter work as framing devices that allow publics to construct a collaborative narrative, thus providing a way to organize and have a long-term engagement.

Hashtags serve as an indexing system on social media (Xiong et al., 2019) through which users can search and identify topics and conversations that are relevant to them. They also allow users to contribute to discourse (Gunson, 2021) and become active participants in framing issues, which lets online users have the power to establish the salience of a topic and follow its development in real-time or ‘trending’. Using hashtags means that user-generated content can bypass mainstream media routines that determine what is news and allow grassroots activism as well as politicians and people in power the capabilities of agenda-setting. In the case of Palestinian digital diplomacy, I argue that the PMoFA aims to frame Palestine and the Palestinian plight through a narrative that builds affective publics. Consequently, the discourse, frames and hashtags used aim to portray Palestinians as human beings with rights, hopes and desires continually crushed by the Israeli occupation.

Methodology

This research examines the frames the PMoFA used on Twitter and Instagram between 6 and 21 May 2021. The study began with the assumption that the PMoFA would use these digital platforms to depict an alternative narrative to the one presented in traditional mainstream media that was favourable for the Palestinian state and its people. A second assumption was that through strategic narratives, the PMoFA would attempt to build knowledge on the historical background of the Palestinian plight that could help foreign publics learn and understand the current status of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, aid in the legitimization of the Palestinian cause and increase support in public opinion towards Palestine.

All of PMoFA’s Twitter and Instagram posts were collected manually through screenshots. In total, the PMoFA published 297 social media posts, 252 on its official Twitter account @pmofa, 34 on its associated Twitter account @MofaPPD, and 11 on its Instagram account @palestine.mofa. This research analysed 297 posts. It is essential

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to clarify that because of the 280-character limit of Twitter, a post can be published individually or be part of a thread where two or more posts are related. Of the 286 tweets analysed, the PMoFA used 39 threads comprising between 2 and up to 25 tweets. In the case of Instagram, the platform allows for a maximum of 10 different photographs or videos to be part of a single post with one caption, and out of the 18 posts, 8 included more than 1 photograph.

Based on the textual nature of social media and digital diplomacy, a frame analysis methodology was used to identify the strategic narratives used in the 297 social media posts. Borrowing from the work of Benford and Snow (1992), frames are defined as selected ways to understand the world. Frames attempt to make a complex reality comprehensible by placing it within specific categories. In their words:

It [Frame] refers to an interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment. (Benford and Snow, 1992: 137)

Frame analysis helps to understand the strategic approach to the use of language and overall communicative activity in a specific context (Lindekilde, 2014). It is a technique for approaching a text and understanding how different ideas and cultural elements are linked together to construct meaning and be implemented in context-specific discursive practices (Creed, Langstraat and Scully, 2002). It revolves around the idea that social actors use strategic and deliberate language, where specific ideas, events, culture and ideology are actively put to work to ascribe meaning or challenge the existing meaning of a topic to focus it on a specific direction.

A codebook was developed by reading the posts and examining the accompanying photographs to determine how the language and imagery used fit themes that could comprise different frames. The posts were analysed again against the categories in the codebook to determine if there was a need to create new categories. In most cases, more than one frame appeared in a single post.

Framing Palestinian Digiplomacy

In a 2020 report, Burson, Cohn and Wolfe (2020) write that 189 countries have either personal or institutional accounts for their heads of state and/or Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs). They add that 'foreign ministries continue to expand their digital diplomatic networks, encouraging their missions and ambassadors worldwide to become active on social media'. One of the attractive aspects of the platform is that heads of state and MFAs can quickly react to and comment on world affairs (Kampf, Manor and Segev, 2015) and broadcast relevant information to local and foreign publics.

Twitter's central purpose as a microblogging service is to share and transmit information without interaction being a prerequisite, as in other social networks. Thus, its high usage for digital diplomacy means that most world leaders and MFAs

continuously publish information instead of interacting with their followers (Kamp, Manor and Segev, 2015).

On the other hand, the photo-sharing app Instagram has become the third most popular social network for diplomats, behind Twitter and Facebook, with 81 per cent of UN member states having an account to share videos and photographs. While it has been underutilized by governments, its importance has become apparent. Some of its appeal is that it helps draw a younger audience, a group not typically attuned to foreign diplomacy and public affairs issues (Clay, 2019), but that can be key for shaping the future of diplomacy since influencing young people at an early age could prove strategic for policymaking and increasing political support. Its strong reliance on user-generated, image-based content (Sprott, 2019) can make it a prominent channel for advancing marginalized voices and challenging hegemonic narratives. Its content can be organized by location data and hashtags, which, as Papacharissi (2015) argued, allow for narratives to be collectively framed and constructed by affective publics.

