REBUILDING PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: THE CASE OF ISRAEL

Eytan Gilboa and Nachman Shai

Introduction

Revolutionary changes in international relations and communication technologies have inspired state and non-state actors to initiate public diplomacy (PD) programs or to examine and adjust existing ones. States face different challenges and have different needs. The big powers like the US, China and Russia receive substantial attention due to their standing and influence in the world. The middle powers like Australia, Canada and Norway are searching for a mission or a niche that would best serve their political and economic interests in the world. Small states, especially developing countries, seek attention and acknowledgement that they exist and have something to contribute. States and non-state actors engaged in war and conflict like Israel and the Palestinians, wish to gain support for their respective causes in international organizations and world public opinion.

States have been aware of the need to develop and adjust their PD programs to the challenges and opportunities of the information age. They have invested considerable resources in evaluation and creation of new initiatives. States that failed to cope with the challenges of the information age denied themselves a critical instrument of diplomacy and foreign policy. From both theoretical and practical perspectives it is vital to investigate how different actors have approached the need to evaluate and reform PD. A comparative analysis may yield a list of strategies which actors may adopt and modify according to their specific needs. A comparative analysis of reform strategies may also contribute observations and findings to the slowly emerging field of comparative PD.

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States have developed various approaches to evaluation, development and conduct of PD programs. They have established investigative committees, commissioned research, held hearings, consulted experts and even solicited views and ideas from the general public. States employed two basic approaches: a closed one that primarily is held in house and involves extensive consultations among officials responsible for PD with the help of outside experts; and an open one which involves the public in the evaluation process. Norway and Poland for example, employed the closed process, while Canada and Australia preferred the open approach.

Following the end of the Cold War, Norway was concerned with its diminishing visibility in world affairs, and in 2002 contracted the Foreign Policy Centre in London to produce a new PD strategy. In 2002 and 2003, the plan was discussed in a series of seminars with selected representatives of several government and non-governmental agencies, journalists, scholars and businessmen. The results were released to the public in 2003. In 2002, Poland launched a PD campaign designed to secure accession to the EU. The government developed a program for the promotion of Poland in the EU and instructed the ministers of foreign affairs, culture, economic affairs and education to implement it. Just before the admission to the EU, Poland hired Wally Olins, Chairman of Suffron Brand Consultants, to brand Poland.

Canada and Australia adopted a different approach to reforming their PD systems. They opened up the process for direct wide public participation in the process. In January 2003, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade published a Dialogue Paper and invited the public to discuss major questions of diplomacy and PD. Many organizations and thousands of individuals responded

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3 Mark Leonard and Andrew Small, _Norwegian Public Diplomacy_ (The Foreign Policy Centre, 2003).
5 Beata Ociepka and Marta Ryniejska, _Public Diplomacy and EU Enlargement: The Case of Poland_ (Clingendael, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Discussion Papers in Diplomacy, No. 99, 2005).
on-line and many participated in town meetings and conferences. The results were presented to the public in a special report. A parliamentary committee in Australia initiated a major study of PD and made many interesting and useful recommendations. The committee opened up the process, invited heads and leaders of relevant organizations to submit papers, and held hearings.

These few cases may suggest that states select approaches to reform based on their respective PD systems. Those of Norway and Poland were centralized and selective while those of Canada and Australia were more fragmented and inclusive, and both the processes of reforms and the conduct of PD may reflect the different societal composition of the states: more homogenic in the first two and more multicultural in the last two.

This chapter examines how Israel has attempted to reform its PD. More than any country, Israel needed a major overhaul of its PD. In the last twenty years the Jewish state has faced enormous foreign policy and national security challenges. The main threats evolved from a protracted low intensity conflict with the Palestinians and Iran's proxies in the Middle East: Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza. Several dramatic events exposed serious weaknesses in Israeli PD including the first Palestinian Intifada (1987–1992), the failure of the Oslo peace process (1993–2000), the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon (2000), the Second Palestinian Intifada (2000–2006), the infamous UN World Conference Against Racism held in Durban (2001), the Israeli unilateral disengagement from Gaza (2005) and the Second Lebanon War between Israel and Hezbollah (2006). All these events demonstrated that Israel was paying heavy political and diplomatic costs for the failure to effectively employ PD.

