

## THE PLACE OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN THE ASYMMETRIC MEDIA CONFLICT: THE “HASBARA EXAMPLE” IN THE HEZBOLLAH –ISRAEL MEDIA WAR

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### Abstract

*Scores of people compromise on that: The most important notion in Middle East is “asymmetry”. The military strength among the parties and the “asymmetrical conflict” used as an expression that indicates the difference in “technology” and qualified as a “means of conflict that is no less important than technological and military strength in directing public opinion” would have been unavoidable for the media not to use. Public diplomacy – which have to use media successfully - is the sum of activities that a state -in order to improve its national interests and image and through all legitimate means- conducts to influence foreign countries' publics, governments, and all persons and institutions participating in the social life, and to contribute to establishing closer relationships between countries. An in my opinion , as an instrument, public diplomacy, which makes achievements possible beyond resistance or struggles on the battlefield where asymmetric conflict is accepted as destiny may be a chance for the Middle East geography. In this geography where pulling back technological or economic conditions to an asymmetric framework seems impossible, public diplomacy appears to be the unique key for a visible transformation within the Orientalist perspective of hundreds of years within asymmetric dependence conditions. So, this study is based on the acceptance that the Israeli “Hasbara” is an effective and systematic public diplomacy example and that the Arab world at no time could benefit to a necessary degree from a systematic public diplomacy communication process.*

**Keywords:** Public Diplomacy, Hasbara, Israel.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Public Diplomacy can be described as the effort to influence through every possible legitimate means of gaining legitimacy for the efforts of the actions taken by all individuals, corporations and organizations that participate in the communal living of foreign countries in order to expand the national interest and image of a nation. Within the coverage of this study, it is important to pay particular attention to the concept of “interest,” for our topic, the Middle East geography, is at the forefront of a *médiatique* arena where interests frequently clash. The most important concept that comes to the agenda in this geography is the concept of “asymmetry”. The military strength among the parties and the “asymmetrical conflict” used as an expression that indicates the difference in “technology” and qualified as a “means of conflict that is no less important than technological and military strength in directing public opinion” would have been unavoidable for the media not to use. As it is known, “mutual dependence” in reality spells Western expansionism and its most ruthless form: multidimensional exploitation. Among the leading thesis towards this view is Mattelard’s “Asymmetric Mutual Dependence”. In this study, this related thesis will be considered from the dimension of the media and linked to public diplomacy which is a daily topic. Because, just as media control and use is important for public diplomacy, asymmetric dependency conditions that have to struggle are as much a reality in which its acceptance has been put forth in many studies.

For example, Harvard University’s Marvin Kalb and Carol Seivetz in their study, “The Israeli- Hezbollah War of 2006: The Media as a Weapon in Asymmetrical Conflict” attempt to determine as an example of public diplomacy, the side that can affect the media in any direction it wishes and that can use it as a weapon during the 2006 Lebanon War.

### 2. PURPOSE AND METHOD

The purpose of this study is to put forth the place and importance of asymmetric media conflict in the media use of public diplomacy in the Middle East geography. Since in the area of international communications, the things that give meaning to the concept “asymmetric” are not “rightness” or your “unrighteousness” or even telling the “truth,” it is the power to reach the targeted information to the target audience and the Arab world must now become aware of the need for this power.

With the aim of contributing to this awareness, the “Hasbara” example with its successful aspects will be examined in detail and Hasbara will be subjected to a textual analysis.

### 3. THEORETICAL ASSESSMENT

#### 3.1 Societal Will of Power and The Ruling Government of Middle East

Nietzsche said: “Wherever a saw a living being, I saw a will directed towards power. Even in the will that serves, I saw the will to become a master.”

The will to power is an immanent event in an individual and the society that human beings form. Since the beginning of history the one thing that singles out societal relations that is directed by humans is “power.”

Power as part of our subject could be described in the context of being in possession of resources and skills that can affect the results. Based on this description, if a country has a relatively large population large population and territory, extensive natural resources, economic strength, military force and social stability than that country is considered as having power in terms of domination and the ability to have its subjects comply with this (Nye, 2005: 12). Yet this acceptance is a significant error that confuses the concepts of power with the ruling power.

Whereas in the context of our topic the use of force of a “ruling government” is important where we can accept its hegemonic, hierarchical, dominating and authoritative style, at a theoretical level power and ruling power or government are two different concepts and it is important to know this difference.

Power is a factual situation. In societal relations, a person being able to have another person or persons do what he wishes is subordinating this person or persons to himself. Ruling governments, on the other hand, as a normative concept, is the right to ask for obedience by one person from others in societal relations (Duverge, 1998: 129).

Power directed toward ruling governments in a country with resources such as abundant population and land, extensive natural resources, economic and military strength and social stability is based on concrete values with its engaging characteristics, cultural, political values and which appears legitimate or has policies that have a moral authority.

How has this will related to the power to possess, given direction to the world that we live in, to the history of international relations? What are its institutional and material foundations?

