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Israel's Soft Power Application through Digital Diplomacy against Hamas to Iran Wars (2023-2025)

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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the concept of Soft power, focusing on the application of digital diplomacy for the projection of soft power as the power of influence and attraction. It further highlights the use of digital media for the diplomatic practices by different countries for the pursuit of their foreign policies. It further examines the possibilities and probable challenges for the achievement of foreign policy objectives through diplomatic activities and how these modern trends and practices are contributing for the application of soft power. Modern trends and Digital diplomacy like many new trends may not replace the traditional interactive diplomacy. Traditional form of diplomacy and the modern concept / practices of digital diplomacy co-exist and complement each other. Digital diplomacy and Internet activities as a whole can greatly assist in projecting a state's foreign policy positions for the projection of soft power. This paper further explores the concept of digital diplomacy by the use of digital media in the field of diplomacy and how Israel has demonstrated the concept of soft power for utilizing these tools in the furtherance of her foreign policy. It examines the opportunities and challenges of Israeli diplomatic activities since the Hamas Israel war of 2023 till Iran Israel war. This paper emphasis the designs of Israel for the use of digital media and how it affects core diplomatic functions of representation, perception and relationship management. The paper further examines the utilization of soft power tools on social media and how strategic narratives serve a greater purpose of justifying and legitimizing military actions during the war. Gaza War is a classical situation which has been described as a war between Israel and Hamas in world media, emphasizes the importance of strategic narratives propagation through digital diplomacy as a soft power tool. Given the current criticism of Israel for human rights and Law of Armed Conflict transgression in Gaza, this research becomes even more pertinent and objective oriented as digital diplomacy may be effectively used as a crucial tool for just war theory. To study the use of digital diplomacy as an effective tool of soft power projection, a case study is conducted which examines the Israel's strategic narratives projection through digital diplomacy tools from October 7, 2023, and the following Israel Iran war in year 2025.

Keywords: *Soft Power, Joseph Nye Jr, Digital Diplomacy, Public Diplomacy, Culture, Political Value, Foreign Policy, Israel, Palestine, Hamas, Iran, Digital and Social Media.*

Introduction

Diplomacy, which comes from a Latin term derived from the Latin word 'diploma' and means the official document that is folded twice which is usually issued by the political rulers of the cities that make up the ancient Greek society, has gone through many stages of development in its history and concept. David Reynolds¹ dates the beginnings of diplomacy appearance at least to the Bronze Age. Documents from the Euphrates kingdom in the mid-eighth century BC, and from Akhenaten's reign in Egypt, reveal a world of about 2500 BC. It was found in the northern region of Iran and was probably carried by an envoy who traveled back and forth about 1200 miles between two distant kingdoms.²

The term "digital diplomacy"³ so far has no specific definition, but its main goal is to be "a way out of foreign policy problems using the Internet by communicating with the public directly without barriers". The British Foreign Office defines it as a "solution to foreign policy problems using the Internet," while "Vargas Hanson" of the Brookings Center defined it as "one of the use of the Internet and information technology to achieve diplomatic goals." Lewis defines as the use of digital communication tools -Social Media- by diplomats to communicate with each other and with the general public.⁴

Nowadays, digital diplomacy is considered an essential tool in international foreign policy. It helps any country to advance its foreign policy goals, expand its international reach, and influence people who have not set foot in any of the world's embassies, in light of all governmental and non-governmental entities competing for influence and power in the same space on the Internet which hosts more than 3 billion people and most of them use the Internet only through their mobile phones.⁵ As one of the most important foreign policy tools of countries, digital diplomacy has unique advantages and characteristics that have brought about a kind of conceptual shift to become the most powerful foreign policy tool in the context of contemporary international relations.⁶ In general, digital diplomacy is the engine room for international relations as it is the well-established method that sets state their foreign policy objectives and also coordinates its efforts to influence the decisions and behaviors of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiations, and others, in order to maintain peace and develop goodwill towards states and people to ensure their cooperation or neutrality. By 2025,⁷ the number of data-driven interactions per day per person (that is, interactions between individuals and their digital devices) is estimated to increase twenty-fold, from an

¹ Reynolds, David. "International history, the cultural turn and the diplomatic twitch." *Cultural and Social History* 3, no. 1 (2006): 75-91.

