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Eytan Gilboa

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Public Diplomacy: The Missing Component in Israel's Foreign Policy

EYTAN GILBOA

Israel maintained a positive image and reputation abroad from 1948 to 1967 and during the few periods of constructive negotiations in the Arab–Israeli conflict, including the 1977–1979 Israeli–Egyptian peace process and the 1993–1994 Oslo negotiations. During the 1991 Gulf War, Israel also garnered sympathy in the international community because it refrained from retaliating against Iraqi missile attacks on its major cities. However, since the outbreak of the second *intifada* or the Palestinian–Israeli war (PIW) in September 2000, Israel's reputation abroad has dramatically deteriorated. Israel is the only nation in the world whose right to exist is constantly being challenged, and whose ancient capital, Jerusalem, is unrecognized by all but a few states. Israeli leaders are often compared to leaders of Nazi Germany, and Israeli actions against the Palestinians are often described as Nazi-like policies. Conditions in Israel and the Palestinian territories are often compared with those that existed in apartheid South Africa. The main goal of these comparisons is to demonize, dehumanize and de-legitimize Israel.

The UN, and most other international organizations, has systematically discriminated against Israel and disproportionately attacked its policies. NGOs, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, frequently criticize Israel while ignoring serious human rights violations on the part of Arabs and Palestinians.¹ States and national and international organizations have boycotted trade and academic relations with the Jewish state and have initiated divestment campaigns. Enemies, opponents and critics—some of whom are Jews and Israelis—portray Israel as the world's worst violator of human rights, UN resolutions and international law. Israel's policies toward the Palestinians are often

Eytan Gilboa is Professor of International Communication at Bar-Ilan University and Senior Research Associate at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies. He is also a Visiting Professor and editor of the USC *Public Diplomacy Annual* at the Center on Public Diplomacy, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California. The Center, under the leadership of Joshua Fouts, and the School of Communication, directed by Larry Gross, provided an ideal intellectual environment for the completion of this paper. The author thanks David Chang for his research assistance.

described as harsh and its defensive measures against Palestinian terrorism excessive. Politicians, policymakers, NGOs, journalists and scholars have too often adopted Arab and Palestinian terms used to describe the critical dimensions of the conflict. Media coverage of the PIW in the Muslim world and the West has been poisonous and anti-Semitic. With the exception of the US, much public opinion around the world sympathizes more with the Palestinians than with Israel.

Given this grim reality, Israel should have aggressively pursued public diplomacy (PD). Yet the Israeli government has failed to prevent the deterioration of Israel's image and reputation in the world. The main reason is the lack of awareness and understanding of the critical role PD plays in contemporary international relations. 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. Even the US, the sole superpower, is slowly learning this hard lesson in the Iraq war. National reputation is what peoples around the world think about a state's conduct and behaviour. Therefore, a grand strategy in international conflict requires the integration and application of three fundamental components: force, diplomacy and communication. The last component, communication, may even be the decisive factor.

Ghassan Khatib suggests that both 'Israelis and Palestinians respectively have devoted a great deal of effort trying to convince the outside world that their cause is deserving of support, with the fault lying with the other side'.² Chris Galloway echoes this statement but argues that it is difficult to determine who is winning the image war.³ According to Nashat Aqtash, Palestinian officials and media experts think that although the Palestinian Authority has not pursued any public relations plan, the Palestinians are winning the PR battle.⁴ Ron Schleifer concludes that 'The failure of the State of Israel in the realm of *Hasbara* [explaining] ... especially in everything related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, is an established fact'.⁵ However, Barry Rubin argues that Israel cannot win the information battle because Europe, the Arabs and most of the world's intellectuals will not give Israel a fair chance.⁶ In the last two decades, since the outbreak of the first uprising against Israel in 1987, the Palestinians have integrated all three components of the new strategy well. They have fought Israel on the battlefield, in the halls of international diplomacy as well as on television and the Internet. There is a wide consensus that Israel, in contrast, has not placed enough emphasis on communication and has not sufficiently integrated the three components of the new grand strategy.

Despite the obvious significance of PD for Israel's security, very few studies have been written on this topic and many of those that have are historical in scope and written in Hebrew.⁷ Not one study has approached the topic from a contemporary theoretical perspective. This work uses two

new approaches to PD, the 'New Public Diplomacy' (NPD) and the 'World Standing Index' (WSI). The NPD represents an ongoing intellectual effort to adjust research and analysis of PD to the information age. The WSI is used to evaluate the standing, image and reputation of states and non-state actors in the international arena.⁸ It includes variables such as status in international organizations, media coverage and public opinion. Systematic application of the WSI is required to evaluate existing PD efforts and to determine whether they are sufficient to meet set goals.

This article begins with a brief introduction to the NPD and the WSI. The next section examines Israel's place in the world as seen in debates about its right to exist, in the 'war of words' and at the UN. The third section presents data and analysis on media coverage of Israel in the West and major trends in public opinion. The last section analyzes Israel's approach to PD, the failures of its past approach, causes for these failures and a few possible remedies. The article reveals a huge gap between the threat to Israel's national security and well-being due to its poor reputation abroad and the meagre PD programme designed to address this threat. Israel must develop and implement a major PD programme and this work suggests a few ways to accomplish the task.

THE NEW PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

PD emerged during the initial years of the Cold War. Due to the enormous destructive power of nuclear weapons, it became clear that information and persuasion campaigns would be the principal weapons that the two superpowers, the US and Soviet Union, would utilize in their global ideological and strategic struggle. Policymakers viewed PD as 'a battle for hearts and minds'. They typically define PD as 'direct communication with foreign peoples, with the aim of affecting their thinking and ultimately, that of their governments'.⁹ In most cases, the goal of PD is to create a favourable image of a nation's policies, actions, and political and economic system.¹⁰ In other cases, the goal is to facilitate internal domestic pressure on a foreign government to alter a hostile policy, and in some rare cases, such as the American PD campaign against Cuba, the goal is to facilitate regime change.

Classic PD uses several channels or techniques including international broadcasting; cultural and scientific exchanges of students, scholars, intellectuals and artists; participation in festivals and exhibitions; building and maintaining cultural centres; teaching a language; establishing local friendship leagues and trade associations. Mass media channels are used to affect a public directly while other mostly cultural channels are oriented towards elite audiences believed to have influence on public opinion. Whereas the mass media focuses on current affairs, cultural channels deal more with long-term perceptions of nations and societies.

At the beginning of this century, scholars and practitioners distinguished between PD and the NPD. The new approach is based on the assumption that recent dramatic changes or even revolutions in politics, communication and international relations have changed the conduct of both diplomacy and public diplomacy. Growing mass participation in political processes has transformed many societies from autocracies into democracies. The revolution in communication and information technologies, the capability to broadcast—often live—almost every significant development in world events to almost every place on the globe, as well as the creation and expansion of the Internet, have led to the globalization of electronic communication and journalism as well as substantial growth in networks, stations and media consumers worldwide. These revolutionary changes have altered the meaning of power in contemporary world politics. Not only military and economic power, but also a nation or leader's image, values and control of information flow help to determine status in the international community.

Rhiannon Vickers suggests that 'NPD can be characterized as a blurring of traditional distinctions between international and domestic information activities, between public and traditional diplomacy, and between cultural diplomacy, marketing and news management'.¹¹ Since this definition is somewhat confusing and limited, it is proposed that the NPD includes the following elements: it is pursued by states and non-state actors (e.g. NGOs); it is based on 'soft power', two-way communication, strategic PD, information management, nation branding and e-image; it involves domestication of foreign policy and it deals with both short- and long-term issues.¹² Contrary to popular misunderstanding, the NPD is not propaganda and is not just PR. It is a communication system designed to create a dialogue with both foes and allies. It requires a capability to use effectively credible information in an attempt to persuade actors to understand, accept or support policies and actions.

Classic PD was pursued only by nations; NPD is conducted by both states and non-state actors, such as individuals, corporations, media networks, terrorist organizations, military alliances, international organizations and NGOs. Joseph Nye coined the term 'soft power' in 1990, and since then it has been developed and refined. Power is the ability to influence the behaviour of others to yield the outcomes one wants. To achieve these outcomes, an actor may employ hard power—that is, military and economic means—or soft power, which entails attraction, seduction and persuasion. Soft power arises from the attractiveness of a nation's values, culture and policies.¹³ It causes people to act through cooperation rather than coercion.