In the history of international relations, all institutional developments have been realized and will be realized within the framework of differences of dualist epistemology and where power struggles are immanent. Such thinkers as Montesquieu, Kant, Hegel, Hume, Locke, James Mill, Dante, Weber, Karl Marx, Engels to Fukuyama and Huntington have each laid a brick in the chasm between East and West and reflected on this power struggle and has continued as such. Hundreds of thinkers have taken the ambition to rule within the context of the will of power and with the support of dualist epistemology have made their contribution by dividing the world as East and West, North and South, developed and underdeveloped, First and Third Worlds. For example, Thomas Barnett during this decade in the “core and gap” doctrine divided the world into two with the “core” being developed, reliable and stable while the “gap” being underdeveloped, unstable and threatening. Barnett associated reliability and conflict into a classification based on his own criteria and thereby not only gave a credible mission to the dominant force but also rationalized this force.

The need to relate dualist epistemology with power struggle in the will of power of international relations, leads us to this acceptance: the history of power struggles in the world is the West trying to overcoming its impasse through expansionism (namely colonialism) and this, therefore, should start at a concurrent point and evaluated within this context. Because, as can clearly be seen in the history of international relations, what has left its mark on power struggles has taken shape from a dualist difference such as “East-West” and “developed-underdeveloped.” *Western expansionism that gives direction to power struggles* was first based on the claim to overcome agriculture raw materials impasse through trade, later militarily to rid the existence of a perverse religion with the existence of its own divine religion and later, based on the assertion that the West is the center of civilization, culture and history, to bring civilization, and with its thesis on modernization, realizing this militarily and culturally. In the point arrived at today, it is predominantly a power relationship that is not directly based on brute force.

In summary, in the process of classical imperialism that was created by Western expansionism, while war and the military dimension was extensively used and while international relations was conducted with brute force, after 1980, in particular, in a world that was to be built on expressions of a new world order and globalization, a new process of imperialism is accompanying global capitalism. In the classical imperialism process, it appears that the political actors have focused solely on military existence and classical military solutions.

According to the assertions made, the process known as neo-imperialism or the new world order as it is called must recognize the development of human rights and living standards and democracy even though as a vehicle it simplifies the development of the capitalist economy. In other words, the new democracies that have taken the place of authoritarian states have gained importance in the power of influencing public opinion and subject to these statements, political powers have lesser freedom than autocracies in developing tactics.

In this new phase of capitalism-imperialism, without the need for direct violence and war its purpose is to control the sources of raw materials, and in easing capital exports and supervision of markets. Thus, the shape of international reflection of the will of power has been revised according to this objective. The Middle East geography, on the other hand, is a special area of a power struggle. In this geography the struggle between “those” that use brute force through resistance and the “others” through frustration and hopelessness as a result of soft power continue the struggle hand in hand.

No doubt the source of this continuity is the Tradition of Western Thought. According to Levinas, who debated the ‘me-them’ dichotomy that is the ethical reflection of dualist separation in Western Thought, “Western philosophy is a philosophy that by applying various dualist differentiation of ‘them,’ as existence that is brought forward, loses its own distinction and becomes as an allergy to ‘them’ without recovery” (Küçükalp, Cevizci, 2009: 183). And this philosophy which guides world history is based on asymmetric power relations, an area of unequal struggle. Whereas as Pessoa has stated, “...to live is to be them.” (Pessoa, 1991: 43).

In summary, as a social being, the history of mankind that has continued collectively by developing various forms of relations is in its basic form of relationship has been a “power relationship” and this relationship in the last few centuries, where it has been currently on the agenda, is the geography of the Middle East that is considered as where relations based on self-interest have been locked.

### **3.2 The Will of Power in the Middle East**

In the narrowest sense, the “Middle East” concept has been used to describe the basin from the Nile to Mesopotamia and in its widest sense from Morocco to Pakistan that encompasses the accumulation of ancient mankind, belonging of civilization, as a geo-cultural basin of Islamic identity, as a geo-economic source of petroleum, as a physical geography a steppe and a desert climate and strategically that evokes elements of the central line of the rimland zone that circles Euro-Asia (Ayten, 2003: 85).

For the Middle East region with its riches has always been seen as a new opportunity worth struggling for in overcoming obstacles for the rest of the world.

In this context, the Middle East has been throughout the history of mankind a region of hot conflict due to its importance. Despite the fact that it is a region that traditionally is at a crossroad between cultures and religions, because of its petroleum riches, it has been the stage of power struggles in particular during the last century. For this reason it is among the most unstable regions in the world. Thus, alliance relations directed towards power struggles have transcended regional boundaries and has reached dangerous proportions (Bal, 2003: 2).

For empires throughout history, this geography worth fighting over is unfortunately still a vehicle for actual wars that still encompass violent power struggles. For these reasons, all openings related to the concept of “power” theoretically are read again and again within the context of this geography. Soft power considered as “public diplomacy” is also one of these openings.

### **3.3 Asymmetric Dependency and the Middle East in the Context of Will to Power**

#### **3.3.1 From Mutual Dependency to Asymmetric Dependence in International Relations**

However real power struggles are shaped by dualist discord in international relations, dependency is to that degree real. The will to power is not a will due to the dialectic need of one’s own but due to the impulse of the powerless.

In fact, according to many psychoanalysts the will to power is the outer expression of dependence on an external power. For the international dimension of this acceptance, the following can be said: The real target in the will to power is that in order to make dependent the values and practices that is defined as central through all means from communications technology to war technology from brute power to soft power, is to make the “other” carry out your requirements and to be subject to you. Thus, institutional openings related to international communications emphasizes the gap between the center and the periphery and that this gap can be rapidly closed with the assistance in international technologies through dependence on the center. In this way, numerous theoretical studies through different forms and communications have considered the relations between dependence among civilizations including brute force within a large area of realization.