² Alrantisi, Izzeddin Khaled, Norhayati Rafida Abdul Rahim, Ihab Ahmad Awais, and Wesam Almahallawi. "Utilizing Digital Diplomacy in the Israeli Discourse to Influence Arab Public Opinion during the Israeli Aggression on Gaza 2021." *A Journal of Vytautas Magnus University* 15, no. 1 (2022).

³ Sotiriu, Sabrina. "Digital diplomacy: Between promises and reality." In *Digital Diplomacy*, pp. 33-51. Routledge, 2015.

⁴ Adesina, Olubukola S. "Foreign policy in an era of digital diplomacy." *Cogent Social Sciences* 3, no. 1 (2017)

⁵ Mwenga, David. "The use of mobile phones for human rights protection: the experiences of Zimbabwean Human Rights Non-Governmental Organisations." PhD diss., University of Westminster, 2017.

⁶ Tassilova, Aigerim, Zharilkasyn Zhappasov, Nazgul Shyngyssova, Meiram Sarybayev, Aigul Sadenova, Nazyia Tasylova, and Gulnar Kozgambayeva. "comparative analysis on digital diplomacy in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan." *Astra Salvensis* 11 (2018).

⁷ Bjola, Corneliu, Jennifer Cassidy, and Ilan Manor. "Public diplomacy in the digital age." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 14, no. 1-2 (2019): 83-101.

average of 298 in 2010 to the staggering amount of 4,909 connections, amounting to one digital interaction every 18 seconds. Furthermore, real-time data usage will grow from 15 per cent of the data sphere in 2017 to nearly 30 per cent in 2025, meaning that the effectiveness of data driven activities will increasingly depend on the availability of data with low latency responsiveness (instant data).

The understanding and realization of countries and governments of the importance of digital diplomacy in building a positive mental image and enhancing national identity and its results on a long-term to achieve gains such as attracting tourists and investors, shaping the foreign policies of other countries, encouraging business growth, and then demonstrating the country's ability to occupy a greater role in foreign policy pushes those states and governments to compete for a better position in the international arena and control the public as a popular force in light of the relative shift in the balance of power.⁸

Studies indicate that the awareness of countries and governments of using social networking sites to present a positive image of the country and to improve its reputation among the peoples of other countries is increasing, as most governments seek to improve their means of communication through social networking sites with target audiences in order to achieve the desired goal of digital diplomacy efforts especially when the number of social networking sites users reached 3.8 billion users in the world representing about 50% of the world's population.⁹

The term "digital diplomacy" does not have a specific definition, but its main goal is to be "a way out of foreign policy problems using the Internet by communicating with the public directly without barriers."¹⁰ Digital diplomacy" as a solution to foreign policy problems using the Internet, or it is one of the uses of the Internet and information technology to achieve and implement the foreign policy goals of any country. Public diplomacy is one of the most important elements of soft power that countries use to promote their values and ideas. Interest in the research and academic circles, as well as in official policy circles, has increased in the field of public diplomacy.

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The concept of Digital Diplomacy

Diplomacy is the "engine room" of international relations. It is the established method by which states articulate their foreign policy objectives and co-ordinate their efforts to influence the decisions and behaviour of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiations and other such measures, short of war and violence. It is, in other words, the centuries-long means by which states seek to secure particular or wider interests, including the reduction of frictions between or among themselves. It is the core instrument through which the goals, strategies and broad tactics of foreign policy are implemented. It strives to preserve peace and aims at developing goodwill towards foreign states and peoples with a view to ensuring their

⁸ Gosling, Jess. "Maximising soft power: The role of digital diplomacy in building trust with nation-branding." *Global Affairs Review* 2, no. 1 (2021): 1-19.