When policies and positions of states or non-state actors have moral authority, or are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, their soft power is increased. Following Nye's conceptualization, Jozef Batora suggests that

'PD comprises all activities by state and non-state actors that contribute to the maintenance and promotion of a country's soft power'.¹⁴ Critics argue that a state's soft power depends largely on its hard power. Superpowers are attractive because they possess great military strength, economic power and technological infrastructure. In his most recent book on soft power, Nye acknowledges this criticism and uses a new phrase, 'smart power', for the effective combination of hard power and soft power.¹⁵

John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt apply Nye's soft power to national strategic thinking. They use the term, 'noopolitik', to describe strategy adapted to the information age and contrasted with the more traditional hard power driven 'realpolitik' approach.¹⁶ Noopolitik is foreign policy behaviour 'that emphasizes the primacy of ideas, values, norms, laws and ethics—it would work through 'soft power' rather than 'hard power' '. Due to considerable differences in the availability of information technology around the world, the new strategy is more effective in the West and concerns some issues more than others. It upholds the importance of NGOs, especially those from civil society, and accords them significant roles and functions in international relations. Although Arquilla and Ronfeldt believe that realpolitik and noopolitik contradict each other, they allow for skillful policymakers to alternate between the two, 'especially when dealing with a recalcitrant adversary who has been able to resist realpolitik types of pressure'.¹⁷ Nye, Arquilla and Ronfeldt agree that intelligent formulation of foreign policy relies on the sophisticated use of both hard and soft power.

Classic PD was one-sided. Messages and information were delivered to the masses, but there was no effort to create a dialogue and listen to the interests and wishes of the message's recipients. The NPD utilizes two-way communication, a central element in several models of international public relations and PD,¹⁸ which requires serious listening to messages from other nations. NPD is based on strategic communication, which includes scientific measurement of public opinion and persuasion techniques. It also involves the creation and persistent dissemination of clear and consistent themes. Information management refers to means used by officials to influence media coverage and the framing of major events, leaders and processes.

More and more, PR scholars and practitioners think nations can be branded like products. The *Journal of Brand Management* reflected this emerging view by devoting a special issue to nation branding in 2002. Branding entails 'giving products and services an emotional dimension with which people can identify'.¹⁹ A brand is best described as a consumer's idea about a product and the 'brand state' refers to what peoples around the world think and feel about the nation. This formulation may also apply to non-state actors, such as terrorist organizations or NGOs. Recent examples of national branding campaigns include: 'Cool Britannia'

championed by Prime Minister Tony Blair to promote the image of the UK as a hub for arts, fashion, media and design; the new Belgian logo, be; and the Estonian effort to replace the 'post-Soviet' image with the more prestigious 'pre-EU' image.

The Internet has become a major arena for information dissemination.²⁰ Almost all states and non-state actors maintain websites to present their history, policies, values, culture, science and other achievements. The Internet provides actors with ample opportunities to present themselves in a way that can cultivate positive support or even neutralize or attack opponents. By using the Internet for self-promotion, actors pursue cyber-PD and the cumulative effect forms competing e-images. Today, e-images are no less important than images created by more conventional means. National e-images appear primarily on the official websites of presidents and prime ministers, as well as agencies and ministries for foreign affairs, defence, domestic security, trade, tourism and science. Terrorist organizations and NGOs have been particularly effective in using the Internet to promote their causes and actions.²¹

The WSI suggests that effective PD formulation and implementation requires an accurate, reliable and sophisticated evaluation of an actor's reputation in the world. The standing of an actor is reflected not only in media coverage and public opinion polls, but in several interrelated fields of international activity. The WSI includes several variables: debates, voting patterns and resolutions in international organizations, primarily at the UN and its affiliated agencies; statements and activities of NGOs; diplomatic recognition and diplomatic relations; debates and resolutions in parliaments and political forums; major policy statements by world leaders seen as having moral authority, such as the Pope; results of major diplomatic visits at the level of heads of state or senior ministers, as expressed in joint public statements; adoption or rejection of critical terminology; hostile and supportive websites; official and unofficial sanctions and boycotts; legal actions in international and national courts; public opinion trends in nations around the world; and media coverage. The WSI helps to accomplish three PD tasks: (1) assessing an actor's image and reputation in the world including strengths and weaknesses; (2) identifying PD challenges and needs; (3) evaluating PD initiatives and programmes.

ISRAEL'S PLACE IN THE WORLD

A Right to Exist

Any design of a new major Israeli PD programme must be based on the principles of NPD and evidence generated by WSI's applications. Due to space limitations, this work covers only a few of the major variables of the

Israeli WSI case, including: Israel's right to exist; the 'war of words'; UN resolutions and actions; media coverage; and public opinion trends.

Israel is the only nation in the world whose right to exist is constantly questioned and challenged. Nations, international organizations, NGOs and individuals have occasionally questioned the legitimacy of authoritarian regimes, but with the exception of Israel, they have never questioned the right of a state—even that of the cruellest and most brutal—to exist. Several actors have taken steps to de-legitimize Israel and to develop the logic arguing for its destruction. The infamous 1975 UN decision to equate Zionism with racism is an example of this phenomenon. Today, the enemies and opponents of Israel pursue the same strategy of de-legitimization through false comparisons with Nazi Germany and the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Many Muslim and Arab leaders and movements have called for the elimination of Israel. Indeed, this is the official goal of Palestinian and Muslim terrorist organizations, such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hizbullah and al-Qaeda. Leaders of the Islamic theocracy in Iran from Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to current President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad have been the most persistent and vocal. In October 2005, the latter opened a conference in Teheran under the banner, 'World without Zionism', and called Israel a 'disgraceful blot' that should be 'wiped out off the map'.²² The spiritual leader Ali Khamenei stated already in December 2000, 'Iran's stance has always been clear on this ugly phenomenon [Israel]. We have repeatedly said that this cancerous tumor of a state should be removed from the region'.²³

Several Western, and even Jewish and Israeli, academics and journalists have adopted similar views.²⁴ Tom Paulin of Oxford University told the Egyptian newspaper, *Al-Abram Weekly*, 'I never believed that Israel had the right to exist at all'.²⁵ Similar views appeared in books written by Jacqueline Rose and John Rose.²⁶ New York University professor Tony Judt argued that the 'self-described Jewish State' is an anachronism, is mainly responsible for the rise in anti-Semitism and that the only solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict is to replace Israel with a bi-national Arab-Jewish state.²⁷ This statement is especially offensive because it resembles accusations made after World War II blaming Jews for the Holocaust.

There are some Israelis who also believe that their own state should not exist. Ofira Seliktar exposed these extreme views and the sophisticated collaboration on the part of some Israeli academics with Palestinians and radical scholars, primarily in Europe and the US.²⁸ No nation has ever faced this kind of systematic questioning of its existence by its own citizens.

Rejection of Israel's right to exist and calls for its elimination by Jews and Israelis are the most damaging to the nation's legitimacy, because enemies of the state cite these individuals, arguing that Muslims and Arabs are not the only people who believe Israel should be eliminated. Although

the number of Jews and Israelis, who think that Israel should not exist is very small, the Western media frequently interview them, thus creating the false impression that they represent a much larger group. Those who reject Israel's right to exist are 'intellectual terrorists' who use words like bombs against Israeli cities and towns. Some of them have enthusiastically supported suicide bombing in Israel.²⁹ The unprecedented intellectual assault on Israel's right to exist has become widespread and dangerous, because it legitimizes the plans of those like Iran to destroy Israel, possibly with nuclear weapons. Only a few scholars and intellectuals refute their false claims and arguments.³⁰

'War of Words'

Strategic use of terms to describe rights, conditions, events, people and processes is critical for any PD campaign, because language frames conflict in ways which shape images and determine ideas of right and wrong, justice and injustice. Israel has failed to persuade the world to accept and use its terms and vocabulary. The media play a significant role in the 'war of words', and therefore, the Israeli failure is partially attributed to media bias, double standards and hypocrisy. Robert Fisk, a notoriously anti-Israeli British journalist, complains that the American media have adopted the terms that Israel uses to describe the Arab-Israeli conflict.³¹ Nothing could be further from the truth. Politicians, policymakers, NGOs, journalists and scholars have too often adopted Arab and Palestinian terms used to describe the conflict. Since the adoption of the Israeli-given terms for the major Arab aggressions of 1967 and 1973, 'the Six Day War' and the 'Yom Kippur War' respectively, the world has adopted Arab terms. For example, no one uses the Israeli phrase for the 1982 war in Lebanon, 'Operation Peace for Galilee', instead the world uses the negative phrase, 'Israel's invasion of Lebanon'.

