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HASBARA: PUBLIC DIPLOMACY WITH ISRAELI CHARACTERISTICS

ABSTRACT

The paper presents the phenomena of hasbara, an Israeli method of conducting state's public diplomacy. For Israel public diplomacy is a part of national effort, perceived as a tool to increase Israel's status on the international arena and recognition from the international community. Therefore, it is a topic of utmost importance among Israeli society and scholars. The aim is to uncover trends in thoughts and opinions on the studied subject. Qualitative research methods were adopted, including historical, institutional and comparative approaches as suitable methods to describe complexity of such phenomena as hasbara. Research techniques included content analysis and case studies to uncover trends in thoughts and opinions on the presented subject. In this paper an answer to the research question on the conduct of Israeli public diplomacy is provided through deep analysis and synthesis of the author's findings, with the said findings being presented by confronting them with main assumptions of the prior research on Israeli public diplomacy and posing questions for further research. Israeli public diplomacy is based on the idea of demonstrating that there is much more about Israel than conflict, tension and fighting terror to fight with the preexisting national stereotypes. A major paradigm shift has to be noticed here as it is no longer a discourse on the right of Israel to exist on the international arena (apart from Arab states and Palestinians), but it became a question of what Israel did and continues to do as an existing state to maintain its existence.

Keywords: Israel, public diplomacy, image, hasbara, nation branding, soft power

1. INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of public diplomacy is to influence foreign governments and foreign public opinion in order to achieve support for the states' foreign policy goals and promote national

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interests. In today's world an image of a country is a major component of its power projection, which translates into an ability to protect itself, dictate conditions or take an active part in a decision making process. Moreover due to technology, information and democratic revolution which resulted in establishing new communication outlets, providing infrastructure for social networks (to which physical borders were no longer an obstacle), granting freedom and access to information, involving citizens in politics by electing governments, influencing state policies and building economic, cultural and social relations with foreign actors and emerging non-state actors, shaped public diplomacy by completely different means to the ones employed in the past.

The past two decades has seen a rapid development of public diplomacy in Israel. In case of Israel, shaping a positive image of the state should be a priority of its foreign policy. Especially when we consider the image challenges that Israel has been continuously facing since its creation in 1948. Israel's failures in achieving its foreign policy goals throughout the years were in many cases effects of its image problems. The way Israel is perceived by the foreign public opinion usually implies the reaction of its governments. When examining Israel's public diplomacy, it can be observed that the authorities noticed the need to improve and adjust its public diplomacy to the modern realities. It started with the failure of influencing foreign broadcast of the Second Lebanon War, which took place in 2006. Since then we can observe that actions are being constantly taken in order to shape a positive opinion of Israel abroad to achieve its foreign policy goals by coordinating both official and unofficial diplomacy tracks.

The main objective of this research is to depict the attempts undertaken by the Israeli authorities to improve the image of Israel abroad and consequently establish Israel's credibility and legitimacy worldwide, as achieving those objectives is still the main point on foreign policy agenda of Israel. The aim is to uncover trends in thoughts and opinions on the studied subject. The importance of our findings is limited to answering the research question, that is how Israeli public diplomacy is conducted. The answer can be only provided based on empirical research methodology, involving case studies in order to depict attempts of Israeli authorities to implement changes to *hasbara* strategy and practice.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: THEORETHICAL FRAMEWORK

Describing the phenomena of Israeli public diplomacy (*hasbara*) has to be set within the frames of the ongoing debate and the conceptualization of public diplomacy in the research field of diplomacy studies. Public diplomacy is considered a subfield of diplomacy with the tendency of gaining more and more importance; however, as an element of diplomacy, it is perceived as an old concept under a new name, as in the early seventeenth-century the French were the first nation to put a big effort into managing the reputation of their country (Melissen 2005). As an idea it gained importance during the Cold War, when it was utilized by both the USA and the USSR to spread their respective ideologies, at that time taking the form of propaganda. The term public diplomacy was used for the first time by Edmund Guillon in 1965 and adopted by the USA to distinguish their activities from propaganda.

