Public Diplomacy, Nation Branding, And The State Of Brand Israel

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ABSTRACT

Advances in technology are changing how we communicate. More importantly, they are changing the way information is received and how public opinion is formed. This capstone project explores the increasing interconnectedness between news media, public policy, and public opinion through an analysis of both theories and practices related to public diplomacy and both social media and digital media. A case analysis of Israel’s public diplomacy efforts on social media platforms were reviewed in conjunction with mainstream American news media coverage of Israel on digital platforms to better understand how Israel establishes its own narrative among American audiences, and how the American news media’s framing of Israel interacts with this narrative.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page.............................................................................................................................................1
Acknowledgements..............................................................................................................................2
Copyright Page.................................................................................................................................3
Abstract.............................................................................................................................................4
Introduction.........................................................................................................................................6
Literature Review...............................................................................................................................9
   Public Diplomacy.........................................................................................................................9
   Nation Branding........................................................................................................................15
   Mediated Public Diplomacy........................................................................................................16
   Israeli Nation Branding...............................................................................................................20
   Israeli Public Diplomacy............................................................................................................21
   US-Israel Relations.....................................................................................................................24
   The Brand Israel Group.............................................................................................................26
Research Methods...........................................................................................................................32
Research Findings...........................................................................................................................37
   Mainstream Media Coverage.....................................................................................................38
   From Main Stream Media to Social Media.............................................................................42
   From Social Media to Mainstream Media..............................................................................48
Discussion.........................................................................................................................................50
Conclusion..........................................................................................................................................55
   Limitations....................................................................................................................................57
   Recommendations......................................................................................................................57
Bibliography........................................................................................................................................59
Appendices.........................................................................................................................................62
INTRODUCTION

Following President Obama’s visit to Israel in March, 2013, The New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman published a piece titled “Israel: Bits, Bytes and Bombs” in which Friedman notes the “President looked as if he were visiting an atoll in the Pacific, or maybe New Zealand — but definitely some kind of island state surrounded by roiling seas” (Friedman, 2013). Friedman goes on to indicate that in “recent years Israel has been feeling, thinking and behaving as though it is no longer located in West Asia and can exist as an island that has broken off from it. As if there was no Arab world, no Palestine, no Iran. No Arabs, no settlers, no occupation” (Friedman, 2013). This depiction of Israel as an island destination, removed from the conflict that so often defines its portrayal in the mainstream media, is one that would be welcomed by many of those charged with managing Israel’s image among American audiences.

The importance the State of Israel places on its international image is evident in the public relations initiative termed the “Brand Israel Group (BIG).” Launched by American Jewish philanthropists in 2004, this public relations campaign is an image offensive targeted at American audiences that was officially endorsed by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2007, and the recommendations and approaches outlined by BIG continue to receive substantial funding and resources from both government and private sources (Shore, 2010, 13). In a speech given at the Sixth Herzliya Conference in 2006 titled “Israel’s Standing in the US and Future Israeli-American Relations,” Brand Israel Group member Dr. Boaz Mourad outlined their focus group findings among American audiences, noting, “Israelis feel they are similar to Americans in many aspects of their lifestyle—and
they are right about this. But these Israelis believe that Americans know this—but that is not true. Instead, Israel’s image is defined by two key concepts: conflict and religion. The perception lacks any human element” (Mourad, 2006).

In light of these findings, BIG, the Israeli Foreign Affairs Ministry, and other pro-Israel organizations embarked on a series of campaigns designed to humanize Israel’s image among American audiences. In keeping with recommendations from the Brand Israel Group, these initiatives sought to highlight a more multi-faceted and personalized depiction of Israelis, promoting Israel as a world leader in technology development, medical research, democracy promotion, and international aid. Dr. Mourad notes, “Branding [a nation] is about identifying a long-term vision of what that nation is about and making a connection with it. It will serve as an insulation in times of crisis” (Mourad, 2006).

Israel is a young country, established in 1948, that is frequently the focus of intense international media coverage. Often characterized as a place of constant conflict, Israel’s “brand image” among international audiences has often been dominated by these conflicts. Israel’s ambassador to the United States, Michael Oren, expressed his concerns about Israel’s continuing struggle to control its own narrative among foreign audiences in an opinion piece published in The Wall Street Journal titled, “What happened to Israel’s reputation? How in 40 years the Jewish state went from inspiring underdog to supposed oppressor” Oren writes, “Why have anti-Israel libels once consigned to hate groups become media mainstays? How can we explain the assertion that an insidious “Israel Lobby” purchases votes in Congress, or that Israel oppresses Christians?
Why is Israel’s record on gay rights dismissed as camouflage for discrimination against others? The answer lies in the systematic delegitimization of the Jewish state. Having failed to destroy Israel by conventional arms and terrorism, Israel’s enemies alit on a subtler and more sinister tactic that hampers Israel’s ability to defend itself, even to justify its existence” (Oren, 2012).

At the core of efforts like those of the Brand Israel Group are attempts to make Israel more relatable, while further establishing Israel’s credibility and legitimacy.

Public diplomacy is an interdisciplinary field that combines elements of traditional diplomacy, public relations, international relations, marketing, and media relations, to name a few. While most scholars agree that a cohesive theory of public diplomacy has yet to be established, a consensus does exist among many scholars and practitioners concerning the basic tenets of this evolving field. Broadly, public diplomacy is viewed as “direct communication with foreign peoples, with the aim of affecting their thinking and, ultimately, that of their governments” (Malone 1985, 199). More recently, this definition has been extended to include nongovernment entities, or “non-state” actors, such as nonprofits, NGOs, and other institutions and opinion leaders who influence public opinion and in turn influence foreign governments (Gilboa, 2007, 26).

Significant advances in communication technologies since the launch of the Brand Israel Group’s rebranding campaign have established new channels to communicate directly with American audiences; increasing the ways in which both state and non-state actors are able to participate in shaping images of Israel among foreign audiences. Public diplomacy practitioners on both sides of the Atlantic continue to debate whether reframing
Americans’ perceptions of Israel is possible, particularly in the face of continued conflict. This capstone project explores current public diplomacy and nation branding practices in the context of Israel’s communication efforts among American audiences. More specifically, it will assess how Israel utilizes new media to communicate directly to American audiences in its attempts to reframe the Israeli narrative in the United States.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

The following literature review examines existing research of public diplomacy and nation branding, along with research that discusses these concepts in the context of the State of Israel, in an attempt to develop a comprehensive analysis of existing theories and practices among scholars and practitioners in this complex area of strategic communication and international relations.

**Public Diplomacy**

Public diplomacy emerged as an alternative to large-scale military conflict during the Cold War. Information and persuasion campaigns were strategically employed by governments to establish a favorable image of their position, with the intention of swaying public opinion within a targeted society. This was done in the hope that those within a targeted society would then put pressure on their own government to change attitudes and policies considered hostile to the communicating country. For instance, the Soviet Union and U.S. widely employed international broadcasting to influence more positive attitudes toward their positions or ideologies among foreign audiences (Gilboa, 2008, 59).
Etyan Gilboa, an established public diplomacy scholar, argues that new challenges associated with globalization, along with advancements in media technology, have significantly increased the need for nations to undertake strategic public diplomacy efforts (Gilboa, 2008). He indicates that the development of communication tools and technologies, primarily the Internet and global news networks, have transformed the ways in which countries and their citizens obtain information, form opinions, and interact with one another. Additionally, political revolutions that took place throughout the twentieth century, and those that continue to take place today, have transformed many autocratic societies into democracies, increasing mass participation in political processes and the ways policies are structured. Lastly, dramatic shifts in international relations have altered the capabilities and overall goals of foreign policy. “Communication, education, and persuasion have become major techniques of foreign relations at the expense of military force. Therefore, a grand strategy today requires integration and application of three fundamental components: force, diplomacy, and communication” (Gilboa, 2008, 60). These transformations, or “revolutions” as Gilboa terms them, have altered how government policies are formed, the way diplomacy is conducted, and how conflicts are waged on the global stage.

While a traditional definition of public diplomacy describes it as “a government’s process of communication with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies” (Tuch, 1990, 3), public diplomacy is no longer confined to such a narrow description. A more inclusive definition describes public diplomacy as “the way in which
both government and private individuals and groups influence directly or indirectly those public attitudes and opinions which bear directly on another government’s foreign policy decisions” (Gilboa, 2008, 57). The broadening of this definition to include both state and non-state actors has substantial implications that warrant additional evaluation.

Because public diplomacy is such a complex and interdisciplinary field, its parameters are often broad and loosely defined. This is particularly evident when examining the lack of consensus that exists among those who are considered public diplomacy practitioners. Traditionally, public diplomacy has been limited to government actors (Loffelholz et al, 2010, 2). However, nongovernment players are increasingly included in this list of practitioners. In the context of public diplomacy efforts in Germany, Loffelholz notes, “organizations’ strategies and activities explicitly or implicitly contribute to raising awareness of and increasing knowledge about Germany as well as shaping and maintaining a positive image of the country abroad” (Loffelholz et al, 2010, 1). This is particularly relevant because recognizing new actors involved in public diplomacy processes emphasizes that distinctions between public diplomacy, public relations, international relations, and other related fields have become increasingly blurred.

The Role of Public Relations

In his article, “Public relations and diplomacy in a globalized world: an issue of public communication,” Jacquie L’Etang describes public diplomacy as a hybrid of public relations and diplomacy. A public relations in this context is defined as an occupation “responsible for the “management” or improvement of organizational relationships and
reputation. It encompasses issues management, public affairs, corporate communications, stakeholder relations, risk communication, and corporate social responsibility” (L’Etang, 2009, 609). The link between public relations and public diplomacy is further established by L’Etang’s contention that both fields are similarly charged with communicating institutional information to diverse audiences, as well as asserting that both areas are receptive to media coverage and public opinion (L’Etang, 2009, 615).

A wide variety of organizations and industries are included in L’Etang’s description of various entities that take part in public diplomacy efforts. These include nations, global organizations, corporations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (L’Etang, 2009). This highlights a steadily evolving view that the public relations efforts of private corporations, advocacy groups, and nonprofit organizations are increasingly linked to the public diplomacy and foreign affairs efforts of nations. The involvement of these new actors has interesting implications in regards to how diplomacy is now conducted, how countries and corporations interact, and how these entities interact with their global audiences.