During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, expressions of “globalization” and “the new world order” having left its mark, parallel to the developments in technology and with the gradual elimination of national boundaries, science, art, culture, politics and economics of nations throughout the world have become dependent on each other and in this context, common values have put forth the thesis of “globalization” in the form of approaches and attitudes that are required to be embraced. With the thesis on “globalization” the old “development” and “change” ideas were put into new disguises and “mutual dependence” was said to have arrived with “globalization” that ended ideological and class struggles. Consequently, by far the most meaningful theoretical approach, and that is appropriate for our study relating to dependence in international relations, is the 20<sup>th</sup> century. “For to hold a region through imperialism during this period has been replaced by “dependence and other evil forms” of economic and technological sovereignty.” (Amin, El Kenz, 2005: 105).

These approaches that we can gather under the heading of Western type development theories have made important comments on the role of communications and dependency in international relations. While stating that Western values and their structure of society is the best and the unavoidable path in the social and economic organization of the world as an agency, in solidifying the theoretical structure with evidences they have pointed out to **mass communication technology vehicles**. In justifying the indicators in the level of development of the West with the backwardness in “underdeveloped” countries, the quantitative volume of the mass communication vehicles and together with this the free flow of information was resorted to. In this context, the quantitative scarcity of communication technologies in a country was presented as an indication of backwardness. In short, communication technology became one of the central pillars of “Western type modernization and development theories.” Western sourced communication technology shown as proof of the development level of the West, was at the same time presented as an agency of escape from “being backward” and in this context, a definition was provided in the dealings – which in fact is a one way flow - between developed and less developed nations.

Among the important approaches that convey the view that both worlds equally need each other, but in fact provide the foundation for Western expansionism, are theories that can be named as “**Mutual Dependence**.” In these approaches where the West is a central reference point, at first, in order to support the mutual dependence between developed and the developing nations, the transfer of communication technologies from the West to the East and “development” expected in this manner was equated with impartiality or good functionality. McLuhan’s “Global Village” thesis, the “Diffusion of Innovations” thesis by Everett Rogers, the “Economic Development” model of Rostow and the “Cultural Lag” approach of Ogburn and others have provided examples of these approaches.

In fact, the mutual dependent balance of power explains collectivism and joint development. The “mutual dependence” of global ideology is the “mutual dependence” of those that exploit and those that are exploited in the global market. In this dependency, the dependence of the exploiter to the exploited contains vital importance and value. The dependence of the exploited to the exploiter is the dependence of individuals that have had their living conditions taken away from them (Erdoğan, Alemdar, 2005: 133).

From our subject at hand, the important point in terms of the perception of dependence, wherever the point of concentration, starts from the acceptance of “inequality-instability.” Based on this, the basic acceptance of a large part of critical approaches in the area of communications is the unbalanced dependence between the Center (West) and the Periphery (East) of a relationship that is based on one side’s hegemony and that this relationship through communication technologies has dominated all areas, such as economics, culture and politics. Thus, according to critical approaches, in the transfer of communications technologies from the West to the East and the “development” expected in this way is not possible to criticize through impartiality or good functionality.

The group that we can name as “**Marxist Critical Approaches**” has defined the manner of the relationship between East and West as “imperialism” instead of “dependence” or “development.” Matellart with his thesis of “**Non-Symmetric Mutual Dependence**” that rejects the neutrality of Western type of modernization, expansion and development; Schiller’s with his thesis of “**Cultural Imperialism**,” Boyd-Barret with this thesis of “**Media Imperialism**,” Smythe’s thesis of the “**Consciousness Industry**,” and Garnham’s thesis of “**Cultural Materialism**” and many others are included in this group.

The basic acceptance of the critical approaches relating to East-West relations is that, the countries in the center (West) and the periphery (East) is of one sides’ asymmetric dependence on another’s sovereignty and that economic, cultural, political and other dimensions are under the influence of the dominating side. At this point there is a benefit in putting forth the sides that describe the asymmetric dependence relations. First, in order for this relationship to be mutually dependent, it must be symmetric or near symmetric. In a relationship where there is no symmetry whatever the quantity may be, the sides in this relations whether local, national or international, we can state that exploitation is still present.

Therefore, asymmetric dependency as the most important dichotomy of dualist epistemology of “East-West” is a candidate in priority illusion in support of one of the premises. The concepts place at the two ends of the asymmetric relationship is the developed West and the underdeveloped East and in this dichotomy in this relationship in question, the part that it is in its favor is of course the “West.” The most important agent in the sustainability of this type of relationship is the mass communication vehicles.

In point of fact, it is highly unlikely to mention a symmetric relation in the fullest sense in international relations. We can find the ideal symmetric communicative relations in Habermas’ description. According to Habermas, “the ideal form of speaking is where all participants in the selection and execution of a speech have equal chances symmetrically as in the Agora, Forum or salons and is completely free of domination” (Habermas, 1981: 17).

For example, with his thesis on non-symmetric mutual dependence Mattelart has stated the complications of the imperialist process and the relations between its local, national and international dimensions and various studies conducted on cultural imperialism and cultural dependency has provided us with valuable information on cultural sovereignty. Related to this, the developments in communication technologies (videos, cable tv, satellite etc.) has not only brought a wave of unequal/unbalanced technological media but also prevented alternative developments as well (Mattelart, 1994).