⁹ Poluan, Miykel S., Lefrand S. Pasuhuk, and Deske W. Mandagi. "The role of social media marketing in local government institution to enhance public attitude and satisfaction." *Jurnal Ekonomi* 11, no. 03 (2022): 1268-1279.

¹⁰ Çiçek, Ali. "Soft power, public diplomacy and public diplomacy techniques: A conceptual evaluation." *Turkish Business Journal* 3, no. 6 (2022): 103-119.

¹¹ Pamment, James, Alicia Fjällhed, and Martina Smedberg. "The 'Logics' of public diplomacy: In search of what unites a multidisciplinary research field." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 19, no. 1 (2023): 49-83.

cooperation or, failing that, their neutrality.¹² This explains the absence in the current literature of a reliable conceptual framework for assessing the effectiveness of social media for public diplomatic purposes.¹³

Digital diplomacy is typically defined as the means to both connect with and influence global publics on digital platforms by both state actors (typically ministries of foreign affairs) and non-state actors (such as cultural icons and news organizations).¹⁴ Over the past decade, a number of governments (and their respective ministries of foreign affairs) invested significantly in digital diplomacy initiatives, largely driven by a belief that such investments are necessary in order to be a relevant actor in globalized discourse. Some entities led this push, particularly ministries of foreign affairs in the United States and Great Britain. A number of practitioners distinguish digital diplomacy from the term e-diplomacy, which is a term used by diplomats to refer to the use of web applications to facilitate traditional functions of diplomacy, such as consular services, or collaboration within a ministry of foreign affairs.¹⁵ Digital diplomacy is usually conceptualized as a form of public diplomacy. It involves the use of digital technologies and social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Weibo by states to enter into communication with foreign publics usually in a non-costly manner.¹⁶

Means of Communication for Digital Diplomacy

The Internet, especially, which has been defined as “a means of communication that enables the publication, exchange and storage of information” (Westcott), has become central to public and private communication while contemporary tools, including social media, have brought millions into open conversation spaces. With more than 2 billion people using Facebook, Twitter, Qzone, Snapchat and other social media platforms daily, digital connectivity has made the world smaller and, in the process, changed the daily lives of billions of people. Now unmediated dialogue and information exchange between people from around the world is occurring 24 hours a day, all through the year. The social media provides enormous opportunities and challenges for states and international organizations as they seek to engage with new policy spaces developing around the Internet.¹⁷

This has given rise to what is referred to as digital diplomacy. However, as noted by Bjola, despite the promises that digital diplomacy offers for the conduct of international relations, little is known, from an analytical perspective, how digital diplomacy works, with what degree of success and what its limitations are.¹⁸

Policy Goals for Digital Diplomacy

¹² Azeez, Ismail Adaramola Abdul. "The influence of digital diplomacy on foreign policy." *Journal of Tourism Economics and Policy* 3, no. 3 (2023): 189-203.

¹³ Hedling, Elsa, and Niklas Bremberg. "Practice approaches to the digital transformations of diplomacy: toward a new research agenda." *International Studies Review* 23, no. 4 (2021): 1595-1618.

¹⁴ Mazumdar, B. Theo. "Digital diplomacy: Internet-based public diplomacy activities or novel forms of public engagement?." *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 20, no. 1 (2024): 24-43.

¹⁵ Azeez, Ismail Adaramola Abdul. "The influence of digital diplomacy on foreign policy." *Journal of Tourism Economics and Policy* 3, no. 3 (2023): 189-203.

¹⁶ Carola, F. R. E. Y. "Digital diplomacy: The impact of technology on modern diplomacy and foreign policy. Current realities and future prospects." *Romanian journal of European affairs* 24, no. 1 (2024): 107-126.

¹⁷ Woolley, Samuel C. "Digital propaganda: The power of influencers." *Journal of Democracy* 33, no. 3 (2022): 115-129.

¹⁸ Bjola, Corneliu, and Markus Kornprobst. "Digital International Relations." *Abingdon, Oxon* (2023).