Within this new framework, the communicator, whether a state or non-state actor, possesses an increasingly important role in foreign affairs efforts. L’Etang argues, “the language of international affairs and political international relations is managed by directors of communication and political PR practitioners, as are the sound-bites of politicians. Such a close alliance between power and managed communication could be defined as propaganda rather than PR. In any context, PR explains and justifies the organizational self in context-appropriate language that takes account of the prevailing relationships and rules of engagement” (L’Etang, 2009, 615).
Gilboa also analyzes the relationship between public relations and public diplomacy, exploring how this relationship relates to power and influence. “Foreign relations practitioners now utilize communication, education, and persuasion in lieu of military force, requiring a diplomatic strategy that integrates force, diplomacy, and communication” (Gilboa, 2006, 716). This shift requires additional evaluations of the existing power structures between these actors and the role that communication plays in this power dynamic.

**Soft Power**

In its most basic sense, soft power encompasses the ways in which countries exert influence through persuasion, as opposed to physical force. In other words, soft power refers to “diplomatic ability gained through attractiveness of a country’s cultures, political ideals, and policies, whereas hard power refers to power based on coercion through military strength” (Yang, 2008, 622). This theory has been examined most closely in relation to public diplomacy, and in this context it can be equated with persuasive power. Yang indicates that in the context of public diplomacy as a national strategy, the “soft power of a country can be developed and enhanced by effective country reputation management, which is to manage attractiveness of a country in the minds of foreign publics” (Yang, 2008, 622).

The increasing importance that is placed upon persuasive power in relation to diplomatic efforts and public communication has led to a greater scrutiny of theories
pertaining to soft power. Those critical of soft power argue that it is not a type of power in the traditional sense of the word, and is lacking in a definitive theoretical framework. For instance, Javier Noya argues that soft power cannot be considered a type of power at all (Noya, 2005), while others question the measure and scope of soft power. Gilboa indicates that “scholars and practitioners have often equated public diplomacy with “soft power” and measured results solely by public opinion polls and media coverage. It is obvious for almost any scholar or practitioner that public diplomacy today encompasses much more substance than these terms convey individually” (Gilboa, 2008, 62).

Some consider soft power to be a component of public diplomacy (Bátora, 2006), while others argue public diplomacy is smaller component of a larger soft power framework (Melissen, 2005). Additional conflicts arise when soft power is considered in relation to cultural cohesion. Gilboa argues that for states, “Soft power may be relevant to one society but exactly the opposite for another. American values, for example, may be appreciated in Australia and Canada but totally rejected in Iran or Saudi Arabia” (Gilboa, 2008, 62). In response to what many see as existing weaknesses in current concepts of soft power, several new interpretations of this theory have been constructed.

“Smart power” is defined as a way of “learning better how to combine or balance hard and soft power” (Gilboa, 2008, 62). Similarly, the concept of “integrated power” also seeks to blend concepts of hard and soft power into one cohesive concept. Integrated power is loosely described as “leading and using alliances; developing new strategies and combining them with traditional strategies; and ending divisions between defense,
homeland security, diplomacy, energy, and foreign aid" (Gilboa, 2008, 62). A primary critique of these approaches is that these varying interpretations and concepts are confusing and lack a substantial theoretical framework (Gilboa, 2008, 62).

**Nation Branding**

Public diplomacy is frequently analyzed in relation to public relations, organizational communication, and mass communication. However, greater attention has recently been given to the evaluation of public diplomacy in relation to the concept of nation branding (Loffelholz et al., 2010). Branding is often described as the creation of an identifiable emotional connection between people and a product or service (Ham, 2001). More recently, scholars have taken this idea of cultivating an emotional dimension or connection with an object and extended it to emotional connections with places, including countries. Peter Van Ham argues that a “brand state” encompasses the thoughts and feelings foreign audiences have about a nation (Ham, 2001, 2). He goes on to argue that the “branding” of nations indicates a transition of modern geopolitics and power structures, asserting that “brand equity” is intrinsically linked to political and economic power (Ham, 2001).

**Public Diplomacy Versus Nation Branding**

Similarly to existing debates regarding public diplomacy, a cohesive theoretical framework for nation branding also appears to be in a formative stage. Gilboa notes that while public diplomacy and branding are similar in many ways, substantial differences do exist (Gilboa, 2008). While Simon Anholt, a founding scholar of nation branding, argues that
the effects of nation branding are not “limited to influencing international opinion through advertising or public relations.” Its architects envision it as ‘a component of national policy,’ never as a ‘campaign’ that is separate from planning, governance or economic development” (Kaneva, 2011, 2). A divergence also exists between European and American schools of thought. The general European viewpoint considers public diplomacy to be a part of overall nation branding practices, while most American scholars consider public diplomacy to be a distinct area, primarily rooted in international relations (Kaneva, 2011).

Most scholars agree that the lack of a cohesive theoretical framework for these concepts, and few clear descriptions of how they differ and relate to each other should be a prominent focus of further study. Gilboa contends that, “Despite the growing significance of public diplomacy in contemporary international relations, scholars have not yet pursued or even sufficiently promoted systematic theoretical research in this field” (Gilboa, 2008, 73). Similarly, L’Etange notes that the “untangling and making known the intricacies of PR’s relationship to power and revealing the processes and social effects of its contribution to public communication, media shaping, and public understanding are the most valuable tasks that PR academics can now assume” (L’Etange, 2009, 620).

**Mediated Public Diplomacy**

However, several scholars have attempted to draw from these various concepts to create a cohesive theoretical framework of public diplomacy. In “Theorizing mediated public diplomacy: the U.S. case,” Robert Entman seeks to establish a model that is grounded in mass communication tactics for domestic audiences, and expands this to international
communication efforts. Entman’s concept of mediated public diplomacy slightly diverges from standard definitions of public diplomacy, focusing on “shorter term and more targeted efforts using mass communication (including the Internet) to increase support of a country’s specific foreign policies among audiences beyond that country’s borders” (Entman, 2008, 88). To support this framework, Entman utilizes the “Cascading Network Activation Model.” This model contains four factors that attempt to explain frame diffusion in the context of policy and mass communication. Entman states,

“Motivations and cultural congruence work internally to “pull” counter-framing (in the United States, anti-administration framing) mental associations into the thinking of individual elites and citizens. Elite power and elite strategy, on the other hand, operate from the outside to “push” consideration within the United States of anti-administration frames through the cascading system. Of these factors, cultural congruence is perhaps the most important determinant of whether those occupying the first or second level of the cascading system mount a challenge to the framing desired at the apex, by the country’s leader and closest aides. When we extend the model to U.S.-foreign communication, cultural congruence takes on even more importance” (Entman, 2008, 92).
Figure 6: Cascading Activation Applied to US Mediated Public Diplomacy

(Entman, 2008, 98)

The Cascading Network Activation Model provides a structure for the dissemination of framed information to domestic media, and as can be seen in Figure 6.

Entman extends this model to the process of international communication, asserting that this model can be utilized in mediated public diplomacy efforts to generate advantageous treatment of policy initiatives in the foreign media (Entman, 2008, 97). Mediated public diplomacy efforts are carried out among members of the foreign media, which in turn encourages more positive mass public opinion among these foreign audiences. This encourages foreign elites who support these initiatives to feel freer to vocally support these initiatives, which in turn generates additional favorable coverage in the media, and the positive flow of information continues and grows (Entman, 2008).

Gilboa notes that Entman’s application of the Cascading Network Activation Model to the field of public diplomacy effectively connects policy, media and public opinion (Gilboa, 2008)
Framing Strategies

Framing refers to “selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution” (Entman, 2004, 5). In “Framing public opinion in competing democracies,” Chong argues, “the likelihood that a consideration suggested by a frame will shape an individual’s opinion increases with perceptions of the applicability of the frame” (Chong, 2007, 640). Entman’s application and evaluation of the Cascading Network Activation Model highlights several significant challenges associated with communicating effectively to foreign audiences. Firstly, cultural congruence is an important aspect in generating positive support among target audiences abroad. This presents substantial difficulties because international audiences often have conflicting reactions towards the same message. Entman notes that certain frames that resonate positively with journalists and the general public domestically are often received negatively among foreign audiences (Entman, 2008).

Additionally, Entman questions the ability of policy makers to exert strategic influence on the media. He focuses on the reality that policy makers are only able to implement a moderate amount of control over domestic media organizations, and questions the likelihood that a strategic mediated public diplomacy program can be effectively carried out among foreign media and audiences (Entman). However, he does suggest that if certain frames that benefit a country do resonate with both with journalists and foreign publics, officials and diplomats from that country could utilize these positive
frames to reinforce support among foreign journalists and elites, creating a “virtuous circle” of beneficial frames (Entman, 2008, 90).

For the purposes of this paper, nation branding will be included as a subset of public diplomacy in subsequent discussion sections. Many scholars of public diplomacy have touched upon the numerous challenges associated with conducting strategic public diplomacy efforts and promoting positive nation brand images. Several scholars have analyzed whether it is possible to effectively manage a nation’s image among global audiences when it is viewed solely through the lens of conflict. A general consensus seems to exist that international relations and political communication challenges greatly increase as a result of this “conflict prism” (Shore, 2010, 87). Israel provides an interesting case study to examine the challenges associated with a country’s public diplomacy efforts in the face of near-constant conflict.

**Israeli Nation Branding & Its Challenges**

In “Brand Israel: an analysis of nation branding concepts as they relate to the state of Israel,” Neuriel Shore examines the evolution of the nation branding tactics that have been utilized by the Israeli government to shape Israel’s brand image abroad. Neuriel argues that Israel’s brand image has largely been shaped by external parties, and indicates that many within the Israeli government have acknowledged the importance of nation branding, particularly in relation to national security efforts. This acknowledgement has resulted in increased efforts to develop and implement strategic country branding initiatives (Shore, 2010). Keith Dinnie argues that a gap exists when a country's image, or
self-perceived identity does not coincide with its image among external audiences, and notes that many nations, and Israel in particular, experiences this “identity-image gap” (Shore, 2010, 4).