Successive Israeli governments have been aware of the need to rebuild Israel’s PD. Leaders have called for major reforms but the awareness and the vigorous statements have never been translated into...

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8 Australia, Senate. Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade *Australia’s Public Diplomacy: Building our Image* (Commonwealth of Australia August 2007).
actions. Substantial public support and engagement in PD is required for successful expansion and utilization of PD. The Israeli public has strongly supported reforms in the PD system. The media often complained about the lack of effective PD, the public has been aware of this deficiency and several bodies such as the State Comptroller and the Keenest Committee on Defense and Foreign Affairs issued critical reports documenting the abysmal results and demanding major reforms. Yet, the government has never made a serious attempt to build an effective PD system and has never consulted the people and local civil society organs in the formulation and implementation of PD.

This chapter systematically examines Israeli attempts to change and adjust its PD to the challenges of both the information revolution and the low-intensity conflict with the Palestinians and other regional enemies. It first maps governmental and extra-governmental agencies and organizations pursuing PD on behalf of Israel. It then examines various plans and actions to reform and rebuild the system. The findings reveal a highly fragmented and deficient system, and reforms attempts which failed due to bureaucratic and personal interests of politicians and officials. The last section presents an optimal model for Israel that with some modifications may be suitable for other countries, particularly those facing similar challenges and threats.

**Governmental Public Diplomacy**

Many organizations in Israel pursue public diplomacy, directly or indirectly, but the system has been fragmented and there has never been one authority for direction and coordination (see Figure 1). The military establishment, the Ministry of Defense (MOD), and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have dominated Israel’s defense and foreign affairs, and as the owners and practitioners of hard power have not appreciated the value of soft power and PD.

The Prime Minister Office’s (PMO) is responsible for policy planning, formulation and implementation and has several bodies to accomplish these tasks. The most relevant offices for PD are those of the Spokesperson and the Foreign Communication Adviser, the Government Press Office (GPO), which provides services to foreign reporters stationed in Israel, and the National Security Council (NSC); however, the PMO is also responsible for the intelligence services
The Mossad operates like the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6). It collects and processes intelligence, combats terrorism, and conducts covert operations. In times of low intensity conflict, these organizations may provide useful information for PD or will be engaged in activity that bears directly on PD. GSA may provide information on terrorist activity and leaders of terrorist organizations which could justify a military operation against them, and the Mossad may be implicated in illegal or problematic activities abroad, as it did in recent years in Jordan, New Zealand and Switzerland.

Figure 1: Clusters of Governmental PD.
In general, given the fragile structure of Israeli coalition governments, the PMO’s media and communication officials are mostly concerned with the Prime Minister’s political interests. Occasionally, they respond to crises or create opportunities for PD during official state visits abroad. The GPO’s duties have been mostly confined to technical matters and has never been given a prominent role in the formulation and implementation of PD. The establishment in 1970 of a unit for communication with foreign reporters at the Foreign Ministry also eroded the GPO’s standing in the PD system. The NSC was established in 1999 in order to improve the quality of policymaking and coordination among the different governmental units responsible for defense and foreign affairs. This body could have served as an excellent organ for planning and coordination of PD. From the outset however, it became clear that the NSC could not accomplish its goals. The MOD and IDF, wanting to preserve their domination of the policymaking process, strongly opposed the Council and undermined its work.12

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) could have been the natural centre for the development and practice of PD. Headed by Deputy Director Generals, several divisions and departments are employing a variety of PD instruments.13 Information and Media is the principal division. It covers public affairs (publications, productions, and special projects), press relations, information and the Internet, and external relations (friendship societies, local government, and other links). The division however, is understaffed and has a very limited budget for PD activities, about $10 million per year. The other relevant divisions include Cultural and Scientific Affairs, International Cooperation (foreign aid), International Organizations and the UN, Diaspora and World Jewish Affairs, and Religious Affairs.