### 3.3.2 Asymmetric Dependence in International Relations and Media Conflict

Considering the operation of mass media defined as the main agents in the international relations process, many communication theories interpreting emerged relation forms have been generated. One of the most important communication model defining this relation as “exploitation” or “asymmetric dependence” is the “**Media Imperialism**” theory of Boyd-Barrett. According to this theory, “there is an unequal, asymmetric and one-way flow from the West to the East/from the North to the South and this reinforces hegemony” (Boyd-Barrett, 1977: 133).

Similarly, as stated in the “**Culture Imperialism**” theory of Schiller, “the communication policy of the West serves for dispersing the American political and economic system and it is a harmless and non-neutral power.” (Schiller, 1992: 194). Therefore, “mutual exchange” or “mutual dependence” relation which is loaded by development institutions on communication instruments serve the *expansionism of the West* (imperialism) by camouflaging an unbalanced (one way) and imperial relations.

The East, which is located on both ends of the asymmetric dependence relation and which is factionalized against the West, must be limited to the Arab world, Iran and Turkey which are a part of Mediterranean history and in relationship with the West for hundreds of years. In other words, the Middle East, “centre of instability and underdevelopment for some and center of oil and wealth for others, and about not much told and few things known (Arı, 2004: 9), is a factionalized region where religious Muslims and ethnic Turks, Arabs and Persians live on. Therefore, this flow is constantly from America and Europe towards the Middle East. Namely, the Middle East peoples are the most explicit object of asymmetric dependence in the world and based on the direction of the flow.

Therefore, the most important concept on the agenda regarding this geography is the concept of “asymmetry.” According to certain thinkers, using this concept as “asymmetric dependence” may gradually result in the danger of legitimizing the relations based on exploitation. Because, as a solution, it is possible to create a way of thinking towards approximating this bond to symmetric. Thus, it is more meaningful to use asymmetric relations with phrases such as “asymmetric conflict” instead of asymmetric dependence. Hence, asymmetric media relations between the East and the West are in line with this description. “Asymmetric Conflict” which is used as “military power” and “technology” between parties is inevitable and has been used by the media which is described as “a tool for struggle that shapes public opinion and which is as important as technological and military power.”

In fact, as stated above, the role that is played by the mass media as a change agent in the international arena by correlating with functionality date back to ancient times. However, the reason for placing this into the title of media wars is the Gulf War. With the Gulf War, the perception that, “war is not only on the battlefield, it is engraved in people’s mind by means of the media” within the world where ‘live war is watched’ is gradually consolidated.

### 3.3.3 The Key Point in Mass Media Wars: The Middle East and the Hezbollah-Israel Conflict

According to Hall, 'reality is the use of reality in a specific manner. Mass media not only regenerates reality established in a specific manner but also defines it. Media adds meaning to things by actively choosing and presenting and configuring and shaping them instead of transmitting an established meaning. Hall examined how ideology and power became a part of the reality setup and how the explanation of its meaning became a political struggling ground (Jensen, 1992: 21) and describes media clout that becomes prominent in media struggles.

As is known, the Gulf War has an important place as it is the first of the media wars that took place at the center of the Middle East. “The Gulf War was a technology war in which the government and particularly the army controlled the crisis and applied censorship and the controlled images could be watched simultaneously by means of satellites throughout the world by anyone who had television” (Özkaya, 2002: 577).

“During the Gulf War which may be defined as television war, the target audience of this television war shocked against periodical and regular live broadcast and, in a manner of speaking, lost their objective thinking abilities.” (Taylor, 1992: 322). The Gulf War is neither the first nor the last war in the Middle East. Therefore, the power and the affect of media discovered were not used for the last time. Within this process, blogs, images edited by Photoshop, internet and cell phones added to television ensured that the media is an important arena for conflicts. It is not difficult to state that the “winners” of the recent few wars and conflicts, particularly in the Middle East, were not determined by military operations but by media wars. One of the best examples for this is the war between Hezbollah and Israel in South Lebanon which lasted 33 days. Hezbollah and Israel had already gained experience between the years 1990 and 2000 which lead to Israel’s withdrawal from Southern Lebanon.

During these years, Hezbollah broadcast the loss of Israeli soldiers caused by their attacks through Al-Manar television. In fact, they even had broadcasts in Hebrew for Israeli soldiers and civilians. Both in the 1990s and 2006 wars, Hezbollah’s strategy against Israel was not to win a military conflict but to strengthen their image of resistance by psychologically wearing down the other side. During recent years Hezbollah has established a media empire that consists of Al-Manar television broadcasting through satellite, the Al-Nur radio station, moqawama.net website and other media organs. What differentiates the 2006 Hezbollah-Israel war from other wars is the active participation of the “new media” to the media war. Communications used by both sides in the war of 2006 was conducted through the use of cell phones, digital cameras, video recorders, blogs, You tube and other websites. Israel supporters used instruments such as sarcastic flash animations and games about Hezbollah and their leader Nasrallah. The Israeli army sent texted messages to Lebanese citizens living in the region they were to assault to warn them and to make propaganda against Hezbollah. Furthermore, Israel supporters from all over the world sent letters and comments called “Hasbara” to television channels and newspapers that had statements in favor of Israel (Varon, 2009a).

Israel launched the Gaza Operation much more prepared, in 2008. In line with the findings of Winogard Commission established after the Hezbollah - Israel War of 2006, Israel gave the signal to a media war.