**Israeli Public Diplomacy & Its Challenges**

By contrast, while extended military conflict can significantly influence and damage the way a nation brand is perceived globally, Sondzi indicates that “Public diplomacy is rooted in conflicts and related to different levels of tension between states and other actors; a peaceful political environment is not a necessary condition for engaging in public diplomacy, which is not the case with nation branding” (Sondzi, 2008, 13). In his article “Public diplomacy: the missing component in Israel’s foreign policy,” Etyan Gilboa argues that Israel’s approach to public diplomacy is a significant factor in the deterioration of their image and reputation internationally. He notes that “Shimon Peres, who served as prime minister, foreign minister and defense 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” (Gilboa, 2006, 735). He goes on to argue that government leaders in Israel have failed to address public diplomacy in a strategic and systematic way (Gilboa, 2006, 735).

Gilboa indicates that Israel’s inability to control the messaging and framing used in the international media to describe the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a primary reason for the decline in Israel’s international standing (Gilboa, 2006, 722). Similarly, Gideon Meir, former Deputy Director General for Media and Public Affairs in Israel’s Foreign Ministry, indicates 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” (Gilboa, 2006, 735).

Within the context of conflict, language frames are considered to be particularly critical in public diplomacy campaigns 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” (Gilboa, 2006, 722). To counter the failings of previous public diplomacy efforts, Gilboa suggests that Israel adopt an aggressive public diplomacy campaign that utilizes strategies associated with “New Public Diplomacy” (NPD). New Public Diplomacy is described as a public diplomacy strategy grounded in soft power, strategic public diplomacy efforts, nation branding, information management, e-image, and two-way communication (Gilboa, 2006). NDP differs from more traditional forms of public diplomacy in that it “involves domestication of foreign policy and it deals with both short- and long-term issues”... [and]... “requires a capability to use effectively credible information in an attempt to persuade actors to understand, accept or support policies and actions” (Gilboa, 2006, 718).

A recent study conducted by Tamir Sheafer and Itay Gabay analyzes how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is portrayed in the foreign media, specifically within the United States and Britain. They examined the competition for international agenda building and frame building between actors in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, comparing the portrayal of Israel’s disengagement from Gaza in 2005 and general elections conducted in the Palestinian Authority in 2006. The study used Entman’s theory of mediated public
diplomacy as the basis for its examination of these situations and the subsequent coverage they received in the foreign media. The study revealed that,

“The success of one actor in promoting its agenda and framing in foreign media is a function of the cultural and political congruency between itself and the target country. As we have seen, Israel is more successful in promoting its agenda and framing in the U.S. than in British media, while the opposite applies to the PA. Second, the competition over the media involves not only a contest between two national rivals; it is a much more diverse environment than perceived in previous studies, in which local governments and the media as independent actors play an important role. The findings show a high correlation between the U.S. government and the U.S. media. The same is true for the UK government and the UK media. Thus, when examining the agenda and frame contests, one has to consider the significant influence of foreign governments over their local media in promoting issues and frames that do not necessarily correlate with those of the competing actors” (Sheafer, 2009, 463).

Interestingly, Sheafer and Gabay note that the acceptance of one frame does not correlate to the acceptance of all frames in a specific message, making it all the more challenging to promote a complete frame (Gabay and Sheafer, 2009). These findings appear to endorse Entman’s views concerning the importance of cultural congruence in relation to the construction of effective frames. Entman’s evaluation of framing and cultural congruence is particularly relevant in the context of international political communication, as this study indicates.

Sheafer and Gabay argue “the findings of this study point to the circular nature of mediated public diplomacy. Specifically, the success of promoting agendas and frames among a foreign audience benefits from cultural and political congruence with the target
country. Hence, the chances of one country influencing foreign policy in a second, politically and culturally distant, country are limited” (Sheafer, 2009, 464). These findings, along with those of Entman and others previously mentioned, indicate that constructing effective frames for a global audience are incredibly challenging, and these challenges are exacerbated when a country is primarily viewed in the context of conflict.

**US-Israel Relations: “A Shared Narrative”**

When Israel was granted statehood by the United Nations in 1948, America became the first country to officially recognize Israel’s sovereignty (Zanotti, 10). Israel has remained America’s closest ally in the region, sometimes wavering in policy differences, but maintaining, “strong bilateral ties based on common democratic values, religious affinities, and security interests” (Zanotti, 2012, 10). Zanotti argues that relations between America and Israel have been,

“bolstered by similar, shared narratives and identities, indicating that “in perceiving their society to be a beacon of what they like to call ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy,’ in a world in which these values are largely absent, Americans have been encouraged to believe that they share a political kinship with societies similarly imbued and that they have an obligation to assist where such values are under threat. It is this belief that sets Israel apart from other nations in the region and forms the bedrock of the US-Israeli special relationship” (Zanotti, 2012, 14).

This “shared cultural identity” echoes Robert Entman’s emphasis on the importance of ‘cultural congruence’ in efforts to persuade, influence, and communicate. While Israel remains a strong regional ally to America, the continued Palestinian-Israeli conflict continues to dominate Israel’s image among both its enemies and allies.
Historically, American-Israeli relations have largely been defined by shared perceptions and cultural values such as freedom and democracy, along with strong biblical and religious ties of individual and shared identity. Many aspects of this “shared identity” remain strong, with the American-Israeli relationship a mainstay in American political discourse. For example, in 2008, then-presidential candidate Barack Obama expressed his “strong commitment to make sure that the bond between the United States and Israel is unbreakable today, tomorrow, and forever” (Stephens and Morewood, 2009, 18). In recent years, government relations between America and Israel have largely centered on areas of defense, such as information sharing, military aid, arms sales, and joint military exercises (Zanotti, 2012, 15). However, these strong military ties between the U.S. and Israel have not translated to an overall positive image of Israel among Americans.

While the vast majority of Americans appear to support Israel in the context of this conflict, their support in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has not translated to positive perceptions of Israel as a whole among many in contemporary American society. (Saad, 2013)
Research performed during the past decade indicates that many Americans have “very narrow, and negative, perceptions of Israel” (Augustine and Vannette, 2009, 1).

Previous survey data indicates,

“Americans don’t see Israel as being like the US”...[they] “know a lot about Israel, just not the right things. They think of Israel as a grim, war-torn country, not one booming with high-tech and busy outdoor cafes. That doesn’t mean that Americans are anti-Israel or pro-Palestinian. They just find Israel to be totally irrelevant to their lives, and they are tuning out” (Brand Israel, 2009, 4).

Significant steps have been taken in the past decade to repair Israel’s image among American audiences. The Israeli government developed a public relations effort targeted at international media to promote a large-scale tourism marketing campaign to counterbalance existing images of conflict. The “Brand Israel” initiative that was developed by the Brand Israel Group was officially endorsed by the Israeli Foreign Ministry in 2006, and several branding campaigns have since been conducted in an attempt to create stronger associations with Israel as a hub of technology and culture rather than with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Shore, 2010). A series of focus groups conducted with young Americans by the Brand Israel Group highlights these rebranding challenges. These focus group findings indicated that while Israel was well known among participants, young Americans associated Israel solely through the lenses of war and religion (Shore, 2010).

**The Brand Israel Group, A History**

In 2001, the recently-appointed Consul for Media and Public Affairs at the at the Consulate General of Israel in New York, Ido Aharoni, hired branding and market experts,
who became the Brand Israel Group, to assist in repositioning Israel in America. Aharoni was concerned that,

“Too many people associate Israel in the context of the broader Arab Israel conflict. Pro-Israel advocates (including the government of Israel) are partially responsible for this association, because for far too long, that is the impression we have projected to the outside world. This is not to say that the threats facing Israel should be understated: from Palestinian and Hezbollah terrorism, a nuclear Iran and the increasing attacks on Israel’s legitimacy...However, we must broaden the narrative to highlight Israel’s attractive dimensions, such as its latest high-tech innovations, medical breakthroughs and the dynamic art and cultural scenes in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem” (Ostrovsky, 2012).

Dr. Boaz Mourad, a co-founder of the global market research firm Insight Research Group, advisor to the Israeli Foreign Ministry, and member of the Brand Israel Group, shared Aharoni’s concern. Believing that the “brand” of Israel was suffering, Mourad believed that their traditional approaches to public diplomacy were not successful in generating enough U.S. support, describing their communication strategy as a “very rational approach, fairly void of emotion” (Augustine and Vannette, 2009, 2). These concerns about Israel’s international image led to the formation of the Brand Israel Group in 2004. This collective of marketing and branding experts developed a strategy designed to utilize branding techniques in assessing Israel’s “brand” and develop a long-term strategy to improve Israel’s “brand image” among American audiences (Augustine and Vannette, 2009).

Simon Anholt argues that a nation’s brand is influenced by a series of elements that include: foreign and domestic policy, tourism, export brands, investment, immigration, leadership, people, and culture (Brand Israel, 2009, 2). The
Brand Israel Group hypothesized that the following six overarching elements were defining Israel's image abroad: media images, competition from other places, Israel's tourism and public diplomacy efforts, efforts on behalf of Israel by supporters, first-hand experience, and historical, cultural and religious factors (Brand Israel, 2009, 4). The moderator in each of these initial focus groups asked a series of questions regarding participants’ existing perceptions, knowledge, and feelings towards Israel.

The focus group data indicated,

“Americans did not envision even the most basic aspects of Israeli life. Although they supported Israel politically”... “the results indicated that Americans were unaware of the secularism, gender equality, diversity, multi-culturalism, and values of the people of Israel.”

“These results suggested that Americans saw Israel only through the narrow lenses of conflict and religion. A picture of “Rabbi Rambo,” Maroud joked. These warlike, extreme, religious images made it very difficult for Americans to relate to, and therefore care about, Israel” (Augustine and Vannette, 2009, 10).”

The full moderator’s guide from the Brand Israel Group’s focus groups can be reviewed in Appendix 1.