Although Israeli culture, literature, music, film, theatre, dance and plastic arts are highly popular around the world, the cultural division budget is extremely limited, and after recent budgetary cuts, MFA was forced to reduce the number of cultural attachés from 14 to 4.14 Until

the UN Durban Conference, the MFA ignored NGOs and concentrated on the UN and international organizations where Israel increasingly has faced hostile debates and one-sided severe condemnation and criticism. Since the Durban conference, however, the Division of International Organizations and the UN is devoting more attention and is allocating more resources to NGOs.

The Center for International Cooperation (Mashav) was established in 1958 and has trained over 250,000 students from the developing world, primarily from Africa. Training and projects were designed to harness Israel’s innovations and experience in agriculture, health, education, and science for helping developing countries to become more productive and meet their essential economic and social needs. Israeli aid to developing countries was more attractive than aid from big powers because the Jewish state was free of colonial past and imperial ambitions, and was viewed as less threatening to the sovereignty and independence of the recipient states. Israel’s long-term aid to Africa may have contributed to the relative favourable Israeli reputation in states such as the Ivory Coast, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Ghana. Israel, however, invests only $10 million in foreign aid either 10 million a year. While several projects are done in cooperation with other countries, boosting the actual annual sum is larger, it is still very low in comparison with the OECD’s recommended allocation of 0.7% of GNP to aid.

MOD and IDF have several departments and units that conduct PD directly or indirectly, including the IDF Spokesperson Division, the Planning Branch, the Home-front Command, the Foreign Defense Assistance and Defense Export Department, the Coordinator of Government Operations in the Territories, and the Liaison Unit to Foreign Forces. MOD operates three procurement missions in New York, Paris, and Berlin, which mainly deal with defence export

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16 David Harris and Itamar Rabinovich (eds.), Israel and Africa (The American Jewish Committee and Tel Aviv University, 2006).

promotion and technological and industrial cooperation, while the
IDF sends military attachés to Israeli embassies abroad.

The IDF Spokesperson Division is the largest spokesperson unit in
Israel with more than 400 officers, civilians and soldiers and with a
reserve unit of almost 1,200 soldiers and officers. Its mission is to
report on IDF’s accomplishments and activities to the Israeli and inter-
national public, to nurture public confidence in the IDF, and to serve
as the IDF’s primary professional authority on matters of public rela-
tions and distribution of information to the public. The IDF
Spokesperson’s Division performs a variety of functions, serving as the
spokesperson for the IDF both at home and abroad, developing and
implementing public relations (PR) policies, disseminating military
related information to the public, instructing IDF personnel in matters
pertaining to PR, and developing relationships with media outlets and
accompanying them to military events.  

The IDF Planning Branch, a central body of the IDF General Staff,
deals with strategic planning, building military forces and organizing
them. Two of its units, Foreign Relations Division and the Liaison Unit
to Foreign Forces are responsible for cooperation with foreign armed
forces. The Foreign Relations Division is responsible for cooperation
with foreign armed forces overseas and the deployment and direction
of military attachés stationed in Israeli embassies, while the Liaison
Unit to Foreign Forces is responsible for relations with various foreign
forces stationed in the Middle East, particularly with peacekeeping
units.

The Home Front Command and the Public Security Ministry, which
includes the Police spokesperson unit, are relevant to PD because of
the Palestinian and the Hezbollah attacks on Israeli civilians residing
in towns and villages. In low-intensity conflict the boundaries between
the home front and the military front are blurred. The Command
instructs the public how to cope with conventional and non-conven-
tional threats. Police routinely attempts to foil terrorist attacks, restore
order when they happen and investigate who are the terrorists, how
they carry out the attacks and who send them. Police is also relevant to
PD because it routinely deals with sensitive PD issues including immi-
igration, foreign labor and international crime.

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units/branches/amatz/Spokesperson/default.htm (accessed 24 November 2008).
MOD’s Foreign Defense Assistance and Defense Export Department (SIBAT) promotes marketing and sales of Israeli advanced defense systems, products and consultancy services.\(^{19}\) SIBAT is relevant to PD because exporting weapons is a sensitive and sometimes controversial issue. The Coordinator of Government Operations in the Territories (COGAT) participates in the formation of policies towards civilians in Judea, Samaria and Gaza and implements them. The unit coordinates activities of government bureaus, the IDF, and the security establishments opposite the Palestinians in relevant civilian areas. COGAT also promotes humanitarian issues, infrastructure and economical projects.\(^{20}\) 

Several other Israeli ministries have representation and offices abroad and by definition are engaged in PD activities. They include the Ministry of Tourism which has offices in 15 countries, and the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor (MITL) which has commercial attachés in 21 countries. The Ministry of Finance also employs financial attachés in several selected countries.