Since Israel believed that they could not control the media as they wished in the 2006 War, they prohibited journalists from entering Gaza to prevent Hamas from manipulating the media; images were not captured by journalists but by soldiers having undergone special training in camera use; cell phone frequencies were deterred electronically within the Gaza region; the relationship between Israeli army, the Foreign Affairs and Prime Ministries were tied to one center named the National Information Directorate; and active public relation campaigns were held by Foreign Affairs officials. The rationale for the operation and selected targets were presented; army spokesmen were selected from women to give a “softer” impression to the world; El-Aksa television and El-Risala newspaper buildings of Hamas were bombed to prevent their propaganda sources; and even the El-Aksa building was used for anti-Hamas broadcasts.

The new media was used actively during the relevant period by Israel. Cell phones and texted messages were used to threaten Hamas militants; texted messages were sent to civilians to abandon the region prior to assaults; the Twitter account of the Israeli Consulate in New York was used for a press conference; Israeli army spokesmen/women demonstrated point blank shootings by opening a YouTube channel; the Israeli government established a voluntary blogger army especially from immigrants that know a foreign language and propaganda on behalf of Israel by these bloggers on the internet sites such as The Guardian, the BBC, and The Times and other channels was ensured. Activities that were not directly supported by Israel but carried by the initiatives of Israel supporters in this area of conflict reached incredible proportions. An internet site called Helpuswin.org attacked pro-Hamas websites by transforming the computers of eight thousand users to volunteer as “hackers” and users shared spontaneous rocket attacks from Hamas to Israel on Facebook and Twitter by means of an application called “Qassamcount” are good examples of the aforesaid new media usage (Varon, 2009b).

As a result of the technological and military inequality between the parties, the Middle East which is thought of an asymmetric war zone and arena in all manners, there are infinite numbers of examples of this fact. As can be put forth with examples, the media cannot be accepted as a channel through which information can be shared more objectively (or more non-objectively) by means of communication to individuals. Thus, it can be understood that the media can be an effective weapon instead of a free communication instrument by governments or through individual initiatives. In terms of international communications, the public opinion of other countries, its legitimacy in the view of public opinion of other countries and preferences of public opinion of other countries are the target point of this weapon which can change all asymmetric conditions. Now, the provider of this framework for all of this is the effectively and comprehensively designed “public diplomacy strategy.”

#### **4. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST: MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE**

##### **4.1 The Concept of Public Diplomacy**

“Public diplomacy is based on the ability to shape others’ preferences. The ability to shape others’ preferences is related to an attractive character, culture, political values and institutions and policies that are believed to be legitimate or ethic” (Nye, 2005: 15). As stated previously, the international power concept is equated with a country that has a relatively large population and territory, extensive natural resources, economic strength, military force and social stability. However, the “power” concept that determined international relations throughout history is not only related to the large population and territory of a country with extensive natural resources, economic strength, military force and social stability and other material values. Similarly, it is based on an attractive character, culture, political values and institutions and policies that are believed to be legitimate or ethic. Achieving these abstract values is shaped by successful public diplomacy which is the most important component of the media.

Because, the world has entered a new phase of imperialism and, in this new phase, the main target has been set as controlling raw material sources, capital outflow and controlling the market without any need to direct violence and war. Therefore, public diplomacy is the main tool serving the requirements of this process by developing political imperialism, cultural imperialism and communication imperialism within the framework of the mechanism to influence. Because, there is a new reference point called “public opinion” which is believed to represent the collective consciousness and common mind. And countries must be backed by public opinion to legitimize their policies. Moreover, public opinion may be widespread which can cover all related matters and countries.

## 4.2 The Significance of Public Diplomacy for the Middle East Geography

This instrument, which makes achievements possible beyond resistance or struggles on the battlefield where asymmetric conflict is accepted as destiny may be a chance for the Middle East geography. In this geography where pulling back technological or economic conditions to an asymmetric framework seems impossible, public diplomacy appears to be the unique key for a visible transformation within the Orientalist perspective of hundreds of years within asymmetric dependence conditions. Because, the decision of Vienna Church Council of 1312 after the Crusades to establish seats on Arabic, Greek, Hebrew and Syriac and research which were under the domination of England and France for about 150 years after the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798, which is believed to be birth of the modern Orientalist movement and which was under the domination of the United States in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, transformed the perception of the East into a systematic information (logos) called “Orientalism” and became the resource for the generation of fictional reality regarding the Middle East geography.

Together with Orientalism, the real East began to become distant using media, literature and academic works as well as basic clichés, semi realities, metaphysic and aggressive discourses. Orientalism discipline, which is the most important thing for the West to prove they are predominant in all other parts of the world, is a strong supremacy discourse which restrains the entire world into it and where humbling myths are immanent and which has left important marks on all mankind. “The reason why this region has always been considered as a worthless part of the world although it has a wider and even bigger potential power when compared with the West, is the systematic generation and flow of information that has been the source of its destiny as a particular hostile region to be watched with fear.” (Said, 2000: 80). Using and reinforcing the most negative images regarding the East with information based on myths, imagination and fictions has survived to this day by very effective channels such as the media. Therefore, changing this perception is both an important necessity and an important difficulty. This can only be possible through an important component of media, a successful public diplomacy, which would be as systematic and continuous as “Orientalism.”