Following the collection and analysis of this data, the Brand Israel Group began promoting a grassroots movement among pro-Israel advocacy groups that sought to encourage campaigns that would “emphasize diversity, similarities to Western cultures like the United States, and innovations and achievements that positively impacted Americans” (Brand Israel, 2009, 11). Additional recommendations included showing politicians with their families
in public appearances, using more minority spokespersons, and placing a
greater importance on highlighting advances in medicine and technology
(Brand Israel, 2009, 10).

The Brand Israel campaign experienced a relatively significant
amount of success in the mid-2000s, with organizations like Israel21C, a
nonprofit “seeking to build a better understanding of the 21st century Israel-
beyond the headlines,” launching a campaign called “Israelity,” while the
Jewish campus group Hillel launched the “Israel starts With I” campaign, an
outreach program aimed at American college students (Brand Israel, 2009.
11). The campaign was also successful in influencing the communication
efforts of the Israeli government. In response the Brand Israel Group’s
research and recommendations, the Israeli Tourism Ministry launched a
multimedia advertising campaign aimed at highlighting similarities between
Israelis and Americans (Augustine and Vannette, 2009). Additionally, the
group’s push for a new communication campaign made its way to the top of
the Israeli government, with three of the most powerful government
ministries, the Foreign Ministry, the Prime Ministers Office, and the Finance
Ministry, agreeing to implement aspects of this rebranding campaign
(Popper, 2005).

However, a long-standing debate among those charged with
strategically shaping Israel’s image internationally was highlighted in a 2005
article about this rebranding initiative. In “Israel Aims to Improve its Public Image,” Nathanial Popper highlights the debate about how best to present Israel on an international level. The primary focus revolves around whether the emphasis should be placed on framing the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict or, as the Brand Israel Group advocated, whether efforts should be made to “move beyond the conflict,” and present a more multi-faceted image of Israel.

Ido Aharoni argues that advocates for framing the conflict “are convinced that Americans don’t know enough about the conflict. What the Americans are telling us loud and clear is that they don’t want to hear more about the conflict” (Popper, 2005). Aharoni and others who support a “beyond the conflict” communication approach believe Israel will maintain its support only if it is seen as a modern and relevant country among its allies, instead of a country that evokes only images of religion and fighting (Popper, 2005). Popper highlights these tensions, writing,

“The battle of old approach versus new has been crystallized in the competition between Israeli21c and The Israel Project, another American group formed at about the same time. The Israel Project has followed the more traditional path of presenting Israel’s side of the conflict with the Palestinians. Among other things, The Israel Project has paid to air ads in influential markets touting Israel’s commitment to peace and democracy.”

Larry Weinberg, executive vice president of Israel 21c, called The Israel Project’s work “crisis management” and said that such efforts frequently end up reinforcing Israel’s image as a conflict-ridden place.”

“Israel 21c is more visionary than they are,” Weinberg, said. “Within our view, crisis management is a necessary
function. They think it begins and ends with what they do. In that they are wrong, they are limited, and it’s not helpful” (Popper, 2005).

Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, founder of The Israel project, refuted Weinberg’s arguments, reiterating that “Until there is peace we have to be dealing with the stories that the media is most interested in” (Popper, 2005). Mizrahi emphasizes that there are approximately “400 permanently stationed reporters in Jerusalem. They didn’t come to do a story about Israel beyond the conflict. You can’t pretend that it’s otherwise” (Popper, 2005). Today, this debate continues.

In an article from June 2012, international human rights lawyer and journalist Arsen Ostrovksy argues for Israel to present a more multi-faceted image of itself to the world, asserting that “in order to improve Israel’s overall global position, we must broaden the conversation beyond just “the conflict” and look at Israel as a product competing in the marketplace of nations (Ostrovosky, 2012). While the continuing work of groups like The Israel Project indicate that “framing the conflict” rather than “broadening the conversation beyond the conflict” remains the primary concern for many. Establishing the effectiveness of these strategies and their ability to influence public opinion presents numerous challenges, however, Ostrovosky asks, “is this approach of repositioning Israel as a product and broadening the conversation working? Well, the results speak for themselves. Take for example the Future Brand Country Brand Index (CBI), one of the leading independent assessors of country brand strength. According to CBI, in 2001 Israel was
only ranked 45th best brand in the world. However, in 2011 it climbed to Number 28” (Ostrovsky, 2012).

Research Methods

Research Questions

After more than a decade of debate, how is Israel currently crafting its own narrative? As Ostrovsky’s recent article indicates, debate about whether to focus on “framing the conflict” or “broadening the conversation beyond it” continues among those charged with disseminating Israel’s message and initiating dialogues among foreign audiences. In light of this, primary research was conducted as part of this project to assess how Israel is currently shaping its own narrative, how its image is currently framed by the mainstream American media, and how these various communications interact in an attempt to understand the following questions:

• How are aspects of Brand Israel’s recommendations currently being implemented?
• Are Israel’s communication efforts primarily focused on “framing the conflict” or “broadening the conversation beyond it”?
• How are social media platforms being utilized to promote Israel’s messaging strategies?
• Are these frames transitioning into the mainstream American media’s coverage of Israel?
• In what way(s) do these frames compare to the mainstream media coverage of Israel in the United States?
**Applied Theory**

To address these questions, Entman’s theory of Mediated Public Diplomacy, which connects policy, media and public opinion, was applied to this research to examine Israel’s existing public diplomacy and branding efforts in the United States. Mediated Public Diplomacy is implemented through “shorter term and more targeted efforts using mass communication (including the Internet) to increase support of a country’s specific foreign policies among audiences beyond that country’s borders” (Entman, 2008, 3). The news media is a primary influencer in public opinion, but societal elites also play an important role in information dissemination and persuasion. “There is a mutually reinforcing role between individuals and society in the formation of political culture and foreign policy, with the most influential members of society playing a particularly central role in the creative synthesis of political culture (Stephens, 2006, 42).” Entman’s Cascading Activation Network Model indicates that these targeted public diplomacy efforts are disseminated through the foreign audiences’ complex communication networks to influence policy makers, national media, and the public within the target nation.

**Applied Research Method**

A mixed-method research approach including in-depth interviews and a detailed case analysis was conducted to examine the content and context of the information about Israel that is reaching American audiences. Case study analysis included an examination of several social media platforms of the Embassy of Israel in the United States, including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. This content was collected in conjunction with domestic American media coverage of Israel during the same timeframe, ranging from March 2012
through March 2013. This media coverage was collected from the online media content of several prominent news organizations in the U.S., including: *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, CNN, and Fox News.

**In-Depth Interviews**

For the purposes of this project, participants interviewed were communication practitioners in a variety of communication-related fields who met several uniform criteria. Each participant had an extensive background in American-Israeli relations and was directly involved in communicating information about Israel to American audiences. Interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis between March 15, 2013 and April 25, 2013 via telephone. A total of four interviews were conducted. Each participant was asked a series of tailored questions about their professional area of expertise, along with personal and professional views regarding communicating the Israeli narrative to American audiences. Participants were also encouraged to expand on additional areas of discussion as desired.

**In-Depth Interview Participants:**

- Thomas Friedman, Columnist, *The New York Times*
  Interview conducted on April 24, 2013 in Washington, D.C.

- Dr. Etyan Gilboa, Director of School of the Communication and Center for International Communication, Bar-Ilan University, Israel
  Interview conducted on March 16, 2013 in Jerusalem, Israel

- Perle Nikol, Former Press Officer, Spokesperson Unit, Israeli Defense Force (IDF) and Web Journalist for i24 News, Tel Aviv, Israel
  Interview conducted for April 3, 2013 in Washington, D.C.

- Jed Shein, Director of New Media, Embassy of Israel in Washington, D.C.
  Interview conducted on April 4, 2013 in Washington, D.C.
Case Analysis

Recent research indicates that an increasing number of Americans are receiving their news through online mediums like blogs, social media platforms, and news websites. A recent study released by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press in 2013 analyses trends in news consumption among American audiences from 1991 through 2012. The survey findings indicate substantial shifts in the ways Americans are getting their news, with a sharp increase in the number of Americans accessing news online and through mobile devices (Trends in News Consumption, 2012). The study indicates a rapidly growing number of digital news consumers, who are increasingly more likely to get their news on cell phones, tablets, and other mobile platforms.

Additionally, the percentage of Americans who now receive their news via social media has doubled since 2010, with 19% of those surveyed receiving their news on social media platforms. This percentage is even higher among young adults (those under the age of 30), with an estimated 33% receiving their news via social media (“Trends in News Consumption,” 2012).
Social Media Content: Embassy of Israel in Washington D.C.

The Embassy of Israel in Washington D.C.’s Facebook, Twitter, and You Tube accounts were selected since these are the most active new media platforms used by the Embassy. With the content posted during a 13-month period, ranging from March 1, 2012, through March 31, 2013, was reviewed. All content posted on the 15th day of each month was selected. If no content was posted on the 15th day of the month, the next closest date starting with the 14th then 16th and so forth was selected. The aim of this informal sampling was to collect a comprehensive amount of material demonstrating Israel’s self-narrative in the United States throughout the timeframe under evaluation.

Domestic Online News Coverage

In order to evaluate domestic digital news media coverage of Israel in the United States, coverage from five American news outlets was selected to be included in this evaluation. These news outlets included CNN, Fox News, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Washington Post. In keeping with the parameters of this case analysis, the researcher examined articles published between March 1, 2012 and March 31, 2013, with articles published on the 15th day of each month selected for this review. These online articles were found through a Google search with set search terms used across all five publications. These search terms included; “Israel, the month, date, year, publication name.” If no content was published on the 15th day of the month, the next closest date starting with the 14th then 16th day and so forth was selected.
Research Findings

In order to explore how Israel is currently presented in mainstream digital news media, online content from five leading American news organizations was reviewed from March 2012 through March 2013. Headlines about Israel were categorized into the six categories topically. These categories include: Military/Security, Religion, Tourism, Culture, Politics, and U.S.-Israel Relations. These categories were selected based on the focus group question, “What makes you care more/less about another country? [Probe: security, spirituality/religion, desire to visit (tourism and vacation), cultural heritage, political importance, American’s relationship with the country, etc.” (Brand Israel, 2009, 14) used in the Brand Israel Group’s Focus Group Discussion Guide.