**Extra-Governmental PD**

Several public and private organizations in Israel and abroad conduct activities related directly or indirectly to PD. Many were created by concerned citizens, both Jews and non-Jews, who were frustrated with the Israeli government failures to address the information and communication challenges presented by the enemies of the Jewish state and their supporters around the world, primarily in the US and Europe. Several Jewish organizations added PD on behalf of Israel to their otherwise wide mission and activities. Others were created to confront a specific challenge in a specific country, such as the Academic Friends of Israel (AFI) created in the UK in 2002 to combat anti-Semitism in British universities and repeated attempts by the University and College Union (the union of British lecturers) to boycott Israeli scholars and academic institutions.\(^ {21}\)

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The extra-governmental network is also highly fragmented. It includes organizations and groups that may be classified into five basic clusters: advocacy and lobbying, media relations, Diaspora PD, academic affairs and specific areas (see Figure 2). The principal advocacy organizations include the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the Israel Project (IP) and the Israel Advocacy Initiative (IAI) in the US; Britain-Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM) in the UK; I Like Israel Movement (ILI) in Germany; and The Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC) in Australia. They mostly conduct lobby activity in local parliaments, disseminate information on Israel and the Middle East, and sponsor visits of politicians, journalists, scholars and opinion leaders in Israel.

Diaspora PD organizations include veteran institutions established even before the establishment of Israel to promote Jewish and Israeli

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**Figure 2: Clusters of Extra-Governmental PD.**

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*The term extra-governmental is used here because it is broader than the term NGOs which is now closely associated with organizations interested in global issues such as human rights, environmental protection, religion, and health.*
causes. They include the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI), Keren Hayesod (KH), the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and the World Jewish Congress (WJC). Several American Jewish organizations added PD on behalf of Israel to their routine local or national community activities. They include the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish American Organizations (CP), the United Jewish Communities (UJC), Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the American Jewish Congress (AJCo). Many of these organizations have offices in Israel established to gather and disseminate information and conduct local activities.

Supporters of Israel who felt that the Western media systematically distorts coverage of Israel and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict established organizations to monitor media outlets and correct factual mistakes and unfounded interpretations. Other organizations provide services to reporters covering Israel and the Middle East and operate independent media channels. Most of these organizations solicit and receive donations to carry out their activities. The Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA) and Honest Reporting monitor media coverage of Israel and the Middle East in the Western media, primarily in the US and the UK. CAMERA also established REVISTA to monitor media published and broadcast in Spanish. BBC World Service enjoyed wide audiences and enormous credibility around the world, and therefore biased, inaccurate and misleading coverage could substantially damage the reputation of Israel. Following many complaints against the network, BBC Watch was established to monitor its coverage.

The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) monitors Arab and Muslim media, The Palestinian Media Watch (PMW) monitors the Palestinian media. Media Central, Media Line and Israel News-makers Forum (INFO) provide services to foreign reporters stationed in Israel. The Israeli Network, American Jewish Life Television (JLTV), Infolive TV (a news service), and Jerusalem Online operate channels, broadcasting news and commentary on current affairs that are ignored by the mainstream media.

Several organizations deal with specific areas, such as academic affairs, NGOs, the UN, and corporate or business diplomacy. The radical left, Arab and Moslem organizations are increasingly conducting anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic campaigns primarily on American and European campuses. These include lectures, workshops, exhibitions, festivals and demonstrations. Several organizations were created to monitor and combat these activities including StandWithUS, Israel on Campus Coalition (ICC) Israel at Heart, David’s Project, and Campus Watch. The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE) supports exchanges of faculty members and students with American universities.