Studies on public diplomacy demonstrate that the debate on public diplomacy started to again dominate the research after the World Trade Centre attacks in 2001 (e.g. Gilboa, 2008;

Gregory, 2008; Cull, 2009; Snow&Taylor, 2009; Melissen, 2013). “War on terror” launched by US authorities, followed by military activities in Afghanistan and Iraq necessitated a return to a sort of Cold War style of diplomacy, rhetoric and tools, such as public diplomacy in order to legitimize US actions. For US government main goal of “war on terror” was to destroy global terror by conducting ideological and religious offensive against the message spread by the radical Islamic terror groups. The concept of the “new public diplomacy” was introduced to the diplomacy studies to distinguish it from the traditional one-sided, asymmetric political communication of the United States run until 1999 under the leadership of the United States Information Agency. The main weapon was returning to public diplomacy in a new form that emerged as a result of technology, information and democratic revolution. It resulted in establishing new communication outlets, providing infrastructure for social networks, to which physical borders were no longer an obstacle, freedom and access to information, followed by involvement of citizens in politics by electing government, influencing state policies and building economic, cultural and social relations with foreign actors, in addition to the later emergence of non-state actors. Those revolutions caused the state to lose its monopoly on international relations.

A considerable amount of literature has been published describing the modern definition of public diplomacy. Although there is some vagueness to the definition, there is a consensus among social scientist (Melissen, 2005; Melissen, 2011; Szondi, 2008; Gregory, 2008; Gilboa, 2008; Cull, 2009; Cull, 2011) on one aspect thereof, that is the one which emphasizes that public diplomacy is a communication between governments, foreign governments, foreign audience, international actors or domestic audiences in order to persuade, to inform, to explain, to cultivate support, to influence the foreign government and the foreign public opinion in order to achieve foreign policy goals of the state actor.

Gregory Szondi argues that the goals of public diplomacy have completely shifted from “achieving political change in target countries by changing behavior” (Szondi, 2008) to promoting “political and economic interest (in order to) create receptive environment and positive reputation of the country abroad” (Szondi, 2008). However, its main aim is still to influence the other party, protect and promote national interests – mainly by building a relationship through a dialogue (Szondi 2008). In other words, such aspects as actors, instruments, practice and even terminology have changed, but the overall aim of the public diplomacy stayed the same, which is the management of the international environment (Cull, 2009). We experience “a new post-Cold War context with public seen today as neither a target nor a generator of diplomatic activity but as a consumer of diplomacy, a reflection of global mobility and twin forces of tourism and terrorism” (Melissen, 2005). As Nancy Snow (2009) notes, public diplomacy of the XXI century can be marked by change and uncertainty.

Public diplomacy can be conceptualized in four dimensions: the conditions under which the communication takes place, such as war or peace; objectives of communication ranging from persuasion (one-way) to relationship building (two-way communication); power as a way to achieve the outcome we want; time frame according to which we can distinguish short-term, medium-term and long-term effects (Szondi, 2008). Strategies of public diplomacy consist of three layers – monologue, dialogue and finally collaboration (Cowen&Arsenault, 2008). Monologue is a one-way communication in order to convey an idea and pressurize a targeted interlocutor. A dialogue is a two-way exchange of ideas aiming at building a relationship that is supposed to later give rise to action. Collaboration, a result of

two previous layers, is a dialogue between two entities on common goals and ways to achieve it by common activities and support to strengthen their relationship, gain mutual trust and respect. To achieve the objectives of public diplomacy, the following activities enumerated by Nicholas Cull (2009) are prerequisite: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, international news broadcasting. Listening means collecting, analyzing and translating the data to maximize communication aimed at the targeted group. Advocacy on the other hand reduces to promoting an idea or policy to influence the discourse. Cultural diplomacy aims at bridging an existing cultural gap in order for two sides to get familiar with each other's perspective. Exchange diplomacy allows one country to familiarize another with it through exposing it to its citizens as ambassadors. International news broadcast is responsible for spreading accurate message. Therefore, practice of public diplomacy should comprise understanding, planning, engagement, advocacy and social media activity (Gilboa, 2008). Simultaneously, technology developments added an emphasis on marketing, media and co-operation of non-state actors in public diplomacy strategy and practice.