Furthermore, the effective use of this medium is a chance for the Middle East nations not only for outside public opinion but for their own people who are frustrated as a result of losing their own realities. For, as all we know, the Middle East nations gain legitimacy to the extent they can give the impression to their repressed and exploited people that they are resisting aggression. Frank Furedi in his book *Culture of Fear* states that “Fear is a mechanism that is a concentration of the mind of a person that is faced with a situation that is unexpected and unforeseen... Our personal experiences shape our imagination and fears. Yet the majority of the fears that we presently live in Western society does not arise from our own personal experiences” (2001:8). Contrary to Furedi writing his book to explain as to why Western societies are in an obsession on security that is extraordinary and needless, the presupposition of this article is of the view that the peoples of the Middle East are in a rightful security anxiety. For contrary to Westerners, the source of the fears of these people is still their individual experiences: the actual war conditions that they have experienced. Under asymmetric war conditions, the only way to suppress this fear and what they entail, as with “public diplomacy” – as a new beginning that will minimize inequality – is to effectively use the means of political struggle.

## 5. FINDINGS

### **A PUBLIC DIPLOMACY EXAMPLE THAT CAN SHAPE ASYMMETRIC RELATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST: “HASBARA”**

Public diplomacy is a very successful process carried out by Israel. Undoubtedly, its systematic and determined lobby, its power over the global media network, Mostar and the Hasbara Commission (Israeli Reaction Center) have great skills in shaping the flow of information. Public diplomacy activities towards Westerners who approach the Jewish people with embarrassment and sensitivity due to the holocaust during the Second World War gain legitimacy beyond the perceptions of justice and injustice.

“Hasbara” means define/explain, enlighten in Hebrew. This giant institution with a budget of millions of dollars to prove their rightness throughout the world manages information in one center and spreads an incredible amount of information... It creates an information-management platform in which everything is taken as given on a vast majority of the public and policy makers (Günek, 2010). Hasbara is the Hebrew word for public diplomacy, i.e. the role people outside of government can have to spread pro-Israel messages and attack Israel's critics.

It is a tried and tested propaganda method long relayed not only by Israeli citizens, but also pro-Israel lobbies (e.g. AIPAC), pro-Israel Jewish community groups (e.g. CRIF) and pro-Israel think tanks (e.g. WINEP). With the advent of the web, pro-Israel groups working in tandem with Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has conducted an often successful and often intensive Hasbara effort targeting bloggers. This has included, for instance, efforts to leave comments in blog posts regarding Israel to defend the Israeli perspective (Al Amrani, 2010).

Continuing the activities of this unit has only been possible with a giant budget. Experts draw attention that the United States alone has given more than 144 billion US dollars to Israel as aid since Israel was founded. Examples of Israel's organized activities towards public diplomacy are almost infinite. For example, in this respect, the communications school of Ofer, the richest man in Israel with its full name of "The New Media Diplomacy Institute" or "Asper" in the city of Herzliya of Israel tries to legitimize the Gaza invasion to world public opinion through the studies it carries out. The founding mission of Asper was defined as explaining the theses of Israel to the world using and researching media technologies in accordance with this purpose.

For example, the infrastructure of a propaganda campaign that will be carried out by the Israel National Information Directorate via internet in the summer of 2008 with experts and students from various ministries and certainly from the Sami Ofer School has been completed. In Herzliya and Jerusalem, two crisis centers were founded where volunteers will be active for 24 hours on the internet.

In addition, on 27 December 2008, while Israeli warplanes were dropping bombs on Gaza a propaganda operation called 'Help Us Win' was launched concurrently. Volunteers in the crisis centers describe the 'tragedy' of Israel on social networks and blogs; bring forward the limited number of Kassam missiles launched from Gaza as an unprecedented disaster; and request the support of everybody by stating they are scared, that they are powerless and that they want peace. If a questionnaire was made on a media site anywhere in the world about the Gaza attacks all supporters are contacted immediately and asked to vote in favor of Israel. On the other hand, all broadcasting organs are exposed to a wide criticism with reader letters and are demanded to give more place to the views of Israel. Major broadcasting corporations that are already willing to support Israel have equated the Kassam missiles which are made by hand and many of which fell on empty land with phosphor bombs that lead to the death of hundreds of people by hiding behind virtual 'audience pressure' while the attacks gained time for weeks and the media operation was successfully concluded. ("Ofer" in *İletişim Oyunu*", 2010)

Furthermore, where "using technology productively and expediently" has turned media wars into wars; in the adequate support of citizens that know how to use technology and adequacy in the use of this technology, Hasbara is an important example. In the final analysis this has been proved with an organization named Giyus. According to GIYUS web site; "GIYUS is a global digital movement of activists who campaign on behalf of Israel. GIYUS is a way for busy but concerned individuals to work together and voice their opinions in support of Israel." (<http://www.giyus.org/about-us.html>)

GIYUS (Give Israel Your United Support) is a new project that has recently been released by the World Union of Jewish Students (WUJS) in order to balance anti-Israel sentiment expressed on the web and influence public opinion. To accomplish this, they created Megaphone, a free tool that can be downloaded from their website. Megaphone allows alerts to pop up on users' desktops every time it finds an attention-worthy article, poll or forum on the internet. Students and members of pro-Israel organizations are encouraged to visit the sites and express their opinions. (Harel, 2006)