The PMoFA has two separate Twitter accounts: @pmofa, established in July 2012, has 8,060 followers and follows 132 accounts. The second one @MofaPPD has operated since November 2018. It currently has 707 followers and follows 116 accounts. Its Instagram account @palestine.mofa first posted on 11 March 2019. It has 3,520 followers, is following 0 accounts, and has 527 posts at the time of writing. Between 6 and 21 May 2021, the PMoFA published 297 social media posts on its Twitter and Instagram accounts, 252 tweets from the @pmofa account, 34 from the @mofaPPD account and 18 Instagram posts, respectively.

Among the general characteristics of the posts is that English was the primary language used on both platforms during the research period, with 184 posts written in English. The analysis shows that the Twitter account @mofaPPD tweets in English systematically. However, the @pmofa Twitter account and its Instagram account tweet mainly in Arabic. Therefore, the use of English signals a departure from most posts before and after those dates. Consequently, the PMoFA recognized the opportunity to reach an international audience during the escalation of the conflict by changing the language it uses to communicate on Instagram and Twitter.

Additionally, the PMoFA understood that sharing photographs and videos along with English text would increase the likelihood of the content being understood and shared by foreign publics. Consequently, posts shared on both platforms used photographs or videos to accompany the messages. While Instagram requires an image to be associated with the post and is the app's central feature, Twitter is a text-based platform. Still, out of the 286 tweets, 66 had image-based content, meaning that 23 per cent of Twitter posts had visual imagery. Tweets with photos and videos tend to perform better and receive higher engagement, thus helping drive the Palestinian narrative further. Moreover, Duncombe (2019) argues that adding images to text-based social media platforms provides an extra layer of emotional complexity to digital diplomacy. She writes:

Texts and images shared on social media are powerful not only because of emotions they evoke but also because they frame representations of identity (Duncombe, 2019: 112).

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The analysis showed that the PMoFA relied on five frames: Affect and emotion, settler colonialism, violence, human rights and international solidarity. However, frames were not used in the same way on Twitter and Instagram; there was different content and language used on each platform, and the use of hashtags also differed. In most cases, several frames were articulated in one single post and used hashtags in combination with one another, which shows that frames are overlapping and interdependent because, in this form, they can articulate a more encompassing narrative and construct a comprehensive meaning.

Affect and emotion frame

This frame was the most prominent on Twitter and Instagram. It relied on different narrative devices that appealed to the conscience and emotions of the audience, such as injured children (Figure 9.1), cultural destruction (Figure 9.2), as well as discourse and images that speak of fear and suffering (Figure 9.3) and elicit an emotional response from the social media user.

Using an emotional frame, the PMoFA implements a strategic narrative that portrays Palestinians as the victims and Israel as the aggressor. This way, the Palestinian state bypasses mainstream media narratives and challenges adversarial reporting to gain the support of foreign publics. Using these storytelling mechanisms, the PMoFA is structuring a clear and cohesive story that can be easily shared online and can help



Figure 9.1 Tweet about Israel's targeting of Palestinian children



Figure 9.2 Tweet about Israel's destruction of Palestinian religious sites



Figure 9.3 Tweet narrating Palestinians’ experiences during Israel’s attacks

increase international solidarity with Palestine while constructing and representing its own state identity (Duncombe, 2019) as one of resistance in the face of adversity, of victimhood and of wanting their own story acknowledged and legitimized by the international community.

While the portrayal of Palestinian suffering is not new, the representation of victimhood by Palestinians themselves is a storytelling device that elicits an emotional reaction while constructing cognitive frames. It is an implementation of soft power that works on several levels, the ideological one showing Palestinian perseverance. The cultural and historical one portrays the history of the conflict and how Israel aims to ethnically cleanse the Palestinians and eradicate or appropriate their culture. Lastly, the emotional aspect, where all these facets work together to educate foreign publics and generate a response from them that can translate into long-term support while also aiming to delegitimize the Israeli narrative and undermine their hasbara, their diplomatic support and international standing.