Some scholars (Szondi, 2008; Cull, 2009) point out that public diplomacy is often associated with other terms and tools that are pertinent to such a field as news management, public relations or propaganda. The major difference is that public diplomacy framework will always belong to diplomatic domain of the state with an agenda being set by state actors involving foreign policy goals of the state. It will be perceived as a part of diplomatic campaign aiming at targeted public in order to convince it of certain values and policies to influence decisions or gain support.

New tools of public diplomacy such as communication technologies that allow access to local populations, therefore enlarging operational capabilities and targeted groups by giving an opportunity to state actors (and also non-state actors) to affect foreign governments by directly communicating with civil societies to persuade them to their policies, ideas and values. That became what is now officially called 'soft power' following Joseph Nye Jr (Nye Jr, 2004). Traditionally diplomacy and international politics were based on "carrot and stick policy" meaning the alternate usage of force or attraction and agenda setting (Nye Jr, 2004; Nye Jr, 2008a; Nye Jr, 2008b). He further draws our attention to the fact that relations between states and *ipso facto* world politics are taking place simultaneously on three dimensions, which are military, economic and soft power. Similarly, Eytan Gilboa (2008) states that grand strategy requires integration of such elements as force, diplomacy, and communication. As the current research and paradigm indicate, hard power is no longer as favorable as it was in the past. Today it is perceived as immoral and lacking political effectiveness as a means to achieve policy goals. In other words, photos of military activities in the war zones and their effects do not look good, especially when it can be easily streamed in real time online and almost everyone can have an access to it. For past few decades the focus of recent research has been based on moral justification of wars and military activities, especially in reference to Western liberal values. According to this paradigm problems should be solved non-violently. Hard power is losing position to soft power. The key is to affect the policy of other country by soft means such as culture, values and cooperation. However, Joseph Nye Jr (Nye Jr, 2008b, Nye Jr 2011) takes into account in his research that soft power is not always moral. It can be manipulative by, for example, presenting distorted facts and images.

2.2. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY OF ISRAEL: THEORETHICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework provided in the previous part is limited and selective as its main aim was only to present a general overview of the issue of public diplomacy and to elaborate a conceptual foundation serving to examine the phenomena of *hasbara*, an Israeli method of conducting state's public diplomacy, that is the main topic of this research paper. For Israel public diplomacy is a part of national effort, perceived as a tool to increase Israel's status on the international arena and recognition from the international community (Cummings, 2016). Therefore, it is a topic of utmost importance among Israeli society and scholars and it is worthwhile to conduct a further research concerning this matter.

Public diplomacy of Israel as a field of study is still limited; however, there are several major works including contribution to comprehensive historical studies of the topic (Medzini, 2012; Cummings 2016), each study presenting an in-depth description of *hasbara* activities in Israel, its conduct by the authorities depending on the current international situation and the issues Israel as a young state was facing. Both authors well describe facts and show their correlation and explain how past actions and policies have still the impact on public diplomacy conduct in Israel. The topic of origins of Israeli *hasbara* is also described in a paper by Ron Schleifer (2003), who analyses the several types of Jewish attitudes to the concept of *hasbara*. The current situation, challenges and critique are covered by only few authors (Schleifer, 2003; Gilboa, 2006; Gilboa, 2008; Gilboa & Shai, 2011; Greenfield, 2012; Swalha, 2014; Harkham, 2015). The same situation concerns recommendations (Gilboa, 2006; Gilboa & Shai 2011; Hadari & Turgeman, 2016).