Coverage of Israel collected from these five news organizations proved similar in a number of ways. Each agency’s coverage was largely related to security and military issues. Of the 13 headlines that were pulled from each news source, the following indicates the number dealing with military/security issues: CNN (6), Fox News (4), The New York Times (7), The Wall Street Journal (6), The Washington Post (4), indicating that Israel is discussed in the context of conflict in approximately 40 out of the 65 headlines analyzed.
However, these results are somewhat misleading in the scope of conflict coverage Israel receives. The category with the second highest amount of coverage, U.S.-Israeli relations, largely involved coverage of military collaboration, and did not highlight any aspect of Israeli culture beyond the conflict. A topical breakdown of all headlines collected from each news agency can be found in Appendix 2.

As previously discussed, many of those involved in repositioning Israel’s image internationally have questioned whether it is even possible to influence the American news media to “broaden the conversation beyond the conflict” in their coverage of Israel. To explore this situation further, an in-depth interview was conducted with a former Israeli Defense Force (IDF) spokesperson and current web journalist, Perle Nikol, who has extensive experience dealing with the American media’s coverage, particularly in relation of the Israeli military and security matters.
The interview is detailed in its entirety below:

Researcher: “Is it possible to frame Israel “outside or beyond the conflict’” in the mainstream American media?”

Perle Nikol: “No, I don’t think so. It doesn’t fit into the usual grid of programs for U.S. television and radio coverage. There is no airspace for it. People are hungry for broader coverage, particularly in Europe. They feel like they are not getting the whole story when it comes to Israel, but I’m not sure the U.S. is interested in that. The New York Times is trying to broaden its coverage, and this approach works well on social media, but for mainstream coverage in the United States, I’m not sure there is an interest or need to go more in-depth, since in my experience, the U.S. has a surface-level interest in foreign affairs.”

Researcher: “How do think Israel can broaden the conversation in the mainstream American media?”

Perle Nikol: “You can’t force the agenda; you have to link it to what is being covered. In terms of branding initiatives, they work best when they have some existing link to Israel. So linking aspects to the situation, such as Israeli women soldiers at the border with Egypt, or highlighting conscientious objectors from the military, or focusing on democracy in Israel. These initiatives work best when they have some link to current events. Then media opens up, and branding can be utilized in that space. Think about these aspects in relation to Israel in past 20 years. You can see a big evolution in our image. Now people understand the means, but not the end. There is difficulty understanding the end game, and that is a huge negative to Israel’s image to foreign audiences.”

Researcher: “What is the primary challenge Israel faces when presenting itself to American and international audiences?”

Perle Nikol: “The biggest problem for us [Israel] is the end. People understand the need for security, in the US that is, but the problem is that the end with Israel is not understood. Public policy is failing to explain that to the world, what our endgame is. This is a problem on a domestic level too. There is no peace process now. The settlements. The wall. Where is this going?”

Researcher: “Why is it important for American’s to have an image of Israel that moves beyond conflict? Or, is that important for American-Israel relations?”
Perle Nikol: “It is important on many levels, at a policy level, for clear communications, and for strong relations. All of these are founded in our shared history, in trust building, and in the ways we communicate. It is crucial to also have a non-militaristic relationship with the US. No bonds are unbreakable. But our history, culture, our narratives are very similar. When Obama speaks about Exodus, he speaks from the heart” (Nikol, personal communication, April __, 2013).

The concept of a “shared narrative” is a thematic framing approach that is frequently utilized in discussions of the U.S.-Israel relationship. The concept of this shared narrative as a cross-cultural communication strategy can be seen again in President Obama’s recent speech at Ben Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv, Israel on March 20, 2013 to mark the beginning of an official visit. President Obama remarked,

“As I begin my second term as President, Israel is the first stop on my first foreign trip. This is no accident. Across this region the winds of change bring both promise and peril. So I see this visit as an opportunity to reaffirm the unbreakable bonds between our nations, to restate America’s unwavering commitment to Israel’s security, and to speak directly to the people of Israel and to your neighbors.

I want to begin right now, by answering a question that is sometimes asked about our relationship — why? Why does the United States stand so strongly, so firmly with the State of Israel? And the answer is simple. We stand together because we share a common story — patriots determined “to be a free people in our land,” pioneers who forged a nation, heroes who sacrificed to preserve our freedom, and immigrants from every corner of the world who renew constantly our diverse societies” (The New York Times, 2013).

The full transcript of President Obama’s remarks, along with a video recording of the president’s arrival and subsequent speech, was posted on The New York Times’ website.
An emphasis on a shared narrative between the United States and Israel is a frame that appears to be firmly established within mainstream American media coverage, and appears to be one of the few non-conflict related frames found in both Israeli and American news coverage.

However, the prevalence of episodic framing in American news coverage of Israel comprises a significant amount of the coverage Israel receives. In an interview conducted for this project, journalist Thomas Friedman, who has extensive experience covering Israel for The New York Times, discussed how the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict relates to the news coverage Israel receives in the United States. Mr. Friedman indicated that, “you can’t ignore the conflict. It is the driver of everything,” and while “the winds of public opinion [in America] are very clearly on Israel’s side,” he indicated that the “wants” of the opposition and the building of settlements in the territories do have an affect on public opinion. Nevertheless, he argues that Israel “never had to sell its public opinion,” but acknowledges that stalls in the peace process do affect the way Israel is perceived. Mr. Friedman also argues that the public is receptive when they feel like efforts are being made to resolve the conflict and reach a resolution. Mr. Friedman believes that the American public senses when these efforts are happening, or not happening, and judges the situation accordingly (Friedman, personal communication, April 3, 2013).

These discussions indicate that both the thematic framing elements of a “shared narrative” and episodic framing elements such as the continuing Israeli-Palestinian Conflict continue to dominate coverage of Israel in the mainstream American media. Having
evaluated current coverage of Israel in mainstream media channels, the content analysis used to examine mainstream American news coverage was then applied to Israel’s social media platforms in the U.S. to analyze how the Israeli government is communicating its own narrative directly to American audiences.

**From Mainstream Media to Social Media**

The State of Israel is involved in a myriad of efforts to maintain its strong ties with the United States. For the purposes of this project, Israel’s social media efforts among American audiences are of particular interest.

A 2011 Report by the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism revealed support for Israel in the context of the Israel/Palestinian conflict was almost a 3-to-1 margin, with users on Twitter and Facebook indicating strong support for Israel following President Obama’s May 19, 2011 speech on the Middle East (“Social Media Expresses Strong Support for Israel,” 2011).

In order to assess Israel’s communication strategies on social media platforms, evaluation techniques similar to those used to examine news media coverage were used to examine the Embassy’s social media content. The social media platforms Facebook,
Twitter, and YouTube were selected to examine how Israel is attempting to shape its narrative among American audiences. Again, content posted from March 2012 through March 2013 was examined, with posts from the 15th day of each month selected for the analysis of each social media platform.

**Facebook: Israel in the USA**

The Embassy of Israel to the United States maintains an active Facebook page with approximately 67,337 “likes” (as of April 7, 2013). The Embassy describes its page as “a resource of information on the Embassy of Israel in the United States [that] provides updates on the Mission’s activities to the general public” (Israel in the USA official Facebook page, 2013). While content dealing with military/security matters is a prominent component of the Embassy's Facebook content, information posted on this platform varies considerably from the mainstream media coverage previously analyzed.
Whereas military/security content comprised between 40 and 60 percent of the mainstream news coverage analyzed, it accounts for only 15 percent of the content on the Embassy’s Facebook page. Culture, tourism, and U.S.-Israel relations (in the context of culture and tourism) are much more broadly represented here. For example, the image of a U.S. pop singer visiting the Wailing Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem prior to a party at a trendy party in Tel Aviv blends religious, historical, modern, aspects into one image of contemporary Israel (Facebook, 2012).

Twitter: @IsraelUSA

Similarly, content on the Embassy’s Twitter page is equally diverse in the information it pushes to American audiences. With 5,029 tweets and 37,661 followers (as of April 7, 2013), the page is described as “Israeli news and information from the official
Twitter of the Embassy” (Israel Embassy in the USA official Twitter page, 2013). While a large portion of the account’s activities are focused on security/military matters, @IsraelUSA also utilizes interactive aspects of this platform to promote cultural exchanges, medical research, and tourism, with a content categorization breakdown similar to the Embassy’s Facebook page.

A recent Twitter exchange between The Washington Post and the Israeli Embassy is an example of one of the Embassy’s communication strategies on Twitter. In response to a Washington Post headline critiquing the political system in Israel, the Embassy tweeted a rebuttal at The Washington Post promoting Israel’s political system, while garnering further media attention.

The blog BuzzFeed highlighted this exchange in an article called “Israel Embassy Gets Sassy with Washington Post” (Kaczynsky, 2012).
The Embassy’s YouTube account has less content than its Facebook and Twitter pages, containing a total of 30 videos posted between September 2009 and March 2013, with the number of viewers for each video ranging from 203 to 139,951 views. Here too, the topics for videos vary across categories, but content posted on YouTube appears to largely focus on prominent international events, such as President Obama’s visit, and highlights cultural events hosted by the Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Traditional interviews with Israeli dignitaries, such as the Ambassador, are interspersed with cartoon videos highlighting current events, and event-specific coverage of visiting Israeli artists. Because many fewer posts are available on this platform, all YouTube videos were included in the content analysis of this platform.
The Embassy's videos are shared across social media platforms, and certain videos, such as a one in which Ambassador Michael Oren took part in a Q & A session of questions asked via Twitter, appear to have been created with the intention of sharing across these platforms. The video below highlighting various products made in Israel is narrated by Israeli supermodel Bar Rafaeli, and was shared across the Embassy's Facebook and YouTube pages.

