Research Article | Araştırma Makalesi

The Republic of Türkiye's Diplomatic Stance from the Perspective of Public Diplomacy and its Response to Disinformation: Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Kamu Diplomasisi Perspektifinden Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin Dezenformasyona Karşı Tepkisi ve Diplomatik Duruşu: İsrail-Filistin Çatışması

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Abstract

Today, disinformation has an impact on all aspects of political communication. Public diplomacy is the most important of them. In this context, the Republic of Türkiye has established the Directorate of Communications, Center for Countering Disinformation. It is aimed to develop an effective strategy to combat disinformation both nationally and internationally. This study is centered on the Republic of Türkiye's combat against disinformation in the international arena, within the context of public diplomacy. In this respect, the study aims to reveal the Republic of Türkiye's response and diplomatic stance against disinformation from the perspective of public diplomacy in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In line with this objective, a total of 110 pages of disinformation bulletins published in English by the Center for Countering Disinformation on the Israeli-Palestinian war, including its 99th and 102nd issues, were analyzed with content analysis method using the MAXQDA 2022 package program. As a result of the research, it was determined that the Center for Countering Disinformation, through its bulletins, has made a concentrated effort to combat fake news and allegations about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in both traditional and digital media. Moreover, disinformation bulletins addressed manipulated, fabricated, fake, and parody content the most.

Keywords: Public Diplomacy, Disinformation, Israel, Palestine, Diplomacy.

Öz

Dezenformasyon günümüzde siyasal iletişimin tüm alanlarını etkilemiştir. Kamu diplomasisi de bu alanların başında gelmektedir. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti bu kapsamda İletişim Başkanlığı Dezenformasyonla Mücadele Merkezini faaliyete geçirmiştir. Bu doğrultuda ulusal ve uluslararası alanda dezenformasyonla etkin bir mücadele stratejisi geliştirilmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Bu çalışma, kamu diplomasisi bağlamında Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin uluslararası arenada dezenformasyonla mücadelesi etrafında örgütlenmektedir. Bu doğrultuda çalışmada İsrail-Filistin çatışması özelinde kamu diplomasisi perspektifinden Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin dezenformasyona karşı tepkisi ve diplomatik duruşunun ortaya çıkartılması amaçlanmıştır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda Dezenformasyonla Mücadele Merkezinin İsrail-Filistin savaşı özelinde İngilizce olarak yayınladığı 99 ve 102. sayılarını içeren toplam 110 sayfalık dezenformasyon bültenleri MAXQDA 2022 paket programı kullanılarak içerik analizi yöntemi ile incelenmiştir. Araştırma neticesinde Dezenformasyonla Mücadele Merkezi yayınladığı bültenler ile hem geleneksel medyada hem de dijital mecralarda İsrail-Filistin çatışmasına yönelik yayınlanan yanlış haber ve iddialarla mücadeleye yönelik yoğun bir çaba gösterdiği tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca, dezenformasyon bültenlerinde en çok manipülasyon, sahte, uydurma ve parodi içeriklere cevap verilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kamu Diplomasisi, Dezenformasyon, İsrail, Filistin, Diplomasi.

Introduction

Developments in communication technologies in the last century have led to significant political, economic, social, and cultural changes, both in the national and international arena. The global connections provided by communication networks have made the necessity of joint effort against global problems, international cooperation, and relations even more important. In today's world of rapid transformation, international relations and communication have become even more important for governments and political actors. This change and interaction also led to the emergence of new methods and concepts in the fields of international relations and international communication (Köksoy, 2015, p. 43). With these developing communication technologies and the change in access to information, influencing foreign public opinion and the concept of public diplomacy has gained importance. Public diplomacy, which has become a concept that should not be ignored in international relations, has become a strategic tool used by every state today (Dinçer, 1999). Additionally, disinformation, which occurs during the process of sharing information and starts to pose a threat to national security in the context of public diplomacy, has also become a challenge for states. Especially in recent years, there has been an increase in fake news that is being spread consciously or unconsciously in both traditional and social media. This increase in disinformation has brought increased sensitivity to the issue and important steps are being taken by lawmakers and government agencies to combat fake news and disinformation. At the same time, research on the detection of fake news content and disinformation is on the rise. These researches offer research methodology by approaching different aspects of fake news and disinformation from a different angle.