One scholar wrote almost all major works that truly add to the research, which makes this discipline limited. Eytan Gilboa should be perceived as a pioneer in this field of research as he is the first scholar to holistically investigate the phenomena. Unfortunately, his works seem to be rather outdated now but his thoughts can still impact the research. In 2006 he gave a powerful critique of the Israeli *hasbara* conduct and apparatus. He believed that the authorities do not give enough importance to public diplomacy, keeping it poorly budgeted and not making any use of non-state actors or private initiatives that could be incorporated by the state. Moreover, he underlined that there were no efforts made in the Arab world in order to present Israeli vision and version of events leaving space for the development of anti-Israel rhetoric in the Arab world. According to Eytan Gilboa (2006), media coverage on Israel is often distorted, inaccurate, misleading and biased, which results in low public support for Israeli policies. In his opinion, Israel lacked a plan for nation branding and was far behind the usage of new media unlike its main opponents. The attempt to reform it failed because of bureaucracy and personal interests of politicians and officials. In his research he noticed that Israel's image abroad is influenced by words that are used to describe events within the state. He called it 'war of words'. He noticed that "language frames conflict in ways which shape images and determine ideas of right and wrong, justice and injustice" (Gilboa, 2006) and Israel did not succeed in persuading the world to use its terms and vocabulary. In his research conducted together with Nechman Shai (Gilboa & Shai, 2011), he proposed fixing public diplomacy of Israel based on revising, reforming and rebuilding to cope with the challenges of technology revolution, information age and changes that take place in international relations. Whereas his observations and recommendations are valuable, they cannot be valid anymore because of the ongoing progress in the field of diplomacy and international relations, involving modern objectives, challenges, practice and actors of the international arena.

And additional work from public relations field examining the role of mass media and public relations in building Israel's brand was recently added (Toledano & McKie, 2013). Additionally, it is worthwhile the works of Eli Avraham (Avraham, 2009) on framing the topics related to Israel by the international media. Moreover, there is a certain amount of literature on branding Israel, however as this is a limited research in scope, the author shall take the liberty to skip this aspect (e.g. Herstein & Berger, 2013).

3. METHODOLOGY

The main objective of this research is to depict the attempts undertaken by Israeli authorities to improve the image of Israel abroad and consequently establish Israel's credibility and legitimacy worldwide, as achieving those objectives is still the main point of Israeli foreign policy agenda. The research refers to the paradigm of neoliberal theory of international relations that enhance the importance of international cooperation and communication (exchanging information to gain mutual trust), setting norms and institutions, increasing interdependence between states and involvement of non-state actors. This theoretical discussion is based on existing research on public diplomacy, provided in order to set a framework to examine the phenomena of *hasbara*, an Israeli method of conducting state's public diplomacy, that is the main topic of this paper. Later the research provides also some theoretical analysis on Israeli public diplomacy. The debate on Israeli *hasbara* conduct in case of this research begins with a short introduction of the setting and context within which Israeli public diplomacy is conducted and the aspects that influence Israel image abroad and its position in the international arena in order to further examine the factors, serving as a basis for further debate on the effectiveness of *hasbara* conduct and for presenting the findings. Qualitative research methods were adopted, including historical, institutional and comparative approaches, as suitable methods to describe complexity of such phenomena as *hasbara*. Research techniques included content analysis and case studies to uncover trends in thoughts and opinions on the studied subject.

Research findings are provided in words and narratives to explain the studied subject in depth. It is important to notice that the research on Israeli public diplomacy is rather limited and biased by the authors who are mostly native Israelis. The importance of our findings is limited to answering the research question that is how Israeli public diplomacy is conducted. The answer can be only provided based on empirical research methodology, providing case studies in order to depict attempts of Israeli authorities to implement changes to *hasbara* strategy and practice. The main subject is analyzed within a certain time-frame, which mostly focuses on the changes made in *hasbara* strategy after the Second Lebanon War failure in 2006, perceived as an important contribution of this element of the thesis to general research on this field of study. Answer to the research question on the conduct of Israeli public diplomacy is provided through deep analysis and synthesis of the author's findings in conclusion section, with the said findings being presented by confronting them with main assumptions of the prior research on Israeli public diplomacy and posing questions for further research.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. FACTORS THAT DEFINE ISRAEL'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The debate on Israeli *hasbara* conduct should start with short introduction of the setting and context within which Israeli public diplomacy is conducted and the aspects that influence Israel image abroad in order to further examine the factors that define Israel and its position in the international arena. It should serve as a basis for further debate on the effectiveness of *hasbara* strategy and practice.

After the Independence War in 1948, Israel remained under siege and was not yet recognized by many countries. However, at that time, contrary to the future, as a state it was not attacked by other nations, which kept in mind still recent events that took place in Europe during the Holocaust. Main objectives of the state authorities was to ensure further existence of Israel, justify it by the right argumentation and arrange mass immigration, gain economic aid and military equipment from other states. Israel spoke unanimously despite the fact that the government was composed of a coalition.