Media bias and double standards help the Arabs dominate the 'war of words'. Israel calls the territory captured from Jordan in the Six Day War by its biblical name, 'Judea and Samaria', but the world has adopted the empty Arab term, 'West Bank' (referring to the Jordan River). When reporting on events at the Temple Mount, the BBC often added '[the Temple Mount] called Haram al-Sharif by the Arabs'. The British network fails to apply the same formula to Israel by mentioning, for example, that the West Bank is referred to by Jews as 'Judea and Samaria'. Israel refers to territories taken from the Arabs in the 1967 war as 'the administered or disputed territories', but the world has adopted the negative phrase, 'occupied territories'.

The Palestinians call their first uprising against Israel (1987–1993) Intifada ('awakening' or 'shaking off' in Arabic), and their more recent violent campaign of terror, the Al-Aqsa intifada. This term conveys the false impression that holy Islamic places in Jerusalem are in danger. The

Palestinians exploited Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in September 2000 to justify their claim and the ensuing violence, even though they planned and prepared for war long before Sharon's visit. The opponents of the Oslo process called it the 'Oslo War'. Thomas Friedman calls the new round of violence, 'Arafat's War', due to Arafat's decision to abandon the peace process and to conduct a war of terror against Israel.³² However, the whole world has adopted Al-Aqsa intifada—even several Israeli journalists, politicians and scholars. This is probably the only case in modern history where a nation under attack has adopted the name given to the struggle by its enemy.

Israel calls Palestinian suicide or homicide bombers 'terrorists', but Western and global media and policymakers refer to them as 'militants', 'extremists', 'fighters', 'gunmen', 'activists' or even 'guerrillas'. The media often call the actions of terrorists 'bombings' or 'attacks', rather than 'terrorism'. Apparently, journalists refer to suicide bombers as 'terrorists' and what they do as 'terrorism' only when they attack their own nations and people. The American media had no inhibitions labeling the 9/11 attacks as terrorism and the perpetrators as terrorists. In July 2005, the BBC used the same terms to describe the terrorist attacks on London.³³ While Israel calls the elimination of senior officers in Hamas and Islamic Jihad 'targeted killing', policymakers and the media use the negative phrase 'targeted assassination' or even 'illegal assassination'.

Israel calls the fence recently built to prevent Palestinian terrorists from entering its territory 'a security barrier', whereas the Palestinians call the fence, 'a wall' or worse, 'an apartheid wall'. Although in 2003–2004 only a small part of the barrier—five miles out of the 85-mile length—was an actual wall, policymakers, NGOs, several media outlets and even the International Court of Justice (ICJ) adopted the distorted Palestinian term. The wall portion was built to secure parts of Israeli Highway 6, where Palestinian terrorists fired on passing civilian cars. The Palestinians chose to call the barrier a wall, to evoke the negative connotation of the 'Berlin Wall', while their use of the phrase 'apartheid wall' is intended to create the false and extremely negative impression that the fence was built to segregate the Palestinians.

The most outrageous abuse of language equates Israel with Nazi Germany, the defensive Israeli actions against Palestinian terrorism with Nazi-like atrocities, and the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) with the SS. Politicians and journalists in many countries have made these comparisons. Pickett gave a few British examples, including the writings of Tom Paulin in the *Observer* and the articles of A.N. Wilson in London's *Evening Standard*.³⁴ He blasted Paulin, the Oxford scholar who not only called the Israeli army 'the Zionist SS', but also told the Egyptian newspaper, *Al-Abram*, that Brooklyn-born Jewish settlers 'should be shot dead. I think they are Nazis, racists, I feel nothing but hatred for them'. The novelist

Howard Jacobson challenged Paulin to show Israel's 'wholesale destruction of another people who posed no threat, who threw no bombs, who simply *were*'.³⁵ Where are the Israeli concentration camps, gas chambers, mass killings, systematic executions of millions of people, medical experiments, and the slaughter of homosexuals? Jacobson concludes that Paulin 'has a mind and in this instance, he has refused to use it. He has chosen to be a fool'.

Emmanuele Ottolenghi observed: 'The conflation of Israel's military policies with Nazism suggests a demonizing element in the way the conflict is presented to the public that has progressively blurred the boundaries between legitimate criticism and irrational, prejudiced opposition to Israel.'³⁶ Moreover, this conflation has legitimized the calls for the destruction of Israel and justified the most monstrous acts of terrorism. Several commentators manipulate these terms to express the same idea. Mona Baker, for example, describes the PIW as '*some kind of Holocaust*' (italics added) in Palestine, and Louis de Bernières observed that 'Israel has been adopting tactics which are *reminiscent of the Nazis*' (italics added).³⁷

UN and International Organizations

The treatment of Israel by the UN and its affiliated agencies demonstrates the country's negative international image and poor reputation. The grim status of Israel at the UN can be seen in the voting record of the 2004 UN General Assembly.³⁸ The assembly voted on eighteen extremely one-sided, anti-Israeli resolutions. With the exception of Israel, only three UN members voted against all of them: the Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Palau. The US voted against sixteen resolutions and abstained on two. No European state opposed any of these resolutions. Contrary to popular myth, the US has infrequently used its veto power on behalf of Israel.³⁹ From 1972 to 2004, the Security Council adopted more than 120 resolutions about the Middle East. Almost all were one-sided and critical of Israel. The US vetoed a total of 39 resolutions. Thus, the US supported the Council's criticism roughly two-thirds of the time. From 1990 to 2004, the US vetoed only eleven extremely unbalanced, anti-Israeli Security Council resolutions.⁴⁰ In October 2004, for example, the US vetoed a typical UN resolution, which condemned Israel's military incursion into Gaza by ignoring the reason for the operation: indiscriminate Palestinian missile attacks on civilian residents in Israel.

The UN has systematically and consistently discriminated against Israel. The UN Security Council has devoted about a third of its activity and criticism towards one nation, Israel. Similarly, about a third of all the resolutions adopted by the UN Commission on Human Rights have criticized Israel. In contrast, this committee and the UN have not adopted one critical resolution against three-quarters of UN members, including 'champions' of international law and human rights, such as Syria, Saudi

Arabia, China and Zimbabwe. The UN rarely calls for 'special emergency sessions' and did not see any reason to call for an 'emergency session' to discuss genocide in Rwanda, ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia, genocide in Darfur or the horrific massacres in East Timor. All Israeli uses of force combined in the half-century since the creation of Israel have caused far fewer casualties and damage than each of these horrific events. However, the UN did not hesitate to call for emergency sessions on relatively smaller issues related to the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. In 2003, for example, the UN called an unprecedented total of three emergency sessions; two to condemn Israel's security barrier and one to criticize Israel for considering the expulsion of Arafat.

Until 2000, Israel was the only UN member ineligible to serve on the Security Council and other important UN bodies, such as the Economic and Social Council, the World Court, The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Commission on Human Rights. To be eligible to serve on these bodies, a member must belong to one of five regional groups. Arab nations have prevented Israel from joining the Asian bloc, and until 2000, the other alternative, the West European and Others Group (WEOG) (which includes 27 states, such as the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), also refused to admit Israel. Sir Robert Jennings, a former judge and president of the ICJ, asserts that this long-term discrimination of Israel at the UN 'is both unlawful and strikes at the roots of the principles on which the UN exists'.⁴¹

The UN Commission on Human Rights (once headed by Sudan and Libya) has reinforced the pattern of prejudice and discrimination against Israel at the UN by regularly placing Israel—and only Israel—as a separate and exclusive agenda item. Similarly, the September 2001 UN-sponsored World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa, was hijacked by Arabs, Muslims and anti-Israeli NGOs and turned into a conference condemning Jews and Israelis. The purpose of this UN assault is to cast Israel as the world's worst human rights violator.

The UN has also assaulted Israel in other unique and specific ways. For example, the UN has created at least four separate special administrative units to examine issues related to the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, including the 'Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People' and the 'Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People'. These units are directly administered by Kofi Annan and have spent an enormous amount of time, money and energy on the production and worldwide distribution of anti-Israeli propaganda, including books, films and exhibits. No other more serious conflict and no other more serious violator of human rights have ever been addressed in such a discriminatory and inflammatory manner.