NGO Monitor exposes abuses, unfounded allegations and biased criticism leveled against Israel by local and international NGOs including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Christian Aid and Oxfam International. Israel21c conducts corporate or business diplomacy and promotes Israel’s image through documentation of Israeli contributions to science and technology with emphasis on health, energy and the environment. Based on Israeli experience and unique technology and instruments, IsraAID helps states and populations to cope with natural disasters. Cultural diplomacy consists of many activities such as annual festivals of Israeli films organized for example by the IsraFest Foundation and other organizations in key US cities and in other parts of the world.

Figure 2 shows that among the extra-governmental organizations, media relations attract attention and resources more than any other PD instrument. It also shows that much of the activity focuses on the US, where the standing of Israel among both the public and policy makers is highly positive. The contributions of all these many diverse organizations have never been assessed in any systematic way. AIPAC, for example, has been recently criticized by American politicians, officials and scholars who among other things blamed the advocacy organization and Israel for pushing the US to wage the war in Iraq. Most of the claims made by the critics have been discredited but the

25 Gerstenfeld (ed.), Academics against Israel and the Jews.
Overall effects of the controversy on public opinion and policy aren’t yet known.\(^\text{28}\) Similarly, the effects of media monitoring are also not clear.\(^\text{29}\)

**Rivalries and Reform Attempts**

Successive Israeli Governments recognized the need to reform the PD system. They conducted studies, established committees, held conferences and produced many reports. Most proposals however, were ignored and the few that were implemented didn’t last long. The various proposals included the appointment of a minister or a deputy minister for information in the PM office, establishment of bodies such as a national information division at the PM Office, an intergovernmental coordinating body under the chairmanship of the Director General of the PM Office or a ministerial committee for information.

The drive for reforms stemmed from widespread feelings that Israel’s PD is not working because of fragmentation and bureaucratic and personal fighting over authority, policy, information sharing and resources. Several ministries, primarily the PM Office, Foreign Affairs and Defense, have often clashed over foreign policy and PD strategies. Clashes have occurred both at the highest ministerial levels as well as at lower levels, over structural and policy issues as well as on specific or relatively insignificant problems. Clashes have occurred inside ministries, among ministries, and between governmental agencies and extra-governmental organizations.

A few examples from the Second Intifada well illustrate the rivalries and their disastrous effects both on the conduct of PD and the attempts to reform the system. The Foreign Ministry often complained that MOD and the IDF did not provide or share critical information on military activity that has direct bearing on Israel’s reputation and standing in the world. The same Ministry, however, completely ignored the GPO when, at the beginning of the intifada, it opened a communication center for foreign journalists. At the same time, PM Ehud Barak instructed his office to prepare and disseminate a “white paper” on the


involvement of Arafat and the Palestinian Authority in terrorism. Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami opposed the strategy and refused to disseminate the book, claiming that Arafat was still a partner for negotiations. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister distributed the book to foreign visitors and organizations abroad, creating confusion at home and abroad about Israel’s policy. After Operation “Defensive Shield” in Jenin, Barak’s successor, Ariel Sharon, rejected a UN proposal to send an investigative committee, but Foreign Minister Shimon Peres endorsed it. With Israel speaking in two opposite voices, it was unclear what policy was and who was making it.

Several PMs attempted to reform the PD system but could not make any significant progress. Barak, for example, wanted to build a national information and communication division in his office, and in October 2000 he appointed Nachman Shai to “guide” and “coordinate” all Israeli communication and information activities. These functions were written into the appointment letter but were not sufficiently clear. Shai was also hindered by internal strife inside the Prime Minister’s office between the Bureau Chief and the Chief of Staff and Security Adviser and by the reluctance of the different government agencies responsible for communication and PD to cooperate with him.

In August 2001, PM Sharon attempted to repair Israeli PD via the appointment of a minister dedicated the function. He asked Tzipi Livni, a minister without portfolio, to plan and coordinate PD strategies and programs. Livni concluded that effective guidance and coordination of PD requires the establishment of a central authority at the PM Office. She had no chance to implement her proposal, however, because Foreign Minister Peres and his senior staff did not want to lose their PD monopoly and undermined her initiatives. As Sharon did not want to confront Peres on this issue, Livni had no other choice but to resign from her PD assignment. Sharon then attempted to fill the position of Communication and Information Head in his office but the official appointed, Yossi Gal, a veteran diplomat from the Foreign Ministry, survived only two months.