Geographic location, the fact of being a small country isolated because of its culture and surrounded by countries perceived as potential enemy states shape Israel's policies, which are based on geopolitics. Since its establishment, Israel was the object of three waves that aimed at its complete elimination: the first wave was strictly military one, the second wave was terrorist one, the third wave is the still ongoing de-legitimization campaign (Swalha, 2014). Since its creation in 1948, at some point Israel had been in armed conflict with all of its neighbors and nowadays, it is still facing constant security challenges. Israel's environment is "hostile, unpredictable, volatile, and replete with dangers" (Berti, 2015). Therefore "siege mentality" was produced alongside a sense of being under constant threat (Berti, 2015). It caused national security to be based on three pillars: deterrence, early warning, and self-defense. It further generated realist approach in the foreign and security policy, "which in turn is based on self-reliance, hard-power and placing the attainment of security above all alternative ends" (Swalha, 2014). As a result, Israel is "traditionally focused on 'hard' security threats, relying on unilateral, proactive and pre-emptive coercive measures in the name of self-defense" (Swalha, 2014). Therefore, what we can observe since the establishment of the state is strong military with its central position within the state and society that simultaneously downplays the importance of diplomacy and the possibilities that could be achieved by this means.

Israel in general is perceived as "militaristic, masculine, religious, stiff-necked, dangerous, chauvinist, and frightening" (Greenfield, 2012) defined by the ongoing conflict and seen as a "threat to world stability" (Greenfield, 2012). As Ambassador Gideon Meir noticed, "images on television have a much greater and immediate impact on what the public abroad feels about Israel, than the arguments Israel presents" (Meir, 2005, May 24). Israel is the only country the right to exist of which is being constantly challenged. The capital city of Jerusalem is still not recognized. Moreover, Israel is perceived as the worst violator of human rights and international law. It is called by its opponents an apartheid state with a Nazi like policies and constantly boycotted.

4.2. THE REVISION OF ISRAELI PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AFTER SECOND LEBANON WAR OF 2006

Second Lebanon War in 2006 was perceived as a failure not only in a political and military context, but also in terms of shaping an image of Israel abroad. Israeli authorities did not control the media information flow and as a result the image of Israel deteriorated globally. Israeli strategy was based on traditional media. However, its enemy Hezbollah has already implemented new media strategy, successfully turning it into a weapon of online war. Moreover, guerilla such as Hezbollah did not have to obey the rules and restrictions of a state in the conduct of the war when it comes to both the traditional and the hybrid one. Hezbollah's troops managed to try out a new strategy of placing the rocket launch sites next to the civilian buildings, thus making the IDF bomb those sites and accuse them of hurting and killing civilians on purpose. Access to the Israeli war zones was much limited therefore the report to the media was based on the journalists who stayed in Lebanon.

After the Second Lebanon War failure Israeli government took efforts to establish a policy for immediate crisis management. The turning point was the state comptroller report in 2007 that underlined the fundamentals flaws in planning, coordination and management of state's public diplomacy apparatus. Therefore, efforts were undertaken to improve it, starting with establishing a governmental body to direct *hasbara* strategy and implementing it.

Utilizing new media make it possible for Israel not only to deepen the knowledge of the country among foreign audience but also to undermine anti-Israel campaigns. Monitoring Internet helped to identify potential image crises as early as possible. Once the potential crisis was identified, due to the approval issued by the Ministry of Public Diplomacy, *hasbara* crises started to be managed in real time by activating a virtual network of Internet social media users all around the world to combat online criticism against Israel. It is monitoring media and information about Israel all over the world and operates in five languages English, Spanish, Russian, Arabic and Hebrew. It was first used in 2010 during the Mavi Marmara Flotilla incident in 2010.

A network of embassies and consulates all over the world provides Israel with a wide-range of contacts; however, the content on social media posted by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs or embassies is perceived as a form of "Twipoganda" than "Twiplomacy". People rather listen to their online "friends" than the official message. Israeli officials communicate now by responding to comments posted on their Facebook profiles in order to start a dialogue with people and measure a reaction of the foreign public opinion to the foreign policy message and later adjust it accordingly. There were also strategic partnerships established by the governmental and non-governmental organizations, especially Diaspora ones resulting in creating a network of ambassadors for Israel such as "Presenting Israel", a campaign launched in 2010 by Israel's Ministry of Information and Diaspora Affairs and consequently creating a webpage www.masbirim.gov.il. The main aim was to encourage Israeli citizens to apply a Megaphone desktop tool developed by the lobby group Give Israel Your United Support. It is an alert tool that informs users of pools involving Israel and problematic articles.