Digital diplomacy refers to the use of the internet and new Information Communications Technologies (ICT) to support diplomatic objectives. Hanson identifies eight key policy goals for digital diplomacy: knowledge management, which focuses on harnessing government knowledge for national interests abroad; public diplomacy, aimed at maintaining online contact with global audiences and using digital tools to influence key influencers; information management, which involves aggregating information to inform policies and respond to emerging movements; consular communications and response, providing direct, personal communication with citizens abroad, especially during crises; disaster response, using connective technologies to aid in disaster situations; internet freedom, promoting open, free internet and supporting freedom of speech and democracy; external resources, using digital means to access external expertise for national goals; and policy planning, ensuring effective coordination of international policy across governments. Digital diplomacy is also known by various terms like e-diplomacy or cyber-diplomacy. Different countries have their own definitions. For instance, the U.S. uses "21st Century Statecraft," while the UK refers to it as "Digital Diplomacy," and Canada calls it "Open Policy." According to Ben Scott, digital diplomacy focuses on public diplomacy, building expertise in technology policy, and utilizing ICT for development and economic growth¹⁹.

What is Soft Power?

One of the most commonly used frameworks in digital diplomacy is Joseph Nye's concept of "soft power," which refers to a nation's ability to influence others through attraction rather than coercion. Nye identifies three core resources that shape soft power: culture, political values, and foreign policies. Culture becomes influential when it appeals to others, political values gain soft power when a nation upholds them both domestically and internationally, and foreign policies are powerful when seen as legitimate and morally authoritative. Nye also notes that economic and military factors contribute to soft power, but the key vehicle for this influence is communication, often mediated through media products like films and music. Political values are conveyed through direct policy statements and narratives that a nation promotes, like the U.S. framing democracy in causes like "Internet Freedom." However, Nye acknowledges that both direct and indirect implementations of soft power are hard to measure. Additionally, he discusses the shift from state to non-state actors in influencing global power dynamics, as social networks have become increasingly important in the information age. Power is now more dispersed, and effective use of communication is essential for influencing global networks and advancing national agendas.²⁰

Israel response during Israel Hamas Wars

A study conducted in 2019, had findings suggesting that Israel, during the three subsequent wars in Gaza in 2008, 2012, and 2014, as part of their public diplomacy employed two legitimization strategies: moral abstraction and instrumental rationalization. The former involved the use of words with positive moral connotations like 'self-defense', 'responsibility', 'obligation', and 'defending our citizens' instead of negative ones such as war, attack, or violence. This approach aimed to shift the audience's interpretation of an event from potentially illegitimate to legitimate. By asserting its right to self-defense, Israel placed the responsibility for initiating the

¹⁹ Hanson, F. (2012). *Digital Diplomacy: A New Era for International Relations*.

²⁰ Nye, J. (2004). *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*.

violence on Hamas²¹. On the other hand, the latter strategy legitimized the war in terms of its goals and objectives. It relied on implicit assumptions and brought meanings to moral assertions, so "this must be done to protect our civilians".

Israeli digital diplomacy and the Arab people

Israel began its digital diplomacy efforts in 2011, coinciding with the Arab revolutions. The Israeli occupation saw an opportunity to penetrate Arab public opinion, realizing the power of digital media in effecting political change. Despite establishing diplomatic relations with some Arab rulers, Israel struggled to win over Arab populations, who viewed it as an occupying state. By leveraging digital media, Israel aimed to influence public attitudes towards the Arab-Israeli conflict and secure its occupation of Palestine.

With the rise of social media, Israel shifted to a diplomacy based on soft power, using digital platforms to shape narratives and evoke emotions. The "Hasbara" program, which means "Explanation and Interpretation," was adopted to explain Israeli perspectives to Western and Israeli audiences, justifying military actions against Palestinians. Digital diplomacy created a new channel for connecting Israelis and Arabs, fostering dialogue while continuing to influence the conflict's perception.