In looking at the operational practice of Giyus we are faced with the following: In order to manipulate the surveys related to the Palestinians over the Internet, Israel has created a Firefox plugin. My means of this program named Giyus with tens of thousands of users, these users are instantly informed of Palestine related surveys on the Internet and are able to go on the offensive" (Arslaner, 2011). The nature of the offence is in general in the form of removing anti-Israel materials together with complaints appearing on the page and in flooding it with spam email that explains how anti-Semitism is on the rise.

reddit is a source for what's new and popular online. vote on links that you like or dislike and help decide what's popular, or submit your own!

self: 20,000 Pro-Israel supporters dispatched to social networking sites to 'manage public perception' of the Freedom Flotilla incident. (self.politics)

submitted 20 hours ago by tsoldrin

From the private version of megaphone <http://giyus.org/>

1075 comments share

search reddit

this post was submitted **982 points** (65%  
2,108 up votes 1,126 do

remember me re

comments

→ ↻ ☆ http://giyus.org/

er Count

100,000

60,000

40,000

25,000

15,000

10,000

8,000

4,000

3,000

1,500

**GIYUS.ORG** Give Israel Your United Support

Français Español Русский עברית

Today's conflicts are won by public opinion. Now is the time to be active and voice Israel's side to the world.

Join the effort in 3 easy steps:

- 1 **Download** and install Megaphone desktop tool
- 2 Receive desktop **alerts** on key articles and surveys
- 3 Click **alerts** to easily voice your opinion

Help us by reporting relevant articles and surveys.

[How to report](#)

**Together we can make a difference!**

"Final Solution" maps in the street of  
Jews walking around Berlin today are likely to be shocked as maps titled the "Final Solution" showing the Middle East without Israel are hang in Berlin.  
**Protest this act**

Your browser is not yet supported by Collective Web Assistant.

Supported platforms:

- Windows: 2000, XP SP2 and Vista
- Mac (Firefox only).
- Linux (Firefox only).

Supported browsers:

- Internet Explorer 6.0 and 7.0.
- Firefox 1.5 and 2.0.

Firefox users, [click here](#).

Internet Explorer users, [click here](#).

Go to the open internet board 4chan.org

Open boards, as 4Chan, that permit anonymous posting of content are a dangerous tool. Go to the boards Random (/b/) or Weapons (/k/) and talk about pro-Israel topics.

: 1275431749.jpg (48 KB, 350x270, pro-Palestinian activists.jpg)



Anonymous 06/01/10(Tue)18:35 No.1171622

- Fact: The Israeli navy has established a blockade of the Gaza strip.
- Fact: Several civilian ships did attempt to run the blockade.
- Fact: The Israeli Navy took appropriate action to prevent the blockade from being run.
- Fact: The crew and passengers of the civilian ships VIOLENTLY opposed the Navy's actions. Several Navy personnel were injured.
- Fact: The Navy personnel defended themselves, killing several of the civilians.
- Fact: Butthurt Arabs & their sympathizers use the situation to further their ultimate goal: the destruction of Israel.

Its unfortunate that people had to die, but the fault in this situation lies entirely with the 'pro-Palestinian activists' who:

- 1) tried to run the blockade.
- 2) violently opposed the actions of the Israeli Navy to enforce the blockade.

1275429727.jpg (80 KB, 641x426, 10.jpg)



Anonymous 06/01/10(Tue)18:02 No.1171036

The israeli army has a right to defend itself. There is no proof whatsoever that mission goal was anything other than redirecting the flotilla and apprehending those on board for deportation.

>>  Anonymous 06/01/10(Tue)18:02 No.1171044

Israel was not attacked.

>>  Anonymous 06/01/10(Tue)18:05 No.1171089

no one has the right to bully the citizens of other countries. Are you ready to take on the world?

Giyus is primarily assessed as one of the “Internet warrior groups” of Hasbara. Since the “Brand Israel” campaign started by Israel in 2005 up to the present time, together with the highly effective use of the new media, whereas the initial objectives of these groups that have come forth was to continuously spread the good news on the successes of the Israelis in the business world and path-breaking scientific and medical discoveries, with time turned to, “Spreading the image of Israel’s contribution to the development of humankind, its invariable right under continuous occupation conditions in this geography as a developed country.”

To all intents and purposes the internet is a theatre in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and we must be active in that theatre, otherwise we will lose," said Ilan Shturman, who is deputy director of the ministry's Hasbara department. And the existence of an "internet warfare team" came to light when it was included in this year's foreign ministry budget. About \$150,000 has been set aside for the first stage of development, with increased funding expected next year... The new team is expected to increase the ministry's close coordination with a private advocacy group, giyus.org. About 50,000 activists are reported to have downloaded a programme called Megaphone that sends an alert to their computers when an article critical of Israel is published. They are then supposed to bombard the site with comments supporting Israel. (Cook, 2009)

In looking at these examples, it can clearly be seen that that the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Israel has designed a cyber war over the Internet. Within the framework of this design, “Short texts defending Israel” and “copy and paste” on frequently visited sites, forums and blogs in the cyber world would be distributed in this manner, and thus, with the contribution of private Israeli groups, results of the survey of the massacre in Gaza would easily be turned in favor of Israel within a few hours.