30 The UN and several human rights organizations conformed that 52 Palestinians were killed—all but three—were combatants. Israel lost 23 soldiers—several of whom were killed because they did not want to injure Palestinian civilians. See, for example, Human Rights Watch Report, “Jenin: IDF Military Operations,” http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/2002/israel3/ (accessed 24 November 2008).
Rivalries and reform attempts also occurred at lower levels of the national security and foreign policy establishment. The IDF became aware of the need to address PD and communication challenges, but units and officers pursued personal initiatives. For example, at the beginning of the Second Intifada, the Central Command (responsible for the West Bank) established a Center for Documentation and Communication, contending that IDF spokespersons were incapable of providing effective communication responses. The Center, however, was isolated from both the IDF Spokesperson unit and the Foreign Ministry. When a Palestinian boy, Mohammed al-Dora, died at the beginning of the Intifada in a war zone in Gaza, the IDF spoke in two voices. The General Staff hurriedly accepted responsibility for the death of al-Dora, while the Southern Command did not and vehemently denied media reports suggesting that Israeli soldiers deliberately killed the boy.31

More successful but limited reforms occurred at lower levels of the bureaucracy. For example, both the MFA and the IDF recognized the need to deal more effectively with the Arab media. The communication revolution in the Arab world, primarily the emerging of numerous regional and global Arab satellite television networks such as Al-Jazeera, required adjustments in the existing administrative structures. Hence, the Information and Media Division at the Foreign Ministry established a special unit for the Arab media, first within the Press Department and later as a separate independent department. In May 2004, the IDF Spokesperson Division also established a desk for the Arab media. These initiatives, however, were limited and could not

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31 The death of al-Dura inflamed the violence, became a symbol and an icon for the Palestinian fighting and substantially damaged Israel’s image in the world. It is not clear, however, whether the boy was killed by Israeli bullets or Palestinian fire. The sole television reporting on the incident, by France 2, has been investigated and questioned, and the report’s credibility is still being deliberated in French courts. See James Fallows, “Who Shot Mohammed al-Dura?”, *The Atlantic Monthly*, June 2003, pp. 49–56; Stephanie Gutmann, *The Other War: Israelis, Palestinians and the Struggle for Media Supremacy* (Encounter Books, 2005), pp. 39–83; Nidra Poller, “Myth, Fact and the al-Dura Affair,” *Commentary* (September 2005), 120, pp. 23–30; Philippe Karsenty, “We Need to Expose the Muhammad al-Dura Hoax,” *Middle East Quarterly* (2008), 15, pp. 57–65.

Tensions also occurred between the government and extra-governmental organizations. For example, after Operation Defensive Shield, the Israel Project conducted a major advertising campaign against Palestinian terrorism. The Foreign Ministry criticized this campaign as hysterical, believing it damaged Israeli economic and tourism interests.
meet the growing needs for sustained and well organized relations with the Arab media.

Attempts have also been made to reform specific PD instruments. The Brand Israel Group, a coalition of seven marketing and communications executives, has concluded that due to Israel’s poor reputation abroad and PD failures, it needs a re-branding campaign. The work began when the advertising firm Young & Rubicam included Israel in its quarterly review of 13,000 brands. The survey found that Israel is well known but has little relevance for younger Americans, who only associate it with war.  

Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who had been exposed to weaknesses in Israel’s PD when she served as a minister at the PM Office, strongly supported the initiative. In 2005, the PM Office, the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Finance decided to authorize the Foreign Ministry to direct the branding project and allocated about $2.5 million for that purpose.

The Centralized Model: A PD Authority

The optimal model for Israeli PD must be centralized and sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of both peace and war. Officials and experts have suggested different administrative ways to accomplish this task. Often, however, these proposals reflected bureaucratic or personal interests. Foreign Ministry officials, for example, have always advocated a system with the Foreign Ministry at the center. One Prime Ministerial Bureau Chief suggested a new PD body and placed himself at the helm to increase his personal power at the PM Office. If the Foreign Ministry is a natural place to plan, coordinate and supervise PD, and although the National Security Council could also fulfil this function, the traditional weakness of these two bodies and their limited role in the making of Israel’s foreign and defense policy means that the solution can only come with the establishment of new powerful PD authority at the Prime Minister’s Office.