The Israeli aggression on Gaza, 2021

Due to its intertwined regional, religious, and historical dimensions since the occupation of Palestine in 1948, the Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the longest and most complex and intertwined conflicts in the world and it was described as Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not a conflict on the borders, but rather an existential struggle aimed at settling the land and eradicating its owners.²²

Nature of Power and Digital Diplomacy for Soft Power Projection

Digital diplomacy has become an essential tool for Israel, especially since the Arab revolutions of 2011. Recognizing the growing influence of digital media, Israel has increasingly used social media to engage with Arab audiences, which were traditionally unreachable due to political tensions. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs has developed a robust digital diplomacy program, producing Arabic content across multiple social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. One of its most successful initiatives, "Israel Speaks Arabic," has attracted millions of Arab followers by promoting Israeli culture, cuisine, innovation, and music. This strategy targets Arab youth, who are highly active on these platforms. As a result, Israel's digital diplomacy efforts have grown significantly, helping it move from 8th place in global digital diplomacy rankings in 2016 to 4th in 2018.

In addition to cultural and social engagement, Israel's digital diplomacy has supported its soft power by fostering cooperation and partnership opportunities. Israeli digital platforms have enabled Arab entrepreneurs and tech enthusiasts to connect with Israeli startups. Furthermore, digital diplomacy played a role in the normalization of relations between Israel and the UAE in 2020. The announcement of the agreement, brokered through U.S. offices, marked a major shift in Arab-Israeli relations, ending 72 years of non-recognition by Arab states that did not share

²¹ Shukurlu, Farid. "The State of Israel's Right to Self-Defence." PhD diss., Master's Thesis, University of Hull, 2024.

²² Alrantisi, Izzeddin Khaled, Norhayati Rafida Abdul Rahim, Ihab Ahmad Awais, and Wesam Almahallawi. "Utilizing Digital Diplomacy in the Israeli Discourse to Influence Arab Public Opinion during the Israeli Aggression on Gaza 2021." *A Journal of Vytautas Magnus University* 15, no. 1 (2022).

borders with Israel. This breakthrough showcases the effectiveness of Israel's digital strategy in overcoming historical political barriers. The success of Israeli digital diplomacy demonstrates how nations can use digital tools to achieve diplomatic goals, enhance soft power, and influence public opinion.²³

Realizing two strategic matters of utmost importance to Israeli digital diplomacy

The Israeli-UAE normalization agreement of 2020 has shifted the diplomatic landscape in the Middle East, revealing new dimensions of Israel's digital diplomacy and soft power. This agreement sets a precedent, encouraging other Arab states to reconsider their stance toward Israel, particularly regarding the Palestinian issue. Under pressure, these Arab states are expected to justify their reluctance to normalize relations with Israel, especially when the UAE's stance clearly links normalization with mutual benefits. Israel's digital diplomacy, focused on bypassing Palestinian veto power, has allowed Israel to establish deeper ties with previously hostile countries. By cooperating with regional and international powers, Israel pressures Palestinian leaders to reconsider their policies, aiming to gradually shift the Arab world's diplomatic orientation toward cooperation with Israel.

However, Israel's soft power approach, particularly through cultural diplomacy, has gained momentum in recent years. Although Israel traditionally emphasized security and direct diplomacy, soft power tools such as audiovisual culture have become essential in shaping perceptions abroad. TV shows like *Fauda*, *Shtisel*, and *Tehran* have proven to be successful communication channels, helping international audiences better understand Israeli society and its complexities. *Shtisel*, for example, delves into religious orthodoxy, addressing sensitive moral issues and creating debates about fundamentalism. These shows, along with others like *Homeland*, based on the Israeli series *Hatufim*, showcase the growing influence of Israeli culture through entertainment platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime, which have amplified Israel's soft power globally.²⁴

Israel Hamas War 2023-24

During the Israeli-Hamas war, which began on October 7, 2023, Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) used strategic narratives to justify its actions and legitimize its war on Hamas. These narratives used visual media to emphasize Israel's right to self-defense, linking its actions to Western values of democracy and freedom. Israel's digital diplomacy aimed to shift public opinion, portraying Hamas as a global threat akin to ISIS and accusing the group of deliberately targeting civilians. The MFA's strategic use of social media, particularly X, was central to spreading these messages.