Settler colonialism frame

Both platforms used this frame in the posts’ text content, hashtags and images associated with each post. Some of the recurring hashtags on Twitter and Instagram were: #IsraeliOccupation, #EndOccupation, #Jerusalem, #SaveSheikhJarrah, #TheNakbaContinues, #Nakba, #Nakba73, #FreePalestine, #Palestine and #SavePalestine. The PMoFA also used three hashtags in Arabic: #جراح_الشيخ_حي_انقذوا and #مستمرة_النكبة and #القصف_تحت_غزة on Twitter but not on Instagram.

Using the settler-colonial frame is a strategic device for Palestinians that captures their historical experience as the country’s indigenous people (Figure 9.4) while establishing that their cause is just and legitimate (Hijab and Jaradat, 2017). It is a tool that addresses the history of the conflict and its different elements and portrays them as part of a broader system of control and oppression (Figure 9.5), not as disjointed attacks or isolated events (Salamanca et al., 2012). This frame also advances the narratives of decolonization and self-determination and establishes links with other former colonized nations.

Violence frame

Violence is one of the most prevalent characteristics of the Palestine–Israel conflict, and it underlines its origins, development and current state. During Israel’s attacks

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State of Palestine - MFA ✓

@pmofa

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(1/5) Today, 15 May 2021, is the 73th anniversary of Al-Nakba (catastrophe) that befell the Palestinian people in 1948, as Zionists militias forcibly uprooted and ethnically cleansed the 800,000 Palestinians from their homes in 400 villages and made them refugees; #Nakba73

11:12 AM · May 15, 2021 · Twitter for Android

8 Retweets 7 Likes

Figure 9.4 Tweet commemorating the Nakba



State of Palestine - MFA ✓

@pmofa

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(4/5) Regrettably, the Palestinian people continue to suffer an ongoing Nakba, as Israel, the occupying Power, persists with its cruel denial of the rights of the Palestinian people; #EndtheOccupation #SaveSheikhJarraj #GazaUnderAttack

11:12 AM · May 15, 2021 · Twitter for Android

2 Retweets 5 Likes

Figure 9.5 Tweet on the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestine

in May 2021, this was one of the main frames used by the PMoFA as the escalation in violence draws attention to the Palestine–Israel conflict and garners traditional news media coverage. Furthermore, the linkages between social media and traditional news media amplify public diplomacy messages as it is now common to have social media posts form the basis for news stories (Duncombe, 2019).

Using war, destruction, death and fear (Figures 9.6, 9.7 and 9.8) as online storytelling mechanisms is a way to make news headlines and obtain emotional reactions that establish affective connections with the audiences. Thus, the



Figure 9.6 Tweet highlighting Palestinian casualties' numbers



Figure 9.7 Tweet about Israel's ongoing attacks on the oPt and Gaza

violence frame, along with hashtags such as #GazaUnderAttack, #Gaza, #SaveGaza, #IsraeliCrimes and #WarCrimes, serves the aims of traditional public diplomacy by informing foreign publics and constructing knowledge about the specific situation of Palestine while contributing to the construction of emotional frames and national identity.

Human rights frame

Framing Palestine as a human rights issue has been more common since the 1980s, coinciding with the events of the First Intifada. It is a frame that has shifted Palestine

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Figure 9.8 Tweet humanizing Palestinians



Figure 9.9 Tweet calling on the UN Security Council

away from the predominant frameworks of settler colonialism and national liberation that were prevalent since the origins of the Palestinian question. The PMoFA used this frame to call on international organizations (Figure 9.9), such as the UN Security Council, and denounced Israel for committing war crimes and violating Palestinians' human rights by militarily attacking civilians, destroying infrastructure and obstructing the work of humanitarian agencies (Figure 9.10).

Allen (2018) highlights that the use of the human rights framework has become a hegemonic discourse for Palestinians and their international supporters. Through this narrative device, Palestinians could break away from the images of the armed struggle that permeated media coverage of Palestinians in the 1960s and 1970s (Collins,



State of Palestine - MFA ✓
@pmofa



21/22 There must be a clear demand for an end to all attacks, provocations and incitement and for full respect of #internationallaw, including #humanitarianlaw, and a demand for a halt of Israel’s criminal aggression against Gaza and a cessation of all illegal Israeli actions;

11:01 PM · May 14, 2021 · Twitter for Android

1 Quote Tweet 4 Likes

Figure 9.10 Tweet highlighting Israel’s violation of international and humanitarian law

2011) and instead be seen and heard as human beings deserving of rights. The use of human rights as a framing strategy has been critiqued for de-contextualizing and de-politicizing the Palestinian cause (Tawil-Souri, 2015). Nevertheless, this framework prevails because the media portrayal of the violent reality of Palestine produces images that are themselves a vehicle for the articulation of the human rights discourse and a witnessing technique that allows Palestinians the right to claim-making and legitimacy based on their identity as a ‘nation of sufferers’ (Allen, 2009: 165). Moreover, it enables Palestinians to elicit sympathy and empathy from foreign publics based on having shared humanity.