The IDF Spokesperson's Unit got in charge of all communication between foreign media and matters concerning Israeli military activities. Growing involvement of IDF in the media indicates the need of the authorities to maintain legitimacy for military activities conducted by Israel. The main challenge for Israeli army was to become a modern and professional

organization, still taking into account the fact that its major role within the state is the military one. One of the main problems it was facing with social media communication was censorship. Originally the IDF had a censorship when launching its Facebook page but soon realized it may be negatively perceived by the public and as a result could bring about the loss of trust in the institution. Another problem was the “Like” button on Facebook. At the beginning, “Click Like” was posted in order to support the IDF’s right to defend the state of Israel from those who attempt to harm Israelis but it was later replaced with “share” the content in support. Therefore, the Internet became a new battleground for Israel, which is now developing a cyber-army to win this war.

4.3. NEW HASBARA STRATEGY

New strategy of online warfare was tested in 2008 during the Operation Cast Lead. IDF employed cameramen within the units to provide operational footage. One of the uploaded videos by IDF “Weapons Horde in Gazan mosque” depicted an Israeli soldier who is showing to the viewer a mosque in Gaza and the weapons held there by Hamas explaining the public why it was necessary for the IDF to bomb the mosque. Therefore, a target that would be considered unacceptable by the public became in some way justified. Another movie “Israeli Humanitarian Aid to Gaza” illustrated Israeli trucks loaded with humanitarian aid for Gazan people, who were going through the Kerem Shalom crossing, hence showing to the world that Israel cares about Palestinians.

This new tactic enabled Israel to show the public opinion the realities of war documented in real time to shape the latter’s views on the story. During the operation Israel for the first time managed to coordinate spreading the key messages on many levels, traditional media as well as diplomatic channels, pro-Israeli non-governmental organizations and social media. The effect was an epidemic of Israeli message abroad. Every media outlet was repeating Israeli message while Palestinians did not have any chances against them, as they did not send one clear messages to the foreign audience. Networking among Israelis helped a lot, campaigners were forwarding emails with the “what are we against” message to unanimously explain to foreign public what are the objectives of Israel.

However, some scholars claimed that part of the *hasbara* strategy to justify IDF operation in the Gaza Strip was to buy enough time to be able to bomb the targets as long as possible to finish what had to be done (Caldwell, Murphy & Menning, 2009). As long as the IDF activities were framed positively or neutrally, Israel did not have to worry about international community criticism later resulting in another United Nations Security Council resolution as it happened before in case of all Israeli-Palestinian conflicts.

Moreover, traditional media were successively denied by the IDF the access to the potential battlefields several months prior to the operation due date in order to control the flow of information from this area. The main points to present to the foreign audience were that the responsibility of the conflict lies on the enemy (Hamas), Israel is responding in self-defense, Israel regrets all civilian losses but it is the enemy side that is to blame. Nevertheless, the operation Cast Lead ended with issuing the Goldstone Report by the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2009, accusing of violating humanitarian law and causing deaths of innocent civilians.

Israeli raid on Mavi Marmara Flotilla that took place in 2010 that carried humanitarian and construction materials resulted in killing nine Turkish activists while many others were

injured including Israeli soldiers. The IDF raid quickly reached the world media resulting in protests against Israel and condemnation for its actions, especially for killing the activists. This time the crisis management on the Israeli side failed again. Several hours after the raid took place the IDF Spokesperson's Unit released on YouTube a series of videos. Simultaneously, the activists on the ship were detained by the IDF; and hence, only Israeli content was reaching public opinion. The aim was to create a strong message that IDF soldiers were fighting in self-defense when attacked by the activists in order to somehow justify killing of nine Turks. What Israelis presented was filled with gaps and "the evidence did not speak for itself, rather the IDF spoke for it" (Allan & Brown, 2010), "Tens of rioters hit an IDF soldier and try to kidnap him" (Allan & Brown, 2010) reads one caption, "Stun grenade thrown at soldiers" (Allan & Brown, 2010) says another. Soon after the detainees were set free the footage appeared on the media in contrast to what Israeli authorities presented, thus contributing to a cognitive dissonance on the part of the public opinion.