In 2003, the Palestinians petitioned the General Assembly to request an opinion from the ICJ on the security barrier. This case demonstrates both the discrimination and abuse of Israel at the UN, as well as the damage such

legal actions can inflict on Israel's image. Israel, the US and several other nations rejected the ICJ's authority to hear the case. Israel submitted a written statement, but declined to appear before the judges. The ICJ opined by a 14-to-1 margin that the 'wall' violates international law, and that Israel should tear it down and compensate 'Palestinian victims'.⁴² Like most UN resolutions on Israel, this resolution completely ignores Palestinian terrorism, the reason for constructing the barrier. Moreover, the opinion was politically motivated and not legally binding (the court could issue only an *advisory opinion*, not a judicial instruction).⁴³ Nonetheless, opponents of Israel were quick to cite the ICJ opinion as evidence of Israel's lawless behaviour. They created the false impression that the ruling was a binding verdict—not just an advisory opinion. Pro-Palestinian propaganda surrounding the case reinforced the image of Israel as an illegitimate 'apartheid state'.

However, the UN did repeal its resolution equating Zionism and racism and has very recently allowed a few Israelis to join UN bodies. In 2005, for the first time ever, an Israeli ambassador to the UN was elected as one of 20 vice presidents who set the agenda for the General Assembly.⁴⁴ An Israeli representative was also elected to serve as deputy chair of the UN Disarmament Commission and another was chosen as a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee—another first for Israel in the UN. However, these improvements do not indicate any major change in the UN attitude toward Israel. The UN allowed these nominations because its abuse and discrimination towards Israel have damaged its image and reputation. The UN and its agencies are still hostile and discriminatory towards Israel and still present a major challenge to PD.

MEDIA AND PUBLIC OPINION

Media Coverage

With a few exceptions—primarily in the US—media outlets and global networks have been extremely critical of Israel and supportive of the Palestinians. Daniel Okrent, the *New York Times* (NYT) Public Editor, admitted in an article about his newspaper's coverage of the PIW: 'It eventually comes to this: Journalism itself is inadequate to tell the story . . . It's not reality, but a version of reality, and both daily deadlines and limited space make even the best journalism a reductionist version of reality.'⁴⁵ Journalism is not only reductionist; it is often highly distorted, inaccurate, misleading and biased.

Two glaring cases illustrate the media's attitudes and failures: Muhammad al-Dura's death on 29 September 2000, at the beginning of the PIW, and the 2002 battle in Jenin. The al-Dura case has now been well

investigated and documented in critical texts and videos.⁴⁶ The death of a twelve-year-old boy in the arms of his father caught on camera on the second day of the PIW electrified the whole world, enraged Palestinians and Arabs and became a symbol of the Palestinian struggle against Israel. It vividly demonstrated the brutality of Israeli soldiers and reinforced the image of Israel as a ruthless occupier and oppressor. Many have suggested that the amplification of al-Dura's death by Palestinian propaganda and anti-Israeli media was the decisive factor in Israel's failure to frame the war as: (1) a breach of the 1993 Palestinian unconditional commitment to seek resolution by peaceful means and (2) an unjustified violent response to the unprecedented offers of final peace agreements which Arafat received from Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and US President Bill Clinton.

The video was filmed by a Palestinian cameraman, Talal Abu Rahmeh, a stringer for the French government-owned television station, France-2. He told the station's correspondent in Israel, Charles Enderlin, who was not at the scene, that Israeli soldiers intentionally fired at the father and son for 45 minutes resulting in injury to the father and the murder of the boy. Enderlin repeated this information in his report and provided a 51-second video. The cameramen said that he captured a total of 27 minutes on video and transmitted only six minutes of the footage to Enderlin. Israel's delayed and confused response to reporters reinforced the feeling that the French-Palestinian story was accurate.

However, the cameraman later admitted that under Palestinian pressure he lied about the circumstances of the incident and his filming. Investigations based on careful analysis of the scene and the video raised serious doubts about the French-Palestinian version, and it is more likely that he was shot by Palestinian fire. It is also likely that during the battle, the Palestinians staged activity around the incident. Enderlin and France-2 failed to produce the raw footage and provided unsatisfactory answers about the original report. Critics including Luc Rosenzweig, a former *Le Monde* journalist, Denis Jeambar from *l'Express*, and Daniel Leconte, a television producer, accused the station of covering up a highly questionable report about the most dramatic incident in the PIW, which greatly damaged Israel's image and reputation.

Coverage of the 2002 Israeli defensive operation in Jenin was even more scandalous than the al-Dura case. On 23 March 2002, Passover Eve, a Palestinian terrorist entered Park Hotel in Netanya and blew himself up, murdering 29 Israelis and injuring 140. Most of the victims were elderly Holocaust survivors. The terrorist came from Jenin, the terror capital of the West Bank. In the next five days, Palestinian terrorism claimed the lives of 24 more Israelis and injured 140. In April, Israel decided to locate and destroy the 'terror factories' in Jenin. 'Operation Defensive Shield' lasted about a week and was conducted over an area of less than 1 percent of the entire area of the city. As later confirmed by the UN, as well as several

human rights and aid organizations, 52 Palestinians were killed during the operation—all but three of them combatants.⁴⁷ Israel lost 23 soldiers—several of whom risked their own lives to avoid injury to Palestinian civilians. Destruction of houses used as bomb laboratories was minimal.

The media, however, immediately accepted the hysterical and deceptive Palestinian description of the operation as a ‘massacre’ without question or verification.⁴⁸ At the same time, they systematically ignored much more accurate Israeli information. In reporting on ‘Defensive Shield’, television networks and papers indiscriminately used terms such as ‘mass murders’, ‘summary execution’, ‘war crimes’, ‘common graves’ and ‘genocide’. The British coverage was typical of the world coverage. On 15 April, for example, A.N. Wilson wrote in the *Evening Standard*, ‘We are talking here of massacre, and a cover up, of genocide’. On 16 April, Phil Reeves of *The Independent* wrote, ‘A monstrous war crime that Israel has tried to cover up for a fortnight has finally been exposed’. On 25 April, he wrote about Israeli ‘atrocities committed in the Jenin refugee camp, where its army killed and injured hundreds of Palestinians’.

The reporting on ‘Defensive Shield’ inspired politicians to strongly condemn Israel. For example, on 16 April, Gerald Kaufman, a veteran Jewish Labour MP, called Sharon ‘a war criminal’ and Israel’s defensive action ‘barbaric’. Israel made the mistake of banning reporters from entering the combat zone during the initial phase of the operation, but this does not justify the media fiasco.⁴⁹ Phil Reeves later explained his own sloppy, unprofessional and unethical coverage and that of his colleagues as a rare ‘accident’: ‘Even journalists have to admit they are wrong sometimes’.⁵⁰ In the meantime, however, they greatly damaged Israel’s standing in the world and encouraged Palestinian terrorism. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the Palestinians and the entire Muslim world still refer to events in Jenin as a ‘massacre’. A comparison between British and American coverage on the same days showed that papers, such as the *New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, raised serious doubts about the Palestinian claims and reported the Israeli version in a relatively fair way.

Coverage by major news agencies is significant because many media outlets, particularly those which cannot afford a bureau in Israel, depend on agency reports. Coverage by these outlets has also been marred by systematic bias and distortion. Two studies have examined coverage of *L’Agence France Presse* (AFP). Clement Raynal found anti-Israeli and pro-Palestinian bias in coverage of three events: incidents around Sharon’s visit to the Temple Mount on 28 September 2000; the death of Mohammed al-Dura; and the admission of Palestinian Communication Minister Imad Faloudji on 2 March 2001 that the PIW had been planned for more than a year, meaning the current violence was not caused by Sharon’s visit.⁵¹ Jacques Tarnero and Phillipe Bensoussan convincingly described AFP’s

anti-Israeli bias and distortions in a 2002 documentary, *Décryptage (Decoding)*.⁵²

Research on media bias has focused mostly on American and European news sources, and has yielded mixed results.⁵³ British media coverage of the PIW represents the prevailing anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic trends in European media coverage.⁵⁴ The BBC deserves special attention because it enjoys an unrivalled professional reputation and broadcasts all over the world via the BBC World Service. Three comprehensive reports published between 2002 and 2004 on the BBC coverage of the PIW revealed a consistent and systematic anti-Israeli and pro-Palestinian bias.⁵⁵ The authors documented breaches in accuracy and impartiality, including selection and omission of facts, 'which portray the opposite of the truth'. They concluded, 'Frequently, the BBC report is misleading. At times it appears to invent material to suit its own bias' (2002 Report, p. 1).