Israel has faced significant challenges in controlling its image, especially on social media. Younger audiences, particularly in the Arab world, have been critical of Israel's actions, which include severe casualties and humanitarian issues. As of August 2025, over 61,000 Palestinians had been killed in Gaza, and there were ongoing attacks on civilian infrastructure, including hospitals. Despite this, Israel's MFA continued to stress its commitment to international law and its efforts to minimize civilian harm, highlighting measures like evacuations and humanitarian aid.

²³ Kampf, R., Manor, I., & Segev, E. (2015). *Israel's Digital Diplomacy and the Arab World*.

²⁴ Baumgart-Ochse, C. (2020). *Israel's Soft Power: The Role of Audiovisual Culture in Diplomacy*. Peace Research Institute Frankfurt.

distribution. The MFA used these efforts to counter the narrative that Israel was targeting civilians and to assert that their war was solely against Hamas.

One of the central elements of Israel's digital diplomacy is portraying itself as "the only democracy in the Middle East," aligning itself with Western values. This narrative aims to strengthen Israel's legitimacy, particularly in Western countries and the Jewish Diaspora. In a post from November 14, 2023, Israel's MFA stated that "Israel fights for freedom, democracy, and human rights." Such posts often featured symbols of inclusivity, like the Haifa LGBTQ Pride parade, to showcase Israel as a pluralistic society. This image of Israel as a democratic state is used to contrast with Hamas, which is portrayed as a terrorist group violating human rights.

Despite these efforts, Israel's conduct of war has been heavily criticized. Many view the Israeli military's actions as disproportionate, with a significant number of civilian casualties. In response, Israel's MFA has repeatedly emphasized that its conflict is with Hamas, not the people of Gaza. They have posted about measures taken to protect civilians, such as distributing millions of leaflets and making phone calls to warn people of impending strikes. These efforts are presented as evidence of Israel's commitment to minimizing civilian harm. However, the situation remains complex. Despite these claims, the continued targeting of areas with known civilian presence raises questions about Israel's adherence to the principles of proportionality and distinction in warfare.

Israel's digital diplomacy seeks to present the war as a struggle for survival, not just against Hamas but against a larger network of terror linked to Iran. The MFA portrays Israel's actions as part of a broader fight for peace and democracy in the Middle East. Yet, this narrative often clashes with the reality on the ground, where civilian casualties continue to rise. The ongoing discourse around Israel's legitimacy is a balancing act. Israel must maintain its moral high ground in the face of international scrutiny while justifying its military actions to a global audience that increasingly questions the ethical implications of its warfare tactics.

Israeli Foreign Policy as a tool of Soft Power

During the Israel-Hamas war, Israel faced a significant challenge in managing its image, especially regarding accusations of war crimes and the portrayal of its actions in Gaza. In response, Israel implemented a sophisticated digital diplomacy strategy to counter misinformation and shape global perceptions. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government agencies used various platforms and strategies to promote Israel's narrative, which emphasized its right to self-defense and its commitment to humanitarian efforts.

The Israeli government employed a multi-faceted approach to counter digital and information warfare (IO) from adversaries, including Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran. These groups used social media to spread misinformation, create fake profiles, and manipulate public opinion. To combat this, Israel's response included leveraging digital media, maintaining communication with international media outlets, and engaging with influencers and public figures globally. Israel's efforts also involved issuing quick, well-documented responses to false reports and requesting the removal of inflammatory content from social media platforms.

In addition to traditional diplomatic channels, Israel's Foreign Ministry and IDF spokespersons worked intensively on social media. After the October 7 attack, Israel significantly expanded its communications efforts. The IDF's international communications office doubled in size, adding more than 200 personnel who spoke fourteen languages. These efforts included pro-Israel rallies, media briefings, and private meetings with politicians, business leaders, and journalists. Israel

also produced a 43-minute video highlighting the atrocities committed by Hamas, using footage filmed by Hamas themselves. This video was shown to delegations visiting Israel and screened globally in an attempt to reinforce Israel's narrative of victimhood and self-defense.