(YouTube, 2013)

Public diplomacy scholar Etyan Gilboa believes that Israel's nation branding efforts can greatly benefit from the Israeli private sector. In an interview conducted with Professor Gilboa for this project, the Director of School of Communication and Center for
International Communication at Bar-Ilan University in Israel discussed several challenges Israel faces in its rebranding efforts. He notes that Israel has many aspects of its society that are highly positive, such as the fact that Israel is a start-up nation, a technological center, a strong democracy, and a country with substantial cultural and historical appeal. However, Professor Gilboa asks whether it is possible to “deal with the dominating force of conflict, and leave room for [Israel’s] other faces?” Gilboa indicates that some nation branding scholars, such as Simon Anholt, think you cannot. But Gilboa disagrees, noting that Israel represents a duality of conflict and the other features or faces it has to present to the world. Gilboa suggests that Israel needs to be more invested in showing the world these other faces. “Policymakers should take the approach of addressing [Israel’s] weaknesses, and exploiting its strengths.” Additionally, Professor Gilboa argues that the government has less credibility than the private sector when it comes to nation branding, arguing that the “private sector in Israel is not doing enough. Industry, the high-tech sector, they are much more concerned with resources, investments, and their own image and reputation, that they aren’t doing enough to improve Israel’s brand” (Gilboa, personal communication, March 16, 2013).

**From Social Media to Mainstream Media**

In an interview conducted on April 4, 2013, Jed Shein, the Director of New Media at the Embassy of Israel in Washington, D.C., discussed strategies that the Embassy uses for its social media platforms. Shein indicated that the number of people who are sourcing their news on social media is growing quickly. As a result, information on these platforms is increasingly shaping opinions.
“We see it as we have to be there, we must be there. We need to be where people are getting their information.” As discussed in the previous analysis of the Embassy’s various social media platforms, the scope of content that is promoted on each platform deals with a wide variety of cultural and political issues related to Israeli society. Shein indicates that the Embassy is “reaching out to the American Public, so there is a political angle and a cultural angle. It can be challenging to balance this, and we use different tools to seek different models. For example, you might reach fewer people on Twitter then say Facebook, but if those users are opinion leaders, then in many instances that can meet your needs. It’s Quality over Quantity and looking about where it can be shared. If it’s translating from social media to news media, it’s a huge success” (Shein, personal communication, April 4, 2013).

During the past few years, the Embassy has had a substantial amount of social media content make the transition from social to mainstream media. One of the more recent examples was a YouTube video created by the Embassy on the eve of President Obama’s visit to Israel. The video in question, called “President Obama Goes to Israel,” was a cartoon depiction of a meeting between Israeli President Benjamin Netenyahu and President Obama, in which both cartoon characters reaffirm their friendship and dance to a soundtrack of the song “Thank You For Being A Friend.” The video was shared widely online, receiving approximately 140,757 views on the Embassy’s YouTube Channel, numerous shares on Twitter, and received a nod from several mainstream media sources. The Washington Post published an article called, “Behind the Odd Israeli Embassy Video,” which discussed the video and communication strategy behind it at length. Similarly, The New York Times’ blog highlighted the much-talked about video in a post titled, “Israel’s Animated Diplomacy,” that also highlighted several other YouTube videos created by the Embassy.
Shein noted that with the recent Obama video “others were setting a tone for the visit that we didn’t necessarily agree with, so we decided to present our own tone to the visit. This was our creative way to get our message heard.” He also describes the Embassy’s overall digital diplomacy strategy as traditional diplomacy conducted through a different medium. “We have the opportunity to reach 7,000 or 30,000 Twitter followers with a couple clicks of the keypad. If that can translate outside of social media, I think we can see even greater success” (Shein, personal communication, April 4, 2013).

**DISCUSSION**

**Implications of Research Results**

Primary research was conducted to build upon existing research relating to Israel’s public diplomacy and branding efforts in the United States. This research was conducted in an attempt to answer the following questions:

- How are aspects of Brand Israel’s recommendations currently being implemented?
- Are Israel’s communication efforts primarily focused on “framing the conflict” or “broadening the conversation beyond it”?
- How are social media platforms being utilized to promote Israel’s messaging strategies?
- Are these frames transitioning into the mainstream American media’s coverage of Israel?
- In what way(s) do these frames compare to the mainstream media coverage of Israel in the United States?

The research yielded several anticipated results, such as the conflict-focused nature of the American news media’s coverage of Israel. However, numerous aspects of Israel’s
use of social media, and the ways in which these platforms were used to interact with mainstream news outlets, were unexpected and warrant further discussion.

Analysis of the Embassy of Israel in the United State’s social media platforms indicates that Israel continues to implement several of the recommendations made by the Brand Israel Group in 2005. Attempts to “broaden the conversation” about Israel beyond the conflict are apparent. The topical analyses of the content presented across each platform demonstrated that topics related Israeli culture are the primary focus across all three social media platforms examined. Additionally, it appears that concerted efforts are being made to present a contemporary, diverse image of Israel that counterbalances the stark images of religion and military conflict described in the Brand Israel Group’s focus group findings. Creative attempts to incorporate the historic and contemporary aspects of Israeli culture were noticeable in much of the Embassy’s content. The Facebook posting of American pop singer Apple D Ap of The Black Eyed Peas at the Western Wall in Jerusalem prior to his performance at a nightclub in Tel Aviv was an opportunity to highlight an iconic religious site in a new way, while also promoting the contemporary and cultural aspects of modern Tel Aviv.

The content promoted across Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube suggests that the Embassy of Israel is focused on communicating a narrative that moves beyond the conflict, while reinforcing aspects of a “shared narrative” with the United States. The Embassy also relies heavily on other thematic frames emphasizing Israel as a technology hub, a start-up nation, a bastion of democracy, and a place with strong biblical ties. These approaches
mirror the recommendations made by the Brand Israel Group and other “beyond the conflict” advocates.

While it was anticipated that the Israeli Embassy would present a more multi-faced image of Israel, the extent of the discrepancy found between coverage from the Israeli Embassy versus that of the American mainstream media was somewhat surprising. With approximately 67 percent of the American news coverage about Israel focused on matters related to military and security, while 15 percent of the content from the Israeli Embassy’s Facebook page dealt with military/security issues. These findings indicate that while Israel is attempting to broaden its own narrative, its approach has yet to translate into the domestic news media’s coverage of Israel in the United States. Domestic media coverage of Israel is overwhelmingly concerned with regional security issues in the Middle East, and in the narrower context of Israel, concerned with the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Interestingly, this conflict coverage appears to be largely presented through episodic framing, with instances of violence, military incursions, and regional instability dominating media coverage in America.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, Gideon Meir indicated that Israel’s international image has historically been “event driven, rather than argument driven, that is, the peace processes shape positive images and the violence yields negative images” (Gilboa, 2006, 735). This episodic framing, most commonly through the prism of conflict, continues to dominate American news coverage of Israel. Interviews conducted with journalists Thomas Friedman and Perle Nikol reiterated the view that Israel’s image is inextricably
linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, Ms. Nikol’s recommendations regarding shifting the agenda through small “openings” that occur in mainstream media coverage of the conflict, such as highlighting women in the military, conscientious objectors, and aspects of Israeli democracy seem to be practical approaches to work within the existing constraints of American media coverage toward shifting Israel’s “identity-image gap.” Mr. Friedman and Ms. Nikol’s arguments reiterate that both policy and the peace process heavily influence Israel’s image among international audiences, and cannot be divorced from branding or communication efforts.

The analysis of Israel’s current communication strategies on social media platforms was both informative and surprising in several respects. The Embassy’s comprehensive approach to communication via these platforms appears quite effective in a number of ways. The content posted presents the diverse, multifaceted, and contemporary image of Israel advocated by supporters of communicating “beyond the conflict.” Additionally, the Embassy appears quite adept at promoting the aspects of Israeli life, culture, and government that resonate strongly with American audiences. This strategy falls in line with Entman’s theory of mediated public diplomacy and related concept of “cultural congruence,” which stresses that existing or perceived cultural similarities greatly increase the likelihood that counter-frames will make their way into the “apex” of the Cascading Network to challenge existing frames, particularly when communicating within the communication networks of a foreign audience (Entman, 2008).
The Embassy’s communication strategies on these social media platforms are also interesting to consider in the context of Entman’s Cascading Activation Network Model. This model indicates that mediated public diplomacy efforts carried out among members of a foreign media help to generate more positive mass public opinion among this foreign audience, in turn encouraging foreign elites who support these efforts to feel freer to support these efforts, which in turn generates additional favorable media coverage, accelerating the positive flow of information to the general public (Entman, 2008). Social media platforms, particularly Twitter, offer a relatively new opportunity for information diffusion. These platforms allow frames that challenge those of the mainstream to reach elites within a target audience directly. Additionally, interaction between these opinion leaders, traditional news media outlets, and the general public are more easily facilitated, resulting in an increasing exchange of information across both social and digital news media platforms.

The recent success that the Embassy of Israel in the United States has experienced with this approach was an unexpected finding. The Embassy has adopted an aggressive and creative approach, particularly on Twitter. Challenging and confronting information or disinformation directly. For instance, their exchange with The Washington Post regarding the democratic process in Israel, or their YouTube video regarding President Obama’s video, not only went viral, but also received significant coverage in many of the mainstream news media outlets who’s framing of the visit they were attempting to counter. As the number of people who use digital platforms to receive their news increases, as Pew Research Center’s 2012 survey on news consumption suggests (Trends in News...
Consumption, 2012), these types of communication strategies may prove to be even more successful in influencing or countering mainstream media coverage of Israel in the future. It may also assist in reducing the “identity-image gap” that exists between Israel and American audiences.

**CONCLUSION**

**Summary**

Rapid advances in technology and the international connectedness they foster have changed how governments communicate with each other, their citizens, and with foreign audiences. Public diplomacy is a relatively new term that encompasses aspects of traditional diplomacy, media relations, international relations, marketing, and public relations. Many scholars and practitioners of public diplomacy indicate that substantial shifts in international relations, along with globalization, and technological advances have altered the overall goals and practices of foreign policy.

Communication, influence, and persuasion are increasingly important aspects of diplomacy and foreign policy. The way a country is perceived is an integral component of a country’s political and economic power. However, framing an issue, narrative, or perspective is particularly difficult to do with foreign media and foreign audiences.