During Operation Pillar of Defense in 2012 in Gaza Israeli authorities leveraged social media war to a completely new level. By using social media, they created an ongoing stream of information on IDF's Twitter, Facebook and blogs making it possible for the users to observe the war in real-time in order to shape one's beliefs immediately. Innocent Israelis constituted a target for terrorists who were firing rockets at them; the role of the IDF was to protect them by eliminating terrorists without harming civilians in Gaza if possible. First the IDF informed about the start of the Operation Pillar of Defense with a ... tweet. Next, about hitting the first target Ahmed Al-Jabari. Then explained who Ahmed Al-Jabari was and why he needed to be eliminated. Short summary of the achievements was presented by the IDF at the end of each day. Later Israel even adopted Hamas rhetoric and tagged each of its tweet with #IsraelUnderAttack. At the same time Hamas armed wing the Al-Qassam Brigades also tried to keep up but not as successfully. First time a dialogue between two enemies mocking each other via their social accounts took place.

For the first time Israel was decisive and aggressive in its *hasbara* conduct. It was informing about its actions but no longer in an apologizing manner. After the end of the operation, IDF officials announced a full victory on the media. However, the Foreign Policy magazine journalist Uri Friedman further questioned, "Still, the IDF's approach to getting the word out about Operation Pillar of Defense does represent a milestone in military communications — one we should reflect on. What does it mean for us as a society when we can follow a targeted killing in real time, and watch a video of it on YouTube hours later?" (Friedman, 2012).

Last example, Operation Protective Edge that took place in 2014 as a result of kidnapping and murdering three Israeli teenagers followed by kidnapping and murdering of a Palestinian teenager and the intensification of military activities, once again proved that social media war is as important as the traditional one. It was about winning the hearts and minds of foreign public opinion. Hamas used such hashtags as #GazaUnderAttack, #PrayFor Gaza and #StopIsrael to highlight the suffering of Palestinian civilians and to portray them as victims who got attacked by the IDF. During the Operation Protective Edge a Twitter account under the name Farah Gazan who was tweeting, while giving an insight of how the life in Gaza looks like including the bombardment of her city by the IDF got vast attention from the international journalists. Her identity and story appeared to be legitimate and was portrayed as a modern Anne Frank. Monitoring Gazan social media by the IDF allowed to

collect valuable data to be used for *hasbara* purposes. For example, they caught complaints of Gazans about Hamas stealing humanitarian food stocks. Therefore, the IDF sent a drone to track the vehicle and recorded Hamas theft of supplies and posted it later on social media platforms. Moreover, monitoring social media collected more valuable intelligence information than interrogations or site inspections.

5. CONCLUSIONS

From the research, it is possible to conclude that public diplomacy in the contemporary diplomacy conduct should be perceived as an essential component of state's foreign policy strategy. As Eytan Gilboa stated, "in the information age, national reputation has become a critical asset and 'soft power' has become a major instrument of foreign policy. Communication, education and persuasion are the principal techniques of foreign relations, not military force" (Gilboa, 2006). In case of Israel's usage of soft power tools is very much needed and for long time was neglected in its diplomacy conduct. Soft power in case of Israel should aim at "undermining the enemy's international reputation, capitalizing on the fact that human rights and respect of individual freedom (which) are now part of the global agenda, whether in Western communities or elsewhere" (Swalha, 2014).

Israel's security and policy cannot rely only on military deterrence anymore. Soft power must be taken under consideration and its ability to influence politics and other countries to behave in a manner that fits Israel's interests. The reputation of a country is nowadays one of the most important assets of state's power projection and agenda setting, simultaneously being a major instrument in achieving foreign policy goals. The main obstacle for Israel and for other countries as well is the fact that if a country is not attractive, then it cannot compete and facts are not crucial anymore. It is personality that matters, not the policies of the state. Therefore, it was decided to found public diplomacy on demonstrating that there is much more about Israel than conflict, tension and fighting terror. Moreover, as the reality of a still ongoing conflict has to be explained to the foreign public opinion, the government came up with an idea of linking Palestinian terror activities to ISIS terrorism with Israel becoming an expert on terror events and shaping the views of the world public.