In 2001 and 2002, the Israeli State Comptroller examined the Hasbara (PD) system, including activities of the PMO, MFA, MOD and IDF, the Ministry for Public Security and Police, and as the

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intelligence services. The results were extremely critical. The report concluded that although the government recognized PD as one of the most important tools in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy, particularly during the Intifada, the system failed to prepare for and to deal with Arab and Palestinian information campaigns. The report attributed failure to the following factors: a lack of a “supreme head” and coordinator for the national PD effort; a lack of coordination among the ministries and agencies involved in PD; a lack of PD strategies and programs; and insufficient resources. The report defined “Arab propaganda” as a “strategic threat” and recommended an effective PD program with a clear and well-defined strategy, adequate administrative structure and resources, and most importantly, a “supreme head” that would manage and coordinate the national PD system.

In response to this critical report, the Cabinet in December 2003 established a committee to recommend measures for a major reform in Israel’s PD, with Prime Minister Sharon appointing his Cabinet Secretary Yisrael Maimon as chair. The Committee was instructed to submit a report in 30 days, but the work lasted more than three-and-a-half years. An interim report was submitted in April 2006 for discussion and approval by the Cabinet, but the sudden eruption of the Second Lebanon war delayed the discussion. Moreover, the war was the occasion for a major Israeli PD failure, and another committee of inquiry, the Vinograd Committee, established by the Cabinet to investigate the conduct and consequences of the war, criticized Israel’s PD and made several recommendations for remedies. Consequently, the Maimon Committee now had to consider the State Comptroller’s report, the PD conducted during the war, and the recommendations of the Vinograd Committee.

The Maimon Committee eventually recommended establishing one central authority to guide and coordinate all the PD efforts under the leadership of a professional high ranking official. The official would be appointed by the Prime Minister, would report to him, would

34 Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, 34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon (Palgrave, 2008).
participate in Cabinet critical meetings on national security and foreign policy, and would have authority to guide ministers and senior officials. On 8 July 2008, however, the Cabinet adopted only a diluted version of Maimon’s proposal. It established a new national PD coordination unit at the Prime Minister’s Office, but it downgraded the standing and that of its head. The unit would only “coordinate” and not “guide and coordinate”. The head would be the Prime Minister’s communication advisor who, given pressing national and political matters related to the Prime Minister, would have little time for PD.

This work builds on suggestions made by the State Comptroller and the Miamon Committee but offers a much more elaborate centralized PD model, built around a new authority at the Prime Minister’s Office. This central authority would function over the next five to ten years, until PD is adequately immersed in the foreign policy and defense establishment; selection of the authority’s head, the administrative structure and resources would meet the agency’s principal functions of effective government-wide guidance and coordination. If possible and desirable, the authority may also coordinate PD activities among extragovernmental organizations.

Figure 3 describes the structure and components of a new PD system built around this authority. It consists of a head, public advisory council, several functional departments, an information and communication centre, and desks for short-term and long-term PD instruments.

It is possible to appoint a minister or a deputy minister at the Prime Minister’s Office to lead the authority, but a professional director is preferable, as politicians are likely to inject political or personal interests into the working of the authority and are likely to battle with other ministers, especially those responsible for defense and foreign affairs. To increase the prestige and authority of the head, the holder of this position would be appointed by the PM and directly report to him. In addition, the head would receive the rank of Director General, the highest rank in the civil service, and would regularly participate in cabinet meetings on defense and foreign affairs.

The Public Advisory Council should include prominent representatives from various sectors including businessmen, industrialists,
authors, artists, musicians, scholars, publishers, journalists, and retired diplomats and military officers. It would meet at least once a year and provide both advice and networking. Council members would be appointed by the Prime Minister and approved by the Cabinet.
The proposed PD authority would have several functional departments, especially for research and development, doctrine, training, and evaluation. The research and development department would prepare the infrastructure and data needed to formulate PD strategies. It would also conduct thorough evaluation of activities and programs. The training department would train both the authority staff and officials working on PD both in the governmental and the extra-governmental sectors.