In order to understand the connection between public policy, media, and public opinion, and the challenges associated with cross-cultural communication, a case analysis
of Israel’s public diplomacy efforts on social media platforms were examined in conjunction with mainstream American news media coverage of Israel on digital platforms. Israel was selected as the subject of this case analysis for a number of reasons. As a small country in a volatile region, Israel has been the subject of intense international media scrutiny for many decades. As a result, Israel has been very active in its public diplomacy and nation branding efforts in recent years. Additionally, Israel’s longstanding relationship with the United States, and its recent rebranding efforts among American audiences, made it a particularly interesting case study for the purposes of this project.

An analysis of existing research in the areas of public diplomacy and nation branding, along with an evaluation of U.S. news media coverage in comparison with Israel’s own coverage on social media platforms, yielded a variety of findings. While Israel’s efforts were largely focused on presenting a multi-faceted image of Israel, mainstream American media focused almost solely on the Israel-Palestinian conflict in its coverage. Interestingly, social media platforms appeared to provide a way for Israel to communicate directly to American audiences outside of this conflict prism.

The Israeli Embassy’s aggressive and creative strategies on social media served to generate online attention and discussion. Aside from producing videos that went “viral,” a number of various content posted on these social media platforms made the transition from social media to mainstream media, becoming the focus of blog posts and articles by The New York Times, Washington Post, and other prominent news outlets. The increasing number of Americans who now get their news on digital platforms, along with the surge in
those who consume news through social media platforms, indicates that these communication strategies have the potential to reach a substantially growing audience.

**Limitations**

The scope and timeframe allotted to conduct the research for this project made it impossible to collect and review all of the content from the five news organizations and three social media platforms under review. While the content selected represented a detailed sample of the information under review, there were several limitations associated with this method. The researcher was charged with selecting a specific category within which to place each headline, thus leaving some room for researcher bias. Additionally, President Obama’s visit to Israel in March 2013 may have slightly skewed the data being collected. The President’s visit at the start of his second term in office generated a substantial amount of coverage that appeared to be somewhat isolated and unique. This may have also contributed to slightly skewing the content collected. However, this method did allow for a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the various digital platforms under consideration.

**Recommendations For Future Research**

As Professor Gilboa and other public diplomacy scholars included in this project have indicated, public diplomacy is much more than the sum of its parts. Reputational management, public relations, and other disciplines that fall within the scope of this field do not adequately explain the full scope of public diplomacy. A nation’s persuasive power, legitimacy, and political power may be abstract, but their objectives are no less important.
Furthering foreign policy through communication, nation branding, and relationship building are crucial aspects of a nation’s foreign policy.

Additional research is needed to develop tangible measurements by which public diplomacy can be evaluated. While it may never be possible to assess with absolute certainty the influences that shape public opinion, nation branding indexes and focus groups currently provide some insights. However, further research to develop more tangible measurements for public diplomacy efforts, particularly measurements that could map possible correlations between policy, news media, and public opinion more clearly, would be exceedingly beneficial for future public diplomacy efforts.


APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Brand Israel Focus Group Discussion Guide

Focus Group Guide

Brand Israel Group
Focus Group Discussion Guide

Focus Group Goals and Objectives:

Overall, the objectives for the Brand Israel focus group discussions are to:
• Understand what drives perceptions of Israel among different constituencies in the US.
• Gauge the underlying emotional factors that impact Americans’ relationship with Israel as a country, a people, and a brand.
• Gain a richer understanding of how Israel as a brand can be positioned to be more relevant for Americans, and held in higher esteem.

Each focus group will last approx. 2 hours, and will cover the following topics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction and Disclosure</td>
<td>10 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Meaning of Place</td>
<td>40 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Israel</td>
<td>35 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care for Israel</td>
<td>35 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrap-up</td>
<td>1 Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>121 Min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Introduction and Disclosure (10 Min)
• Welcome, thanks for coming.
• Self-introduction, length, general topic of discussion.
• Ethical disclosures: Independent researcher; video/audio taping; colleagues.
• Hear from everyone – no wrong answers.
• Please turn off pagers, cell phones, BlackBerrys, etc.
• I’d like to go around the table and have everyone introduce themselves:
  -Tell us how you spend your days.
  -Where you live and what you do for living? Do you have kids?
  -Talk about your favorite place to take a vacation – let us get to know you.

The Meaning of Place (40 Min)
Meaningful Places (10 MIN)
• Let’s start by talking about the different places – actual physical and geographic places – that are important and meaningful to you. What are the different places that are meaningful to you?
  [Make List] [PROBE: hometown, home, neighborhood, workplace, school, etc.]
  -Describe these places?
  -What makes them important to you?
  -How are these places similar/different from one another?
• How about other places in the state or country that might be important to you? [Make List]
  -What makes these important to you? [PROBE: Does importance mean “personal benefit”?]
  -Is there anything these places have in common with each other? Is there anything they have in common with the first list? How are they similar/different? [PROBE: What provides a place with significance?]
Other Countries (10 MIN)
• New let’s go beyond the borders of the US and talk about places outside of the US - other countries. What are some other countries you’re familiar with? [Make List; Ensure Israel is on list]
• What comes to mind when I say the words “other countries”? [PROBE: Tourism, security, spirituality/religion, US involvement, news, immigrants, food, politics, etc.]
• When do other countries come up in your lives? [Make List]
  - Why do they come up?
  - What goes through your head when you hear something about another country?
  - When was the last time you spoke about another country?
  - Why did it come up? How did it come up? Who did you speak with?

Card Sort Exercise (20 MIN)
PART I:
• I’d like us to do an exercise. I’m writing on the board the names of the countries we mentioned, and adding a few others so that we have enough to work with.
• I’d like each and every one of you to take a couple of minutes to look these names over, and then I’d like you to group the countries according to the degree to which you care about them.
• Create 3 groups: Care a lot; Care a little; Don’t care. Using the sheets of paper I’m giving you, write down the name of each country in one of the columns, based on the degree to which you care about that country. As you do this, think of why you may care or not for each country.
  - Discuss groups
  - What makes you care more/less about another country? [PROBE: Security, spirituality/religion, desire to visit (tourism and vacation), cultural heritage, political importance, American’s relationship with the country, etc.]
  - Do any of these countries offer you more/less of a personal benefit? [PROBE: Germany and good cars, Japan and technology, etc.]
• How is that similar/different than places in the US? Are these similarities/differences good or bad? How so?
  - What do you “do” when you care more about a country? [Make List]
• How is it different from not caring about a country?
• How are your thoughts different/similar?
• How is your behavior different/similar?
• How are your feelings different/similar?

PART II:
• Great. Now I’d like us to do an exercise as a group. I am writing the name of each country on a separate card. Take a few minutes to look at the cards, and then - together - group these countries into meaningful groups.
• Basically, I’d like you to put each country in a group with other countries you think go together - based on whatever criteria you decide. This exercise has one rule, and that is that you cannot group these countries by geography.
  - Discuss groups. [PROBE: What are groups based on: personal benefit, security, language, religion, politics, ethnicity, etc.]
• Thinking about: all the different ways we’ve just grouped these countries, what are the core elements that stick with you the most when you think of a foreign country? [PROBE: People, cities, current and historic events, wars and conflicts, culture (food, music, dress), language, leaders, etc.]

Perceptions of Israel (35 Min)
• Let’s focus more specifically on [Name group of countries Israel is in. List countries in the group].
• How would you describe this group?
• What are the differences/similarities between the countries in this group?
• How do you feel about the countries in this group?
  - What comes to mind when you look at this list of countries?
  - How are these countries similar/different than the US?
Brand Party (15 MIN):
Imagine that there’s a block party and that each of the countries we just spoke of was a house on the block. Imagine that each house had characteristics that captured the essence of the country.

- Let’s start with [NAME COUNTRY FROM LIST]? 
- Describe the house.
  - What style is it?
  - Are there cars in the driveway? Describe them?
  - Describe the yard and the furniture in the house?
- Who lives in this house? Describe the person or the people who live here?
  - What do they look like?
  - What kind of clothes do they wear?
  - Would you enjoy hanging out with the host? Why/why not?
- What would you talk about? What kind of relationship do you have with them?
  [PROBE: Friendship, cordial, hostile, etc.]
- Would you invite them back to visit you in your house?
  - [IF NOT] What would they need to change or do for you to want to invite them to your house?
- Repeat for 2 countries in general + Israel in depth.

Knowledge of Israel (10 MIN)
- Let’s focus more specifically on one of the countries in this group, Israel.
- What are immediate reactions to the word “Israel”? What comes to mind? [Make List] [PROBE: Religion, conflict, democracy, terrorism, etc.]
  - Which of these are positive/ negative? [Make List]
- Who are the people who live in Israel? [Make List]
  - Describe a typical Israeli?
  - Do Israelis fit your perceptions of Israel? [PROBE: What is the source of your impression?]
  - Are there different groups of people living there? [PROBE: Is there awareness of Israel’s multi-culturalism or is Israel perceived only as a Jewish country?]
  - Has anyone ever met an Israeli?
- What type of government does Israel have? [PROBE: Awareness of Israel’s democracy? Is Israel’s democracy perceived as a “benefit” to America and personally to “Americans”?]
- How do you know about Israel? [PROBE: School, news/media, word-of-mouth, prejudice, etc.]
  - How does your knowledge of Israel compare to that of other countries?
- Are there things you would like to know more about regarding Israel?
  [PROBE: Religion, technology, sports, music, movies, arts, etc.?]
  - Why these?
  - What is it specifically about these that you would like to know more about?
  [PROBE: Do these offer a personal benefit?]
  - How would you go about learning these things?
  [PROBE: How can this information be made more readily available for Americans?]
- Who are the different people or organizations who help you learn about other countries?
  [Make List] [PROBE: Politicians, media, community, church, etc.?]
  - How do you feel about each of these?
  - Do you trust this source of information? Do you respect them? Why/Why not?
- How about people from the actual country – how do they influence your perceptions of the country and the events?
  - Do you pay attention to “official” representatives from that country?
- What about various cultural items and people from that country - like artists, movies, and musicians - how do they influence your views? Does a specific example come to mind?