Many scholars and Israeli society perceive bad conduct of *hasbara* as the main reason for Israel's diplomatic isolation and for its negative image internationally. However, the scope of the apparatus, standards, strategy and quality as depicted with various case studies in the research prove this claim to be wrong. Israeli *hasbara* was indeed in bad condition, lacking supervision and a strategy, but it was noticed (state comptrollers reports 2007, 2012, 2015), verified and suitable changes were implemented, including funding. For many years for Israel the main mistake with *hasbara* was to explain itself, to legitimize its actions in a way to prove that Israel is not doing anything wrongful. But the source of such an approach can be derived from Zionist movement, with Herzl as a leader who valued the importance of *hasbara*, that is from convincing and explaining why the state has to be established based on cultural, moral and socio-psychological aspects. In contrast to Ben Gurion and Eastern European Zionism, this added socialist component to the movement. It was focused on doing, rather than gaining support or explaining, perceiving it as a key to success of Zionist activity in Palestine. Moreover, as a leader of the new established state, Ben Gurion and other representatives of the state were focused more on creating the new Jew, strong Sabra in comparison to weak Jew

of Diaspora. Instead of using public diplomacy for its own purpose Israel became a victim of it, especially from the Palestinian side and other Arab countries. And that is a fact. However, many commentators and scholars raise the issue of the comparing it to other countries. The question here is to what, to which state, organization, international actors Israel in its conduct of public diplomacy should be compared? Israel is a unique case to examine when it comes to public diplomacy and the challenges it is facing, so the argument of comparison is perceived in this research as inadequate, because on what basis it can be made? More research is required to determine the efficacy of *hasbara* practices and achieving its strategy goals, which requires setting a specific method of measuring it and providing suitable data. Very much is done by the Israeli authorities and many various programs are launched, but we cannot answer what is effective and this is something that cannot be stated with qualitative methods and empirical study.

In the new communication era, nothing can be controlled or regulated as it all has its own dynamics. What matters is how certain images combined with facts skew people's perception of a certain matter. Therefore, one of the main challenges for Israeli public diplomacy is undoubtedly the technology revolution. Even though Israel is trying to influence the foreign public opinion with facts it may not win in this battle of "hearts and minds". Interpretation, but not facts, counts in today's word, combined with good timing and images that follow a certain story. The unpredictability is one of the major obstacles for Israel to spread the new, better and more attractive image of the country. Moreover, Israel has to constantly fight with the preexisting national stereotypes foreigners have.

Israeli representatives very often raise an issue of Israel being subject to critique, condemnation and attacks of various entities such as UN bodies and its agencies, non-governmental organizations in Europe and US and other countries. That is a fact, but that is also the prerogatives of democracy and freedom of speech. Israel, regarded as a more powerful side to the conflict, is very often critiqued for not revising its policies and not ending the conflict with Palestinians (who do not incline towards peace either) but it does make a lot of effort to win foreign and internal public opinion's sympathy for its vision and version of events during military activities in the region. And here the question of morality of the online live stream of military activities arises: how are both Israelis and Palestinians supposed to justify the war.

On the other hand, Israel has to face unusual challenges. It suffers from two types of anti-Semitism: the traditional one based on religious premises and modern, that is racial one. Moreover, it still seeks legitimization for establishment of the state, the arguments for it such as being nation among nations, historical right and the events of Holocaust no longer persuade foreign public opinion about authorizing its military activities in regard to West Bank, Gaza and the Palestinian people. Western liberal democracy states and citizens demand from Israel a moral explanation. Especially because of the decolonization process taking place in the 60s and 70s, Israel adopted an apologetic approach, because what moral standpoint could it present to expelling from the land the people some of which were inhibited for generations by their ancestors. A major paradigm shift has to be noticed here as it is no longer a discourse on the right of Israel to exist on the international arena (apart from Arab states and Palestinians), but it became a question of what Israel did and continues to do as an existing state to maintain its existence.

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