In recent years, the Republic of Türkiye has taken important steps in public diplomacy and the combat against disinformation. In particular, the number of Türkiye's main public diplomacy actors has greatly increased through public institutions. These actors include the Presidency's Directorate of Communications, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yunus Emre Institute, Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, Turkish Red Crescent, Turkish Maarif Foundation, Presidency of Religious Affairs, Turkish Radio and Television Corporation, Anadolu Agency and Turkish Airlines. In particular, the Directorate of Communications is currently making a great effort in terms of public diplomacy.

The Presidency's Directorate of Communications carries out the necessary work to promote the values that constitute Türkiye's soft power in the international arena, to conduct research on issues that set the foreign policy agenda, to provide accurate information to the international public, and to organize organizational activities in cooperation with public diplomacy actors. The Presidency's Directorate of Communications, which plays a central role in ensuring that Türkiye's public diplomacy activities are carried out with a complete strategy, provides an analytical perspective on public diplomacy practice areas and develops strategies according to foreign policy objectives by using soft power instruments to engage in dialogue with foreign publics (Directorete of Communications, 2022). Today, the fight against disinformation has become a strategic area of public diplomacy. The Center for Countering Disinformation, established under the Directorate of Communications, carries out intensive work in this area. The number of publications and posts they make on disinformation, which are distributed through digital platforms, newsletters, or publications, continues to increase day by day. Communications Director

Fahrettin Altun stated: "The posts of uncontrolled accounts with unknown sources on social media can influence large masses and shape public perception on critical issues. Therefore, as the Directorate of Communications of the Republic of Türkiye, we see the fight against disinformation as a 'national security issue'. We are carrying out many projects to deal with this vital issue" (Altun, 2023), With this statement, Altun explains the Republic of Türkiye's strategy to combat disinformation.

Considering the studies in the literature on public diplomacy and disinformation; Ekşi, (2022), in his study titled "Kamu Diplomasisinde Post-Truth: Bir Meydan Okuma Olarak Dezenformasyon" (Post-Truth in Public Diplomacy: Disinformation as a Challenge), revealed the transformation of public diplomacy, the challenges it faces and how it responds to these challenges on the basis of the post-truth situation and the problematic of disinformation. On the other hand, Nisbet and Kamenchuk (2019), explored the psychology of state-sponsored disinformation campaigns and their implications for public diplomacy. Fjällhed, (2021), in their study on managing disinformation through public diplomacy, showed how public diplomats can understand and counter the new disinformation uncertainty in a polarized media environment. Finally, Cull (2021), lays out the ways of state financing in the fight against disinformation. Although the existing studies in the literature are similar to this study in terms of subject matter, they differ in scope and research area. This study differs from other studies in that it was centered on the Directorate of Communications, which is a public institution. In addition, this study is important in that it is directly related to the works carried out by the Directorate of Communications, Center for Countering Disinformation about combating disinformation, in terms of combining public diplomacy and the fight against disinformation. In light of all this information, this study aims to reveal the Republic of Türkiye's response and diplomatic stance against disinformation from the perspective of public diplomacy in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A Conceptual Overview of Public Diplomacy

The main factor that introduced the concept of public diplomacy is the governments' need to communicate and engage with the people of other countries. Initially, this need was only for governments to turn foreign publics into an instrument of pressure on their own governments to achieve their foreign policy objectives. Governments were the main actors in the field of public diplomacy. The method of communication used was one-sided and aimed at political influence. As governments lost their dominance over public diplomacy processes, public diplomacy has gained civil attribution. This change was also reflected in the definitions and historical processes related to this concept (Köksoy, 2015, p. 43). Public diplomacy covers dimensions of international relations which go beyond traditional diplomacy. Examples of these dimensions include creating agendas by states in foreign countries, certain groups contacting groups in foreign countries, and explaining international relations. Moreover, its influence on politics, ensuring communication between diplomats and foreigners engaged in this profession, and the process of interaction between cultures are other examples. Public diplomacy is a steady and convincing force used as a powerful communication function by states that have proven themselves in the international arena (Kömür, 2020, p. 94).