News (5 MIN)
- What are specific news stories you remember hearing about Israel? [Make List]
  - What were these stories about?
-What were the different building blocks of these stories? [Make List] [PROBE: Background, general information, quotes, information about Israel’s relationship to the US, etc.]
  -How did you feel when you heard these stories?
  [PROBE: What were the specific elements in the news stories that prompted positive/negative thoughts?]
  -What did these stories make you think about?
  -What do you know about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? [Make List]
  -How do you feel about it? [PROBE: How important a role does the conflict play in their perceptions of Israel and their opinions of it?]
  -Can you imagine Israel without thinking of the conflict? What comes to mind?

Israel & the US (5 MIN)
-What would you say are the things that are similar/different between Israel and the US? [Make List]
  -Which of the similarities is most important to you? Why?
  -Which of these is positive/negative?

Care for Israel (35 Min)
-Do you care about Israel? In what way?
  -Let’s make a list of the ways in which you care about Israel, and the ways in which you don’t. [Make List]
-Think back to those issues we discussed earlier as making you care about another country - what are some of the things that make you care about Israel? [PROBE: Religion/spirituality, security, democracy, spirit (independence, irreverence), people, conflict, terrorism, technology, relationship with the US, etc.]
  -Would you say Israel is relevant/not relevant to you and your life? How so?
  -What are the things that make Israel relevant/not relevant to you and your life? [Make List]
-Do you benefit from Israel in any way? [Make List]
-Are there other countries that are relevant to you in a similar way?
-What would you need to know and/or want to know more about to care more about Israel?
  -Spirituality, security, fun society, scientific developments, democracy, tourism, people and ethnicities, relationship with the US, etc.
  -What specifically about each of these would you want to know more about? Why? [PROBE: Each category will be probed and discussed to see how it may be operationalized]
  -How would you go about knowing these things?
  -Where would you learn about them?

[MODERATOR NOTE IF RESPONDENTS CANNOT GET BEYOND THE CONFLICT: “Let’s assume that the conflict continues as it is now. Looking beyond it, what would you want to know?”]

Collage Exercise (20 MIN)
Each respondent will be given a large easel paper, and a glue stick. A variety of magazines will be placed on the table (travel, politics, home and gardening, leisure, etc.), and respondents will use the images in these magazines to create collages.
- I'm going to give each of you a sheet of easel paper. Please fold the sheet in half and write on one half “Israel Now” and on the other half “Israel Care.”
- Start with the half called “Israel Now.” Using the magazine images in front of you, I’d like you to create a collage of images that capture how you feel about Israel today - what comes to mind when you think of Israel.
- As for the half marked “Israel Care,” I’d like you to use the images to capture what you would like to see to make you care more about Israel. It can be anything, including things we didn’t talk about today. Try to capture images that would represent what you’d like to see in Israel and about Israel so that you would care more about it.
- Have groups present collages and discuss them.

Wrap-up (1 Min)
- The reason we all gathered here today is to discuss Israel, and to learn how people feel about Israel. Is there anything you would like to add, or raise that you think we didn’t cover - anything?

Thank you.
APPENDIX 2: Digital American News Headlines

**CNN**

**Contain Israel, compel Iran**
By Nina Tannenwald and Hussein Banai, Special to CNN
updated 12:28 PM EDT, Thu March 15, 2012

**Israel detains pro-Palestinian activists**
From Kareem Khadder, CNN
updated 3:55 PM EDT, Sun April 15, 2012

**All prisoners on hunger strike will end it, Palestinian official says**
From Kareem Khadder, CNN
updated 10:13 AM EDT, Tue May 15, 2012

**Militant Palestinian group behind Israel attack, Egypt official says**
From Mohamed Fadel Fahmy, for CNN
updated 9:04 PM EDT, Mon June 18, 2012

**Clinton discusses Iran, Egypt with Israeli officials**
By the CNN Wire Staff
updated 9:30 AM EDT, Mon July 16, 2012

**Israel shifts defense focus after Arab Spring**
From Paul Colsey, CNN
updated 10:46 AM EDT, Wed August 15, 2012

**Jewish groups mad about initial reports on anti-Islam film**
By Lateef Mungin
September 14th, 2012
03:00 AM ET

**Israeli airstrike targets terror operatives in Gaza**
By the CNN Wire Staff
updated 6:14 AM EDT, Mon October 15, 2012

**Rockets, airstrikes reignite Mideast conflict**
From Sara Sidner and Talal Abu Rahma, CNN
updated 10:42 AM EST, Thu November 15, 2012

**Israel's foreign minister resigns amid charges**
By Sara Sidner, CNN
updated 1:11 PM EST, Sat December 15, 2012

**Hagel's wrong on why U.S. supports Israel**
By Ari Fleischer, CNN Contributor
updated 7:28 AM EST, Mon January 14, 2013

**A global push to end violence with song and dance**
CNN iReport
By Emanuella Grinberg, CNN
updated 12:42 AM EST, Fri February 15, 2013

**Israeli parties sign coalition deal**
By Mike Schwartz and Jason Hanna, CNN
updated 12:56 PM EDT, Fri March 15, 2013
FOX NEWS

Will Israel act on its own against Iran?
Fox News Video
Mar 15, 2012

Israeli PM says nuclear talks gave Iran 'freebie'
Published April 15, 2012
Associated Press

Don't underestimate Israel's military option for Iran
By Mitchell Bard
Published May 14, 2012, FoxNews.com

Bill would protect Israeli authors' royalties
Published June 14, 2012
Associated Press

Iran reports: War games showed missile accuracy
Published July 13, 2012 Associated Press

North American Jews move to Israel despite risks
Published August 14, 2012
Associated Press

US aid to Middle East questioned after anti-American attacks in region
Published September 15, 2012
FoxNews.com

3 reasons why Jews could decide the 2012 election
By Mitchell Bard
Published November 06, 2012
FoxNews.com

Kim Kardashian slammed over pro-Israel tweet, deletes it
By Hollie McKay, LOS ANGELES
Pop Tarts
Published November 16, 2012
FoxNews.com

Israeli foreign minister Lieberman resigns in wake of fraud charges
Published December 14, 2012
Associated Press

Israel's Labor leader takes on Netanyahu with social agenda that downplays party's dovish past
Published January 15, 2013
Associated Press

Report: Hagel Said State Department Controlled by Israel
February 14, 2013

Crossing the 'red line' in Syria?
Published March 19, 2013 | Hannity | Sean Hannity
With: Col. Oliver North, Juan Williams
Egypt-mediated truce calms Israel-Gaza border
By Karin Brulliard, March 13, 2012

In Israel, pro-Palestinian activists get attention, if not entry
By Karin Brulliard, April 15, 2012

Under Netanyahu, Israel is stronger than ever
By Fareed Zakaria, May 09, 2012

Posted at 08:28 AM ET, 06/15/2012
Israeli deportation of South Sudan refugees signals policy shift
By Benjamin Gottlieb

A tense relationship: Obama and Netanyahu
7/15/2012 9:05 PM PDT

In Israel, speculation rises of pending attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities
By Anne Gearan and Karin Brulliard, August 17, 2012

Bridging the U.S.-Israeli gap on Iran
By Editorial Board, September 07, 2012

A ‘reset’ in Israeli-U.S. relations?
By Editorial Board, October 15, 2012

Israeli army drops warning leaflets on Gaza
Posted by Olga Khazan on November 15, 2012 at 8:50 am

What makes America’s gun culture totally unique in the world, in four charts
Posted by Max Fisher on December 15, 2012 at 2:14 pm

From Obama’s lips: No respect for Israel
Posted by Jennifer Rubin on January 16, 2013 at 10:45 am

Stan Fischer saved Israel’s economy. Can he save America’s?
Posted by Dylan Matthews on February 15, 2013 at 2:09 pm

For Obama, trip is a chance to repair relations with disappointed Israelis
By Scott Wilson, Published: March 17
With Arms for Yemen Rebels, Iran Seeks Wider Mideast Role
By ERIC SCHMITT and ROBERT F. WORTH
Published: March 15, 2012

A Missionary Impulse
'The Crisis of Zionism,' by Peter Beinart
By JONATHAN ROSEN
Published: April 13, 2012

Ferocious Israeli Assault on Gaza Kills a Leader of Hamas
By ISABEL KERSHNER and FARES AKRAM
Published: November 14, 2012

Israel and Hamas Step Up Air Attacks in Gaza Clash
November 15, 2012

Hard-Line Israeli Foreign Minister Resigns
By JODI RUDOREN. Published: December 14, 2012

Morsi's Slurs Against Jews Stir Concern
Jan 14, 2013

Israel's Prisoner X Linked to Dubai Assassination in New Report
Feb 14, 2013

Israeli Areas Near the Old City
March 16, 2013

Museum and Gallery Listings for June 15-21
Jewish Museum: 'Kehinde Wiley / The World Stage: Israel' (through July 29)
Published: June 14, 2012

The Israel Museum in Jerusalem, Renewed
July 13, 2012

Israel and Iran
Editorial

No Rush to War
Sep 14, 2012

Woman Must Relinquish Kafka Papers, Judge Says
Oct 14, 2012
Israel Really Isn't All That Friendly to Its Christians
March 16, 2012

Why Airport Security Is Broken—And How to Fix It
April 15, 2012

Michael Oren: What Happened to Israel's Reputation?
May 14, 2012

Israeli Tax Preparers Snared
June 17, 2012

Israel Blames Iran For Attack in Bulgaria
July 18, 2012

U.S., Israel Build Military Cooperation
Aug 14, 2010

Revisit the Food of Jerusalem
This season's most anticipated cookbook shines a light on the city’s crossroads cuisine
September 14, 2012, 5:41 p.m. ET

Israel Aims Air Attacks at Gaza Militants
October 14, 2012, 4:26 p.m. ET

Israeli Strike Kills Hamas Commander
November 15, 2012, 3:04 a.m. ET

Israel Indicts Foreign Minister
December 13, 2012

TowerJazz to Present at Mentor Forum Israel on January 15, 2013
January 14, 2013, 4:00 a.m. ET

Israel Lifts Cloak on Prisoner's Death
February 13, 2013, 7:39 p.m. ET

How Israel Screens for Terrorists
March 15, 2013