Between 2001 and 2004, the BBC aired a total of 20 major documentaries on Israel and the PIW—all but one attacked Israel. The BBC devoted a significantly disproportionate amount of space to the PIW almost to the total exclusion of other regions where major humanitarian and political problems exist.⁵⁶ The statistics are astonishing: The British network aired a documentary critical of Israel every two to three months—moreover, 88 percent of these documentaries 'paint either a negative impression of Israel or (in two cases) a positive image of the Palestinians' (2004 Report, p. 3). Douglas Davis found severe 'systematic and systemic anti-Israeli bias' and inaccuracy. He went on to blame the BBC for encouraging anti-Semitism in the UK, Europe and the world.⁵⁷ Davis argues that 'Anti-Semitism is the inevitable, inseparable by-product of the relentless anti-Zionist and anti-Israeli culture that has become intrinsic to the BBC's output'. The print media in the UK, particularly the left-wing media, also exhibit a similar bias and distortion.

Research on the American media coverage yielded mixed results. Zelizer, Park and Gudelunas concluded that three American newspapers, *New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and the *Chicago Tribune*, offered different accounts of the PIW, and that bias was mainly responsible for these differences.⁵⁸ They found *New York Times* coverage was slightly pro-Israel whereas the other two papers tended to be balanced but more pro-Palestinian in certain areas. However, their study investigated only thirty days of the first ten months of the warfare. Joshua Muravchik examined coverage of ten major events, from Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount to the battle in Jenin, by seven national American print and broadcast media: *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN and Fox. He found numerous cases of inaccurate, tendentious, misleading and unfair coverage of Israel.⁵⁹ Stephanie Gutmann believes 'The second Intifada was explained to the public through a series of images—images that didn't bring us the truth'.⁶⁰

Two commentators correctly observed that the European coverage has been much more critical of Israel than that in the American media, but their explanations themselves are questionable. Michael Goldfarb suggests that the difference implies a bias toward Israel in the American media and that the latter should 'learn' how to cover Israel 'more objectively' from the European media. Marda Dunsky believes that the US media support Israel because they follow official US policy without questioning it.⁶¹ There is ample evidence to suggest exactly the opposite, that the American media have been critical of Israel and US policy whereas the European media have closely followed Europe's anti-Israeli policy without questioning it.⁶² American coverage of 'Defensive Shield', for example, was much more accurate and balanced than European coverage.

Journalists rarely acknowledge bias and distortion. They rarely apologize for errors in facts and judgement. They are rarely held accountable and are rarely punished for defamation and incitement to hatred and violence, but the following partial list of admissions, apologies and court decisions is astounding. In 1985, *Time* Magazine was instructed by a New York court to publish a retraction of a fabricated report on Sharon's role in the 1982 massacre of Palestinians by Christian Lebanese soldiers in Beirut.⁶³ After Western media had covered up incidents of threats made by the PLO against foreign journalists working in Beirut,⁶⁴ Thomas Friedman acknowledged the pro-PLO bias in Western media coverage.⁶⁵ More recently, after receiving a flood of angry e-mails and letters, the editor of the *New Statesman* apologized for an anti-Semitic cover story published on 14 January 2002. In 2004, a few courageous journalists at Radio France International demonstrated against the anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli views of the station's news director, Alain Menargues.⁶⁶ In May 2005, a French court found *Le Monde*, one of the most prestigious papers in France and the world, guilty of 'racist defamation' against Israel and the Jewish people.⁶⁷ This list indicates a major systemic problem with media coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict in Western and global media.

The media are not objective observers, rather, they are active anti-Israeli participants in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.⁶⁸ Galloway suggests a relevant theoretical approach to this phenomenon is the 'hostile media effect', which occurs when two groups engaged in a conflict and their supporters interpret the same reports in opposite ways believing that the media frequently favours the opponent. However, this explanation misses the point. The question is not how the two sides interpret news—rather, it is how the news is presented to policymakers and people around the world and how these groups interpret it. Another approach, 'journalism of attachment', in which journalists take sides and actively campaign on behalf of a 'victim', provides a more valid explanation of media coverage of

the PIW.⁶⁹ The media has decided that the Palestinians are the victims and Israel the aggressor.⁷⁰

This attitude is responsible for much of the highly biased and inaccurate coverage around the world. Other factors include an ineffective Israeli information policy; anti-Semitism; the nature of television coverage which favours pictures of children versus tanks; Palestinian terrorism against foreign reporters; and employment of Palestinian stringers whose commitment to the cause of their people overrides professional standards.⁷¹ Media coverage of the current PIW severely damages Israel's image and reputation, particularly in Europe. Investigations of cases such as al-Dura's death and the battle in Jenin prove that false Palestinian versions of events are often accepted by uncritical media sources. The problem is that immediate reporting affects policymakers and public opinion whereas subsequent investigations are published weeks later (and in some cases years later) and are ignored.

Public Opinion

Several public opinion polls taken in the last several years, primarily in Europe, reveal negative perceptions and low public support for Israeli policies and behaviour. A poll commissioned by the EU and leaked in November 2003 found that the public in 15 nations ranked Israel as the 'greatest threat to peace in the world'. According to the poll, Israel was ranked as a greater threat to peace than countries such as Iran, North Korea, Iraq, Libya and Syria.⁷² The Dutch, Austrians, Luxembourgers, Germans and Danes were the most critical of Israel whereas the French and Italians were the least critical. The poll was superficial and flawed in terms of structure, wording and analysis and it was criticized by political leaders and experts.⁷³ What matters most, however, is the publicity given to the results in the European media and around the world, which served to reinforce negative views of Israel.

A series of more serious polls taken in several European nations between 2002 and 2004 reveal Israel's deteriorating image. Table 1 shows that in 2002, four of the ten European nations surveyed held favourable views of Israel (Denmark, Germany, Italy and the UK), but in 2004, only Italy continued to hold this view. Also, in 2004, the percentage of unfavourable views of Israel went up in all ten countries. In several countries, such as Belgium, Denmark, Switzerland and the Netherlands, the rise in negative views was substantial. The results in the US were very different. A substantial majority held favourable views of Israel.

Table 2 shows that between 2001 and 2004 respondents in nine out of the ten European nations sympathized more with the Palestinians, and that most of those who took a neutral position in 2001 moved into the Palestinian column in 2004. In Belgium, Spain, Italy and the UK,

TABLE 1

ISRAEL'S FAVOURABILITY (%) QUESTION: THINKING GENERALLY ABOUT ISRAEL, WOULD YOU SAY YOUR VIEWS ARE VERY FAVOURABLE, FAIRLY FAVOURABLE, NEITHER FAVOURABLE NOR UNFAVOURABLE, FAIRLY UNFAVOURABLE, OR VERY UNFAVOURABLE?

Country	Favourable			Unfavourable		
	2002	2004	Trend	2002	2004	Trend
Austria	21	23	↑	29	32	↑
Belgium	26	18	↓	30	38	↑
Denmark	31	23	↓	27	35	↑
France	23	22	↓	28	30	↑
Germany	29	21	↓	24	27	↑
Italy	41	40	↓	19	20	↑
Spain	14	13	↓	34	40	↑
Switzerland	24	17	↓	34	46	↑
The Netherlands	34	25	↓	35	43	↑
United Kingdom	29	24	↓	21	26	↑
United States	58	59	↑	35	35	–

Sources: European data from an April 2004 report by the Anti-Defamation League, which commissioned First International Resources to conduct the poll. 2004 fieldwork was done between 16 March and 8 April; 2002 fieldwork was done between 16 May and 4 June. The margins of error in both surveys were +/- 4.4 percent. American data from February 2002 Gallup poll conducted by the Center for Public Opinion Research.

pro-Palestinian sentiment increased greatly. The American public sympathized more with Israel by substantial margins.

Table 3 shows that between 2002 and 2004 the percentage of respondents who believed that Israel wants to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians declined. In Denmark, France and the Netherlands, the decline was sharp. In two countries, Austria and Italy, the number of respondents who thought Israel was interested in peace remained unchanged. Between 2002 and 2004, the respondents in six out of the ten surveyed countries thought that the Palestinians want peace more than Israel. Only the American public thought that Israel wants peace more than the Palestinians by a large margin, and while the figures for the two sides in 2002 were 75 percent and 64 percent respectively, 70 percent of the American public believed that Israel wants peace while only 46 percent held the same view about the Palestinian Authority in 2004.

A similar trend appeared in polls taken over time in specific nations. Scandinavian countries have traditionally supported Jews and Israel, but in recent years, Israel's image has been tarnished. Polls published by the leading Danish newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* show that 28 percent of the Danish population supported Israel and only 14 percent supported the Arabs in 1982. By 2002, the results had reversed: 21 percent supported the Arabs and only 9 percent supported Israel.⁷⁴ Similarly, according to a 2002 survey by the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten*, 44 percent of respondents 'felt

TABLE 2

SYMPATHIES FOR ISRAELIS VERSUS PALESTINIANS QUESTION: THINKING SPECIFICALLY ABOUT THE CURRENT CONFLICT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS, ARE YOUR SYMPATHIES MORE WITH THE ISRAELIS OR MORE WITH THE PALESTINIANS?