The communication and information centre would serve as the heart of the authority, guiding and coordinating existing and future activities. The centre would gather and process relevant information from various sources, including the media and all the governmental and extra-governmental organizations, and would initiate and employ effective listening methods. Based on information received from sources, the center would produce guidelines for all bodies working on specific short-term and long-term PD instruments, submitted them first to the head for approval, transmission, and coordination.

Working with relevant representatives of the PMO, the MFA, MOD, MITL, and Police, the authority would handle both short-term and long-term PD and would recommend appropriate instruments for specific situations and audiences. Several instruments such as media relations, public relations, cyber PD, international broadcasting, lawfare, and extra-governmental PD are more suitable for short-term reactive and pro-active PD.\textsuperscript{37} Others, such as cultural diplomacy, international exchanges, corporate or business diplomacy, branding, and foreign aid are more suitable for long-term PD.

Conclusions

Adjusting PD to the challenges of the information age and the rapid changes in international relations may be divided into three categories based on whether the required adjustments are minor or major and

\textsuperscript{37} “Lawfare” refers to the use of international law in general and international legal institutions in particular as weapons of war and confrontation. Thus, it is also an instrument of public diplomacy. Israel’s enemies have extensively used lawfare to damage the country’s image and reputation. See, for example, Anne Herzberg, \textit{NGO Lawfare: Exploitation of Courts in the Arab-Israeli Conflict} (NGO Monitor Monographs, 2008), http://www.ngo-monitor.org/data/images/File/lawfare-monograph.pdf \hspace{1em} (accessed 24 November 2008).
whether they deal with issues or fundamental structures. The three categories are revising, reforming and rebuilding. Revising refers to situations where the PD system works effectively and needs only minor adjustments in areas such as personnel, budgets and programs. Reforming refers to situations where parts of the system do not work properly or are outdated and more far-reaching structural changes are needed. Reforms may include creating new positions or offices, abolishing or moving offices, or altering hierarchies. Rebuilding may also include these activities, but it refers to systems that do not work and need substantial structural overhaul. Based on our typology, Israel's PD needs rebuilding.

Despite overwhelming security threats from immediate neighbors and more distant enemies, and despite the increasing importance of soft power and PD, Israel has not been able yet to overhaul its PD system. The country adopted the closed approach to reform, similar to the one used by states such as Norway and Poland, but so far the effort has been very limited and produced very little results. Many governmental and extra-governmental units and organizations are active in PD. Their contributions, however, are hampered by a lack of direction and coordination. As a result, the inadequate and highly fragmented system often fails to meet the challenges of modern PD and the low intensity conflict with the Palestinians and Hezbollah.

The main problem in the system is structural, and therefore the existing highly fragmented and ineffective model should be replaced by a centralized model based on a new PD authority which should be established at the Prime Minister's Office. The mere establishment of the agency, however, would not be sufficient. In making critical decisions on national security and on war and peace, Israel must consider PD effects and ramifications. The proposed authority head should be present in cabinet meetings and add PD to the deliberation of options. Israel must also develop a coherent PD strategy and systematically apply it to organizations, instruments and evolving crises situations. The proposed authority should help to develop this strategy in cooperation with the Public Advisory Council and the relevant ministries and organizations inside and outside the government.

The authority should conduct an annual PD conference with all the relevant governmental and extra-governmental actors from Israel and abroad, to evaluate and discuss existing programs and activities and to consider new ones. The authority may initiate a dialogue with the Israeli public on PD, similar to that held in Canada and Australia.
The government has to substantially increase funding for PD and create a better balance between hard and soft power in Israel’s foreign policy. A successful and functional PD system also requires constant monitoring and evaluations of programs and activities.

Different state and non-state actors have different PD needs, and they often have to adjust their strategies and programs to rapidly changing trends and circumstances. While we have focused on Israel, the approach suggested here may assist with the design and implementation of reforms in PD systems, primarily in cases of small states or middle powers facing serious international challenges.