Israel's strategy also included paid digital advertising. The Israeli government spent millions on ads across platforms like YouTube and even in popular games like Angry Birds. These ads depicted Israel's military actions, emphasizing the scale of the Hamas attack on Israel and the subsequent retaliation. At the same time, Israel promoted its humanitarian efforts, including distributing Arabic leaflets, making phone calls, and sending text messages to civilians in Gaza, warning them to evacuate certain areas. The goal was to showcase Israel's commitment to minimizing civilian casualties.

To further influence public opinion, Israel used covert IO tactics²⁵. The IDF's "Influence Unit" worked to plant stories in the media to shape the narrative in Israel's favor and demoralize Hamas. One such example was the release of photos showing Palestinian men in underwear, allegedly Hamas fighters surrendering to Israeli forces. These images were intended to demoralize Hamas by showing them in a position of weakness. However, such tactics sometimes undermined Israel's official public diplomacy efforts.

Israel also worked in the legal domain, with the State Attorney's office running a cyber team dedicated to removing terrorist-related content from social media. By December 2023, more than 21,000 removal requests had been submitted to platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Israel's collaboration with tech companies led to the removal of thousands of posts and accounts promoting terrorism. This initiative also included efforts to eliminate specific hashtags that could incite violence, such as those linked to anti-Semitic content²⁶.

Israel's Use of Digital Diplomacy as a Tool of Soft Power during Iran Israel War

Joseph Nye's concept of "soft power" highlights a nation's ability to influence others through attraction rather than coercion. In the 2025 Iran-Israel escalation, Israel used digital diplomacy to shape global perceptions and secure international support. Israel's strategic goals included portraying Iran as an aggressive actor, positioning itself as a democracy under siege, and countering Iranian narratives by discrediting their justification of attacks. Israel also aimed to humanize its civilian experience by sharing real-time stories, images of shelters, and emotional appeals, effectively using digital platforms to sway public opinion and gain global backing.

Objective	Digital Approach	Example from 2025 Conflict
Framing Iran as the aggressor	Satellite imagery, infographics, press kits	Shared drone footage of Iranian missile launch installations
Showcasing Israeli resilience	Reels, emotional videos, memes	Iron Dome interception videos with #IsraelUnderAttack
Engaging Western policymakers	Twitter threads, diplomatic briefings	Prime Minister's X posts tagging world leaders
Reaching Arab populations	Arabic-language digital campaigns	"Israel in Arabic" accounts explaining Israel's position

Platforms and Stakeholders

²⁵ Shenker, J. (2023). *Digital Diplomacy: Israel's Information Warfare During the Gaza Conflict*.

²⁶ Cortellessa, E., & Bergengruen, V. (2023). *Israel's War on Misinformation and Disinformation: A Digital Battlefield*.

Israel employed a wide array of platforms, coordinated through multiple state institutions:

Platform	Stakeholder	April 2025 Use Case
Twitter (X)	Foreign Ministry, PM Office	Real-time updates, direct messages to journalists and influencers
YouTube	IDF Spokesperson's Unit	Footage of missile attacks and civilian defense operations
Facebook/Instagram	Israel in Arabic, Ministry of Diaspora	Regional engagement and diaspora mobilization
Threads/LinkedIn	Diplomats and policy influencers	Policy analysis and infographics for think tanks and academics

Graph 1: Tweet Frequency on April 13–14, 2025 (Israel vs Iran)

Notable Digital Campaigns

#StandWithIsrael

- (a) Trended globally within hours of the Iranian missile launch.
- (b) Used video loops of Iron Dome intercepts and testimonies from civilians.
- (c) Politicians and celebrities (e.g., Elon Musk, Macron, Modi) tagged and engaged.

#IranIsTerror

- (a) Paired visuals of Iranian proxies with UN resolutions on terrorism.
- (b) Infographics showing missile range and Iranian drone networks.
- (c) Shared widely among U.S. think tanks and security communities.²⁷

Case Study Box: Viral Video Impact

A 17-second video showing a father shielding his daughter during an air raid was viewed 43 million times in 48 hours, re-shared by the White House official account.