Country	More with the Israelis			More with the Palestinians			Neither		
	2001	2002	2004	2001	2002	2004	2001	2002	2004
Austria	–	13	17	–	38	26	–	34	43
Belgium	10	14	12	12	29	30	68	36	41
Denmark	–	16	13	–	33	27	–	24	34
France	7	10	18	17	29	17	66	37	53
Germany	15	17	17	15	25	21	65	36	43
Italy	8	10	16	11	31	24	58	33	43
Spain	3	11	7	12	35	24	77	37	46
Switzerland	–	16	11	–	38	31	–	33	41
The Netherlands	25	28	28	21	27	27	33	23	27
United Kingdom	12	13	18	14	30	24	59	27	33
United States	50	49	55	13	14	18	37	37	27

Sources: For European data for 2002 and 2004, see Table 1. European 2001 data comes from a Canal Ipsos poll, which asked: 'As you know, the tension and violence in Israel have progressed in recent weeks. On the basis of what you have seen or heard on the conflict in Israel, do you support Israelis, Palestinians, or neither?' The 2001 question also included a 'Don't Know' column not represented in these tables. The Canal Ipsos poll did not collect data in Austria, Switzerland and Denmark. American data comes from Gallup poll which asked, 'In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with Israel or with Palestinian Arabs?' Figures represent averages of available polls each year. Results available at www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/gallup.html.

more sympathy for the Palestinians in the current conflict', only 9 percent sympathized more with Israel. The *Nova* magazine in the Netherlands found in February 2001 that 30 percent of the population in this country held favourable views about Israel, while 21 percent held unfavourable views. In 1999, before the PIW, the ratio was 45 percent to 12 percent in favour of Israel. A survey commissioned by the Italian newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera*, in January 2004, found that 75 percent of the respondents disagreed with Sharon's approach to the Palestinians and 36 percent agreed with the following statement, 'The Israeli government is perpetuating a full-fledged genocide and is acting with the Palestinians the way the Nazis did with the Jews'.⁷⁵ A similar percentage blamed suicide bombings on Sharon's aggressive and imperialist policies, while 92 percent considered Israel's right to exist sacrosanct, 28 percent made it conditional on the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Scholarly literature on the relationship between media coverage and public opinion has produced mixed results. But one survey on European attitudes toward Israel and the Palestinian–Israeli conflict did include a question about media coverage, and therefore provides some evidence about possible links between media coverage and public opinion. Table 4

TABLE 3

DESIRE TO REACH PEACE (%) QUESTION: PLEASE TELL ME WHETHER YOU AGREE A LOT, AGREE A LITTLE, DISAGREE A LITTLE OR DISAGREE A LOT WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: 'ISRAEL TRULY WANTS TO REACH A PEACE AGREEMENT WITH THE PALESTINIANS' OR 'THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY TRULY WANTS TO REACH A PEACE AGREEMENT WITH THE ISRAELIS'

Country	Agrees Israel Wants Peace			Agrees PA Wants Peace		
	2002	2004	Trend	2002	2004	Trend
Austria	31	31	–	36	28	↓
Belgium	39	34	↓	46	46	–
Denmark	39	27	↓	42	38	↓
France	47	39	↓	47	48	↑
Germany	36	29	↓	33	27	↓
Italy	40	40	–	43	38	↓
Spain	33	28	↓	42	41	↓
Switzerland	32	28	↓	37	38	↑
The Netherlands	45	33	↓	32	29	↓
United Kingdom	54	49	↓	49	47	↓
United States*	75	70	↓	64	46	↓

Sources: For European data for 2002 and 2004, see Table 1. American data comes from a March 2005 report by the Anti-Defamation League, which commissioned Marttila Communications, which asked, 'In your opinion, how serious are the leaders of Israel about wanting to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians—very serious, somewhat serious, not very serious, or not at all serious?' and 'In your opinion, how serious is new Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas about wanting to reach a peace agreement with Israelis—very serious, somewhat serious, not very serious, or not at all serious?' 2003 fieldwork was done 1 and 3 December, 2005 fieldwork was done 18 and 25 March. The margins of error in both surveys were ± 2.8 .

* American data for years 2003 and 2005.

TABLE 4

MEDIA COVERAGE AND SYMPATHY FOR THE PALESTINIANS (%) QUESTION: THINKING SPECIFICALLY ABOUT THE CURRENT CONFLICT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS, ARE YOUR SYMPATHIES MORE WITH THE ISRAELIS OR MORE WITH THE PALESTINIANS?

Country	Sympathy for the Palestinians	Following coverage a 'great deal' or a 'good amount'	Following coverage as 'little' or 'nothing at all'
Austria	26	30	21
Belgium	30	41	19
Denmark	27	34	19
France	17	25	10
Germany	21	27	16
Italy	13	16	9
Spain	24	30	16
Switzerland	31	41	19
The Netherlands	27	30	19
United Kingdom	24	34	16

Sources: For European data for 2004, see Table 1.

shows that in all the surveyed European nations, those who said they followed the coverage a 'great deal' or a 'good amount' were much more sympathetic to the Palestinians than those who said they followed the coverage a 'little' or 'not at all'. In five countries, Belgium, France, Spain, Switzerland and the UK, the difference between the two groups was substantial—a ratio of more than two to one.

ISRAEL'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Failures

Israel's approach to PD has been very problematic. Shimon Peres, who served as prime minister, foreign minister and defence minister, held the opinion that if a country has good policies, it does not need PR, and if the policy is bad, the best PR in the world will not help.⁷⁶ For many years, the Israeli public believed that it would be useless even to attempt PD since it perceived the whole world to be against Israel. However, these views—both at the policymaking level and the public level—have been misguided and have caused substantial damage to Israel's image and reputation in the world. Even a 'good' policy, such as a peace initiative, requires PD to convince others that it is useful and good. In addition, PD must deal not only with one's own policy but also with policies and actions of other relevant actors.

Until very recently, Israel used the Hebrew word '*Hasbara*' (explaining) to refer to PD. This term conveys a highly limited, defensive and apologetic approach to PD.⁷⁷ The Foreign Ministry has finally adopted the term 'public diplomacy'. Israeli leaders, including those who should have been the most interested in PD, have rarely addressed the issue in a systematic way. The government has occasionally recognized the value of PD and decided to develop and coordinate efforts among all the relevant ministries and agencies. However, these decisions have never been implemented in a consistent manner. For example, at the beginning of the PIW in December 2001, the Head of the National Security Council named *Hasbara* as one of five integrated components in the battle against Palestinian terrorism (along with efforts on the political, security, economic and legal planes). While Israel has also been told by many sources and supporters around the world that it has no real PD programme and has done very little to counter Arab PD efforts, the government has failed to view and administer PD as a significant strategic component. Gideon Meir, Deputy Director General for Media and Public Affairs in Israel's Foreign Ministry, has attributed PD difficulties to both internal and external reasons.⁷⁸ Internal reasons include: the openness of Israeli society, which tolerates considerable dissent, as opposed to the autocratic nature of Palestinian society, which does not tolerate any dissent; the failure of officials to recognize that PD is an

essential part of Israel's security; and a lack of resources. External reasons include: hostile media coverage; anti-Semitism; anti-globalism; and the dominating power of an anti-Israeli coalition of Arab, Muslim and Third World countries in international organizations. Meir adds that Israel's image abroad is 'largely event driven, rather than argument driven', that is, peace processes shape positive images and violence yields negative images. The WSI's evidence, however, does not support this specific observation. Ron Kitrey, an IDF spokesman, also attributes PD failures to distorted media coverage and to Israeli reluctance to release graphic photos of terror attack victims in the same way that the Palestinians expose their injured and dead.⁷⁹

Others have offered internal political reasons for Israeli PD failures. Zvi Mazel, a senior diplomat, describes Israel's PD as 'delayed reactions, excuses and apologies' and claims that it was not always this way.⁸⁰ He blames Israeli politics for this development: 'Immediately after Oslo, the information department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was shut down; since Israel was presumably on the road to peace, it wasn't necessary to continue to explain our policies. Unfortunately, the other side had a different idea and redoubled its propaganda.' In his opinion, this effort led to the adoption of the Palestinian narrative by the world and the rallying of the extreme and moderate left in Europe against Israel. Dan Diker also attributed PD failures to the politics of the recent national unity government in Israel. Foreign Minister Peres blocked PD because this would have been an admission of the failure of the Oslo peace process he sponsored.⁸¹ In the crucial first year of the PIW, Peres still viewed Arafat as a reliable partner and refused to hold him and the PA responsible for the terrorist campaign.