While initially international NGOs relied on this frame, Palestinians have adopted it as a way to portray themselves, which coincides with Duncombe’s (2019) notion of how framing aids states in identity construction. In Allen’s words:

Human rights informs how Palestinians see themselves, how they create solidarities internationally and locally, and how they forge channels through which to mobilize forms of support, to empathize, and to provide national pedagogy. (Allen, 2009: 165)

International solidarity frame

The international solidarity framework helps portray Palestine as a prominent example of a global fight against injustice and oppression while allowing the Palestinian cause to establish links with other justice, anti-colonial and human rights movements worldwide. Because of the protracted nature of the Palestinian issue and the emergence of other international crises, internationalizing it is a mechanism to maintain Palestine in the political and media agenda and exercise pressure for its just and prompt

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Palestinian Public Diplomacy
@MofaPPD

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Countries around the world are rising up to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people. Friends of #Palestine from all over are speaking out against the illegal occupation and the inhumane treatment Palestinians suffer at the hands of the #IsraeliOccupation.



9:07 AM · May 19, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

1 Retweet 3 Likes

Figure 9.11 Tweet showing international protests in support of Palestine

resolution. The PMoFA used the frame to highlight the international protests to call for an end to the Israeli military attack on Gaza and, more broadly, the occupation of Palestine (Figures 9.11, 9.12 and 9.13).

The solidarity frame contributes to the construction and maintenance of affective publics. It is a way to bond with foreign audiences and recognize how grassroots activism has the mobilizing capabilities to challenge the international status quo. By acknowledging transnational solidarity with Palestine, the PMoFA uses strategic narratives that advance a history of dispossession and oppression that international activists legitimize. As the protests took place offline, it also demonstrates how online framing can have a spillover into offline grassroots collective action.



Figure 9.12 Tweet thanking global solidarity with Palestine



Figure 9.13 Tweet thanking international solidarity with Palestine

Conclusions

This chapter examined the Twitter and Instagram output of the PMoFA during the Israeli military attack against the oPt and the Gaza Strip to understand which frames the PMoFA advanced online and how they can work as strategic narratives for online public diplomacy. The research found that the most prevalent frames were affect and emotion, settler colonialism, violence, human rights and international solidarity.

The analysis demonstrates that the use of these specific frames is an active exercise of narrative and storytelling that relies on the overlapping and interdependent use of

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frames and hashtags to provide context on the situation of Palestine and construct a resonant meaning that can be understood and shared by online publics.

The prevalence of the affect and emotion frame on both social media platforms aligns with the notions of Duncombe (2019), Nye (2011), Papacharissi (2015), Polleta (2002) and Roselle et al. (2014) about the importance of eliciting an emotional reaction and constructing affective publics as a way of exercising soft power and articulating strategic narratives. Using English as the primary language of the publications and including images and videos provided the social media postings with further emotional complexity than if they had been solely textual.

The frames operate on an individual level, but their joint usage contributes to constructing a coherent and cohesive narrative that articulates Palestine's history and its people's stories. It also helps the PMoFA construct and portray a national identity that aids in legitimizing the Palestinian narrative and the role of the PNA and its foreign ministry vis-à-vis local and foreign publics and the international community.

Understanding how the PMoFA exercises its public diplomacy online provides insight into how the Palestinian state positions itself in the broader international relations landscape and the ideological resources it uses to construct its identity vis-à-vis its population and the foreign publics it seeks to influence. It provides a window into Palestinian leadership's narrative tools to counteract Israel's hegemonic narrative on the conflict and its pervasiveness in global mainstream media. As such, this work seeks to contribute to the literature on the practice of digital diplomacy and strategic narratives (Bjola and Holmes, 2015; Bollier, 2003; Duncombe, 2019; Kampf, Manor and Segev, 2015; Olubukola, 2017, Roselle et al., 2014) and specifically, on the gap that exists on the field of Palestine's public diplomatic practice, which has only been studied by Manor and Holmes (2018) when they looked at the Facebook page of Palestine in Hebrew.

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