Narrative Strategy: Israel vs Iran

Narrative Issue	Israel's Message	Iran's Counter-Narrative
Justification of Attack	Defensive response to Iranian aggression	Retaliation for Israeli strikes on Damascus HQ
Civilian Safety	Iron Dome protects innocents	Israel kills civilians in Gaza and Syria
Legitimacy	Democracy under attack	Zionist occupier and regional bully

Chart 1: Global Hashtag Sentiment (Positive vs Negative)

Role of Cyber and Digital Warfare

Israel employed offensive digital strategies, including cyber leaks exposing IRGC missile base coordinates, AI-powered monitoring by the IDF to detect and disrupt Iranian bot farms, and WhatsApp campaigns targeting Arab-language broadcast lists to counter Iran's propaganda with rebuttal videos.

Global Reception and Effectiveness

Region	Digital Impact Assessment
United States	Bipartisan support statements within 6 hours
European Union	Digital diplomacy contributed to EU statement supporting Israel
Gulf States	Muted official response, but low-key sympathy on Arabic Twitter

²⁷ Bernstein, Aaron. ISRAEL'S DIVINE MISSION AGAINST IRAN: How Meticulously Israel Plans To Break Iran's Ayatollah's Neck. Eigenverlag, 2025.

Iran/Pakistan	Iranian narrative dominated local platforms
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Chart 2: Geo-Engagement Heatmap (April 13–14, 2025)

Israel's digital diplomacy faced limitations, including accusations of algorithm bias, with Western platforms allegedly suppressing pro-Iranian or Palestinian voices. It also faced criticism for one-sided framing, emphasizing Iranian threats while downplaying civilian casualties. Additionally, its digital campaigns struggled to effectively reach audiences in the Global South, limiting their impact.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Israel-Gaza conflict has exacerbated demand for digital diplomacy. Israel has heavily embraced digital platforms to promote its narrative during the ongoing war, as Hamas and Palestinian groups have retaliated with their own digital propaganda. Utilizing public Twitter content from Israeli Foreign Ministry and Prime Minister's Office accounts, along with in-depth interviews with Israeli diplomats, the research examines efforts and challenges of pro-Israel digital diplomatic outreach. Findings reveal an unmatched proactive approach by Israel's digital diplomacy compared to other states, rooted in a humanitarian grounds concern despite limited peace efforts, and significant obstacles from prevalent anti-Israel online sentiment, changing social media perceptions, and platform executive decisions hindered by personal political inclinations.²⁸ Pro-Israel digital diplomacy efforts increase during military operations, focusing on countering anti-Israel online narratives while highlighting Israel's statehood and right to self-defense. Despite successes in reaching intended audiences and shaping narratives, formidable obstacles remain. The ubiquity of anti-Israel sentiments in wider online discourse poses immense challenges, exacerbated by ill decisions made by social media executives. The ongoing war further complicates digital outreach, necessitating crucial adjustments in strategy. These findings benefit scholars and policymakers, presenting a new research approach for analyzing public diplomatic efforts within conflict contexts. The April 2025 Iran-Israel conflict revealed the power of digital diplomacy as both a soft power asset and a narrative weapon. Israel's ability to coordinate across ministries, target diverse audiences, and project its perspective in real-time solidified its international standing, even amid a dangerous military confrontation. Digital diplomacy, when strategically deployed, not only amplifies a nation's moral high ground but can serve as a deterrent, influencing global responses before missiles land. In this digital battlefield, Israel continued to lead with precision, persuasion, and preparedness. The emergence of digital platforms as primary venues for public discourse, debate, and deliberation has resulted in a range of ethical dilemmas when these platforms are employed for diplomatic purposes.

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²⁸ Othman, Rose. "The Challenges Facing Digital Diplomacy in the Israel-Gaza War (2023-2025)." *Available at SSRN 5134274* (2025).

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