Several critics have focused on the presentation and content of Israeli arguments. Stephens, for example, wrote that spokespersons for Israel often 'miss their cues, muddle their arguments, botch their points', employ wrong and self-defeating messages, and are unable to match the slickness of Palestinian spokespersons, such as Hanan Ashrawi and Nabil Sha'at.⁸² While the Palestinians deliver the same clear and simple message—end the occupation and allow the establishment of a Palestinian state over all of the West Bank and Gaza—Israeli messages are often mixed and contradictory.

As a nation that fiercely debates its final borders, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, the status of Jerusalem and the use of force, Israel can produce only inconsistent, confusing and wavering messages. The nation has always been ruled by coalition governments, and cabinet ministers are independent party leaders, who often speak about the PIW based on their different, and sometimes opposing, party platforms and convictions. This pattern becomes even more problematic in periods when Israel is ruled by a government of national unity, as was the case during much of the PIW. Governments of national unity help to mobilize wide

domestic support for the war effort, but this comes at the price of confusing messages emerging from otherwise opposing camps. Frank Luntz, a PR expert, argues that Israeli politicians use the media to attack their opponents, but these critical statements damage Israel's reputation when they are reported abroad.⁸³

In 2001 and 2002, the State Comptroller examined the *Hasbara* system, including activities by the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and IDF, the Ministry for Public Security and the Police as well as the Intelligence Services.⁸⁴ The results were extremely critical. The report concludes that although the government recognizes *Hasbara* as one of the most important tools in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy, particularly during the PIW, the system has failed to prepare for, and to deal with, Arab and Palestinian propaganda. The report attributes failure to the following factors: a lack of a 'supreme head' and coordinator for the national *Hasbara* effort; a lack of coordination among the ministries and agencies involved in *Hasbara*; a lack of *Hasbara* strategies and programmes; and insufficient resources. The report defines 'Arab propaganda' as a 'strategic threat' and recommends the development of an effective PD programme that includes adequate conception, structure and resources, and, most importantly, the selection of a 'supreme head' to administer the programme. It also recommends the creation of a PD mechanism for the Arab world. Despite the harsh criticism, the government has done very little in the past four years to implement the report's principal recommendations.

One factor that has made it very difficult for Israel to conduct effective PD is severe criticism of its policies by Israelis at home and abroad and their strong support of the Palestinians. To name but a few major examples, such critics include members of radical, anarchist and human rights organizations, such as Gush Shalom, Women in Black, Rabbis for Human Rights, B'tzlem, and local branches of Doctors without Borders and Amnesty International. Various groups of Israeli soldiers have accused the IDF of committing 'war crimes' and called on their colleagues to refuse service in the army. An Israeli newspaper, *Ha'aretz*, employs two full-time journalists, Gideon Levi and Amira Hass, who exclusively and uncritically report on the PIW from the Palestinian perspective. This is probably the only case in modern history of an elite mainstream paper employing journalists who represent the enemy's claims and version of events in a time of war. Significantly, the English edition of *Ha'aretz* is extensively used as a source by foreign reporters.

Former Israelis living abroad have also attacked Israel and defended the Palestinians. A few, like Daniel Machover who now resides in London, have attempted to indict senior Israeli officers (travelling abroad) for 'war crimes'.⁸⁵ In 2004, Dror Feiler, who currently lives in Stockholm, created a piece of art glorifying Palestinian terrorism, which the Swedish Museum of

National Antiquities thought worthy of exhibiting.⁸⁶ Former Israeli academics now settled in the UK were also instrumental in the 2005 decision of the British Association of University Teachers (AUT) to boycott two Israeli universities. The organization cited violations of academic freedom in Israel as the main reason for the boycott.⁸⁷ The AUT rescinded the decision only after being threatened with lawsuits and learning that it was misled by a controversial Israeli academic, Ilan Pappé, who provided false information about his academic status at the University of Haifa.

Remedies

Given the deterioration of Israel's reputation in the international community and the strategic threat that this negative reputation presents for its existence and well-being, Israel must completely alter its approach to PD. Fixing the PD system requires a major coordinated effort that may take several years to develop. The initial steps should take place in the Office of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Ministry.

Governmental Implementation

The first priority is to get the government, and especially the prime minister, to understand the cost of neglecting soft power and PD. Strategic planning must include an assessment of the effects of every major political or military action on the national image; such actions should be reconsidered and adjusted if the costs are too great. The West expects Israel to meet the highest standards of behaviour, which it does not expect of the Palestinians and Arabs. Israel must fully expose the double standard, but also take it into consideration in policy formulation and implementation. A grand strategy must include an assertive PD component and the means to implement the effort.

All the recommendations included in the 2002 State Comptroller report must be implemented. The most natural office for formulating, coordinating and implementing PD is the Foreign Ministry. However, given the failures of past foreign ministers to pursue PD, prime ministers may have to lead the campaign in the early stages of the new programme. Organizational changes may have to be instituted in Israeli embassies and consulates. All legations will have to substantially increase their PD activities. A second person in command may have to be appointed to coordinate activities and supervise officials responsible for various dimensions of PD, including media relations, public affairs, cultural affairs, academic affairs, tourism, etc.

Professional Training

PD can be effective only if coordinated and implemented by highly trained and qualified professionals. All members of the Israeli Foreign Service, other official Israeli representatives abroad and officials working on

defence and foreign affairs must go through intensive PD training. They have to learn how to create useful relationships with the media, how to address audiences on television and radio, how to reach relevant diverse audiences and how to speak in front of hostile or neutral publics. A major new Israeli PD effort requires a substantial increase in human resources. Israeli universities have to launch academic PD programmes and short intensive programmes for officials already working on PD-related jobs in various ministries and agencies.

Focus on the Arab World and Europe

Israel should first address the Arab world and Europe, where Israel's reputation is at its lowest. Israel lies in the Middle East and has to refute misperceptions prevalent in the Arab world about the nation's history, society, democracy and interest in peaceful coexistence. Although Arabic language news networks, such as al-Jazeera and al-Arabia, have been hostile and biased in their reporting on Israel and the PIW, an effort should be made to get these news outlets interested in presenting the Israeli version of events as well as stories on other aspects of Israeli life and aspirations. Europe is crucial to Israeli foreign policy due to the EU's importance to Israel and the urgent need to reduce negative attitudes and anti-Semitism.

Proficiency in Arabic and knowledge of Arab culture and norms is a key factor in gaining access to appear on Arab television networks. Al-Jazeera often interviews Israeli Arabs, politicians and leaders who speak Arabic. The problem is that the Israeli Arabs selected for the interviews portray Israel in a negative light, partly because they are extremists and partly because they use Arab networks to talk to their own constituencies of Israeli Arabs. Israel needs to train and prepare a pool of Arabic-speaking Israeli Jews who will be able to present effectively Israeli responses to daily events and place them in appropriate political and social contexts. The Arab networks may be interested in airing such Israeli voices to create some appearance of balance in their reporting. Israel should also consider the establishment of satellite and radio channels in Arabic to broadcast to the Middle East and to Arab communities around the world. The highly reliable and successful programme in Persian on Israel Radio can serve as a model for these channels.

Critics have suggested altering the direction and content of Israel's PD. Bret Stephens has argued that the Arabs have so distorted the basic historical facts of the conflict that there is a need for a 'reclamation project', an effort to remind the world of historical truths. For example, the cause of the occupation of Arab lands is the Six Day War, which the Arabs initiated.⁸⁸ Max Singer applied this idea to the 2005 disengagement from Gaza, arguing that Israeli spokespersons should have refuted the Palestinian argument that Gaza belonged to them in the first place.⁸⁹ Nachman Shai, a former journalist and a spokesperson for several Israeli

institutions, including the IDF, believes that the Palestinians' greatest achievement—and consequently Israel's greatest failure—is 'the dissociation of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict from its historical roots'. Consequently, he suggests focusing on a long-term campaign designed 'to explain our clash with the Arabs—and to a certain extent the Muslim world—in geographical, religious and cultural terms'.⁹⁰ The question is how Israel can implement this strategy against the hostile media and intellectual elite.