In fact, the most important point we want to emphasise in this study is that necessity is not always a *sine qua non* for public diplomacy activities. That is to say, according to many studies, the whole Hasbara (propaganda) is based on lies. “The Hasbara project has been supported for years by Sayanim that altogether presents Israel as a ‘Western and democratic nation within the Arab Sea’. Within this time, the Jewish state torments its neighbors by massacring, leaving them to hunger and performing ethnic cleansing activities” (Atzmon, 2010). However, even upon this admission the success of Hasbara is approved. Because, as stated above, it is not difficult to say that the “winners” in last few wars and conflicts are more determined by media wars, not with military operations. And this is only possible by nations using public diplomacy strategy to utilize the media in a target driven, systematic and continuous manner.

For example, Israel states that they are an enemy of Hamas not the Palestinian people through Hasbara and claim that they are protecting the point of defense, and not the point of attack. They build on this discourse which they use as a deliberate public diplomacy basis.

For another example, all targets of attacks are correlated with terrorism and through this means they are placed on the defending end. The last example of this was the attack on the Turkish vessel carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza. Below is an example of Hasbara sent by e-mail and which coincides with the traditional and the new media:

**HASBARA EXAMPLE****Subject: news for your blog**

Message: Hi,

My name is Michael Moreno, and I take part of an online campaign that aims at explaining Israel's point of view regarding the Flotilla approaching GAZA.

The flotilla - that starts its progress towards the Gaza strip today, should arrive in Israeli territorial waters by tomorrow, and just as it arrives - I'd like to offer you some online content that represents our point of view on things. We found two documents that prove direct connection between the IHH - that's the organization that supports the Gaza flotilla and extremist Islamic groups. One - is a court document from the US Virginia court and the second is a report from the Danish institute for international studies which links the IHH to Hamas, al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations (they raise money for them). Below are the links to the documents as well as a summary of key points that we put together:

<http://www.diis.dk/graphics/Publications/WP2006/DIIS%20WP%202006-7.web.pdf>

court document: [http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case\\_docs/312.pdf#page](http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/312.pdf#page)

As a result of broadcasts Israel carried out after this event, the fact that Israel could not be brought to a point of apology is a result of the support she receives. And even with this support, by means of Hasbara and the media in Europe and North America which is under Jewish guidance and by demonising the Palestine Islamic Freedom movement it can be seen that it has achieved a great success in the West in terms of gaining sympathy. Now the question is how and in what ways the relationship between Israel and Palestine that is known to be an explicit asymmetric relation in terms of technology and economy can be drawn to symmetric point. The "rich" and "strong" from the Arab geography from which Palestine expected support for a considerable can be made possible with an example of total public diplomacy.

**5. CONCLUSION**

Firstly, since Hasbara is stated to be a public diplomacy activity by the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was discussed in this study as an example of public diplomacy beyond right or wrong evaluations. The explanation of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs is as follows: "Hasbara sounds passive and apologetic, yet there is nothing passive about it and Israel has nothing to apologize for. A much better term would probably be "public diplomacy" because it seeks to work with and convince the public, particularly decision makers, shapers of public opinion and important sectors of society." (Meir, 2005) On the other hand, if the world is in a clash of civilizations as Huntington claims and provides the evidence, the fact that the most important platform of this cause is the media must not be overlooked and what is necessary must be done.

Though it is problematic for the Middle East geography, the world has entered into a new phase of imperialism and in this new phase, the main target has been described as the control raw material sources, capital outflow and the supervision of the markets without any need to direct violence and war. Thus, public diplomacy is the main vehicle serving the requirements of this process by developing political imperialism, cultural imperialism and communications imperialism within the framework of the control mechanism. Because, the public information system of nations which are the inevitable parts of the global world today includes all communication channels and elements a citizen requires in his daily life and decisions.

Furthermore, "When the truth is replaced by silence, the silence is a lie" said Yevgeny Yevtushenko. Although it is argued that symmetry is being reached by "independent" media organs and the new media which have become the sincere outcome in the last few years in terms of the reflections of the media and its diplomatic use in the Middle East, it is difficult to state that this is true. As with nations, in the presence of great establishments, as with public diplomacy strategies, correct and effective use of the media and what is more maintaining continuity without an organized and systematic foundation is not possible.

It is clear that many of the writings of Jewish realist commentaries such as Avi Shlaim, Tanya Reinhart, Noam Chomsky, Neve Gordon, Tom Segev, Uri Avnery, Ilan Pappé and Norman Finkelstein suggesting that Israeli activities in the Middle East are illegitimate and racist or scrappy war images without continuity and main theme were not adequate to effect public opinions of other nations.

"We have never had it so good, The Hasbara effort is a well-oiled machine" said the Israeli foreign ministry spokesman Gideon Meir in 2006." (Pilger, 2009)

The best evidence for the fact that Hasbara can be a successful propaganda element as a good example for the Arab geography lies in the statement made by Edward Said in 2003 to Al-Ahram newspaper: "Countless Arab money was invested on weapons. The Arabs have never tried to avert systematic Israeli propaganda that has been continuing since 1948. Thus, thousands of Arabs died and lost their property. That is why the world still believes that Arabs are extremist and fanatics." (Erdal, 2010).

The only way to level the chances and change the aforesaid perception which is a result of a systematic propaganda dating back to hundreds of years ago is an organized public diplomacy to be established with the union of forces in the Arab world. Having such a project as a Pan-Arab entity by Arab nations may reopen a page of history that is claimed to be already closed: symmetric relations and just struggles in the Middle East...

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