Cyber-PD

Israel is a technological superpower but its cyber-PD is weak. Official websites of the various ministries and agencies are limited in content and presentation. They also provide different and sometimes contradictory messages. These websites do not present materials in languages other than Hebrew and English, and therefore cannot compete with numerous anti-Israeli websites in Arabic. Arabs and Muslims have flooded the Internet with extremely anti-Semitic websites in English and other languages, demonizing and dehumanizing Israel. Israel has hitherto failed to utilize the Internet to counter attacks by its enemies and to promote a favourable e-image. A much greater effort is needed in this area.

Funding

A major new PD programme will require substantial funding. The current PD annual budget of US \$9 million is drastically inadequate. Israel must substantially increase resources for PD. The appropriate amount for the first few years should be at least ten times the current level of spending. However, an increase in funding is insufficient if the nation does not know how to use it effectively. Therefore, the proper approach requires planning new viable initiatives, estimating their costs, and then requesting the funding needed to implement them.

Utilization of Non-governmental PD Programmes

Several private and public initiatives demonstrate that a nation does not have to depend only on government PD programmes. Several monitoring NGOs have significantly contributed to Israel's PD. The Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA) and Honest Reporting monitor the American media, and have now opened a British branch.⁹¹ Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) and Palestinian Media Watch (PMW) monitor Palestinian and Arab coverage.⁹² The effectiveness of this monitoring is debatable.⁹³ CAMERA's campaign against anti-Israeli bias in the National Public Radio (NPR) coverage was successful.⁹⁴ Systematic distortion by NPR and other media outlets would be much worse if CAMERA had not intervened. The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs recognized the significance of 'soft power' as well as the

unjustified and discriminatory treatment of Israel by NGOs, such as Human Rights Watch, and founded NGO Monitor to expose such abuses.⁹⁵

Branding

American PR experts have called for a paradigm shift in Israeli PD from focusing attention on the PIW to other neglected areas, and have attempted to demonstrate that their approach works. These experts measured attitudes towards Israel via Brand Asset Evaluator and found that Americans view Israel primarily as a grim, war-torn country, tough, rigid and dangerous.⁹⁶ They recommend branding Israel through disseminating information on daily life in the nation and achievements in science and technology. The question is whether it is possible to shift the focus from the politics and violence of the PIW to Israel's cultural life, arts and high-tech industries.

A few private American initiatives suggest that while altering the paradigm may be too ambitious a goal, some limited exercises in branding are possible. Israel at Heart (IAH) organizes meetings between young Israelis and youths in North America, South America and Europe.⁹⁷ They talk about their daily lives in Israel, and in this way they are able to tell stories about Israel not normally shown on television. IAH has also brought black Israelis of Ethiopian origin to speak at black churches and organized basketball exhibition games between Israeli and American teams. Another group, Israel 21c, an advocacy group based in Silicon Valley, focuses on Israel's scientific and technological advances that are saving and improving lives around the world.⁹⁸ The group takes credit for placing more than 2,500 stories with positive images of Israel and Israelis in the last four years. The Israel Project, founded in March 2002, employs a combination of strategic communication and branding. It works with PR experts, conducts polls, identifies weaknesses and devises strategies to improve Israel's image. It produces guides and holds conferences to explain to supporters what language to use when representing Israel, and also how to get the media to write on topics other than the PIW.⁹⁹ Israel enjoys considerable support among Jewish and Christian communities around the world and should use them more effectively to conduct extensive PD activities.

Increasing Domestic Awareness

A private US–Israeli initiative has helped to educate the Israeli public about Israel's deteriorating reputation abroad and the need for aggressive PD. In 2004, Israel's Channel 2 television (in cooperation with IAH) produced *The Ambassador*, a highly popular reality television show. Fourteen contestants, seven males and seven females, competed to win an appointment as an informal Israel PD official who would work at IAH in New York City. Initially, the Foreign Ministry criticized the programme

because it was seen as a vote of no confidence in the official PD organ of the state. However, the programme's success in educating the Israeli public about the importance of PD enabled officials to demand more attention and resources for PD. All these private branding and PR initiatives are interesting and useful, but they are mostly conducted in the US while Israel's PD challenges lie mostly in the Arab world and Europe, and they cannot substitute for an official PD programme.

CONCLUSIONS

While Israeli policies and actions occasionally deserve legitimate and reasonable criticism, the assault on Israel's existence and reputation in the world has crossed the lines of reasonable criticism. Israel is not the 'worst' state in the world; it is not a Nazi state and does not employ Nazi-like tactics against the Palestinians. It is not an apartheid state; it is not committing crimes against humanity, is not systematically violating human rights and does not pose the greatest threat to peace in the Middle East or the world. However, many people around the world now associate Israel with these claims. As such, more than any nation in the world today, Israel must design an innovative and bold PD effort based on the most advanced knowledge and practical experience of the NPD.

Jews have a right to self-determination and a state like any other people. The denial of Israel's right to exist means discriminating against Jews and singling them out for special treatment. Israel should handle debates about its right to exist the same way the Jewish world handles Holocaust denial. Debates on Holocaust denial are viewed as illegitimate, and in some nations are illegal and subject to criminal procedures. Like Holocaust denial, questioning Israel's right to exist is not a legitimate exercise of the democratic right of free speech. Israeli representatives should refrain from participating in debates on the right to exist, and Israeli citizens who deny this right should be stripped of their citizenship.

Most of the UN resolutions and actions on Israel and the Arab–Israeli conflict have been one-sided, some even ridiculous and absurd. Due to this pattern, Israel has downplayed the significance of the UN for many years, but it can no longer afford to do so. Despite being a corrupt, ineffective and immoral organization, most people around the world view the UN as a source of legitimacy, legality and international norms—perhaps, due to the absence of any other alternative institution. For this reason, debates and resolutions in the UN and affiliated organizations are highly significant. Israel must devote much more attention and resources to a systematic campaign at the UN to create more balanced resolutions and actions. If this campaign does not bear satisfactory fruit, the strategic solution would be to expose UN abuses and undermine its image and reputation. This strategy was employed in the last two decades and yielded some limited,

though effective results, such as the repeal of the resolution equating Zionism and racism. Surprisingly, no scholar has written a definitive book on the UN and Israel.

The Western and the global media have adopted critical views of Israel and its policies, and have supported the Palestinian and the Arab campaign. Israel has valid complaints against the foreign press in Israel. However, Israel cannot change its democratic principles just because many reporters systematically abuse them. Israeli leaders and media officials have to learn how to deal effectively with hostile media outlets.

Israel must establish a highly experienced rapid response team with sufficient proficiency in various languages to present arguments to the media in a coherent and persuasive manner. Fast, accurate monitoring and exposing major professional failures of journalists are critical. Spokespersons should demand quick and adequate corrections. While there are organizations which monitor the media in the US, UK and parts of the Arab world, there are no groups monitoring coverage in other parts of the world. The government should allocate research grants and fellowships to scholars who would conduct systematic research on media coverage of Israel around the world. The findings can be used to criticize media outlets and journalists who systematically file biased and distorted reports.

As this and other studies have shown, Israel's image and reputation in the US is very favourable. Successive presidents, Congress and public opinion polls strongly support Israel. This long-term support strengthened after the 9/11 terror attacks. It could be argued that due to the powerful position of the US in the world, this is all that matters. Since the war in Iraq, however, the position of the US in the world has weakened, and it occasionally ignores Israel's interests to gain support in the Arab world and Europe. Israel must seek sympathy and understanding across the globe, primarily in the Arab world and Europe. Asia should also be targeted for intensive PD programmes, because Asian nations, such as China, India and Japan, are likely to have much more influence on the world stage in the future.

Israel has neglected PD and soft power, relying primarily on hard power to cope with Arab and Palestinian violence. It can no longer afford to neglect these significant foreign policy instruments. Israel must develop an innovative PD programme and must wisely use a combination of hard and soft power to counter existing and future threats. Israel cannot rely on sporadic and limited private initiatives; it must develop its own major and assertive PD programme. The lack of an adequate PD programme has significantly affected Israel's strategic outlook and freedom of action. Ariel Sharon decided to initiate and implement Israel's withdrawal (disengagement) from Gaza and parts of the West Bank due primarily to fear of an attempt by the international community to impose a solution to the PIW—a solution which would prove disastrous to Israel's sovereignty and

security. Any further neglect of PD would not only restrict Israel's strategic options, it would be detrimental to its ability to survive in an increasingly intolerant and hostile world which thinks sacrificing Israel's vital interests or even the state itself would be a small price to pay for ending the global confrontation between the West and Islamic fundamentalism.

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