The term public diplomacy was first used in 1965 by the US Ambassador to Congo "Edmund Gullion" to describe the activities aimed at the Eastern Bloc, instead of the term propaganda. As an extension of traditional diplomacy, public diplomacy seeks to motivate foreign publics to develop positive international relations and manage the international

environment. Public diplomacy brings topics together that include and cover the fields, such as public relations and international relations. In its traditional sense, public diplomacy focuses on influencing foreign publics and institutions (Yağmurlu, 2019, p. 1269). In addition, public diplomacy is the organized attempts of a government to determine the country's policy in foreign media and to exert as much control as possible over them (Entman, 2008, p. 89). Nye (2005), defines public diplomacy as "smart power". On the other hand, public diplomacy refers to the process in which the states communicate with foreign publics to understand their nation's ideas and ideals, institutions and culture, as well as national goals and current policies (Tuch, 1990). Traditionally, public diplomacy is the relationship between a nation state and its foreign publics. The main goal of a nation is to develop a positive image of itself on the world stage. In this context, states, politicians, and more recently, military actors have recognized the need to create a positive public image in foreign countries. With the understanding that sympathetic media coverage is a prerequisite for achieving these goals, the challenge of gaining access to the media has become a central element in modern wars (Sheafer and Shenhay, 2009).

Public diplomacy has certain dimensions. These dimensions come in three different forms to build and develop long-term relationships: daily communications and information, strategic planning, and country branding (Nye, 2005). To ensure a constant flow of information and healthy communication, governments communicate and brief the international community on a daily basis. This is a prerequisite for countries to be able to express themselves accurately both to other institutions and to individuals. Moreover, it is important to manage individuals' perceptions correctly and to prevent misinformation. On the other hand, countries need to use public diplomacy effectively in order to become an international brand. Countries that strengthen their country brand and raise their public perception improve both their image and their ability to persuade in the international arena. Countries with a high reputation and image increase their global influence and become more credible and respected in the international arena. In addition, one of the most important objectives of public diplomacy is to establish and develop long-term relationships. Countries that use public diplomacy effectively can develop better relations with other countries and institutions. Establishing the right relationship and communication ensures healthier and longer relationships and paves the way for further development.

In the early periods when the concept of public diplomacy emerged, it only referred to the communicative processes of states. However, due to the fact that the target audience has become more easily accessible with changing and developing communication technologies and that multinational companies are indirectly connected to public diplomacy with globalization, public diplomacy is no longer just a state-oriented field of activity. For this reason, in addition to states, other institutions also assist in public diplomacy activities and even carry out these activities independently. Corporations, universities, and civil society organizations are making extensive use of activities aimed at strengthening official foreign policy objectives today. These activities, called soft power or smart power, have become a field that every organization needs and carries out work to meet these needs every day. In addition to companies, universities, and NGOs; opinion leaders, media and news agencies, and private sector representatives have become the main actors in public diplomacy (Özkan, 2015, p. 8).

In addition to its actors, public diplomacy also varies in terms of the tools being used. Mass media is undoubtedly the most important tool used in public diplomacy. Mass

media provide unique opportunities for states to communicate their policies, knowledge, and cultural elements to other states and people. Science, art, sports, education, and cultural elements are also frequently used in public diplomacy in addition to mass media, to convey messages to the target audience. All these tools are used as soft power in public diplomacy and are used effectively to convey messages to other individuals and institutions, as well as to influence them.

The Concept of Disinformation and the Republic of Türkiye's Response to Disinformation

Disinformation is characterized as false information that is deliberately disseminated with the intent to mislead and/or deceive (Hernon, 1995; Shu et al., 2020). In addition, fake news is defined as "news texts that are intentionally or verifiably false and may mislead readers", and therefore the terms disinformation and fake news are used interchangeably (Allcott et al., 2017, p. 6). (Fallis, 2015), states that typical examples of disinformation include deceptive advertisements (in the business world and politics), doctored photographs, forged documents, forged maps, internet scams, fake websites, and manipulated Wikipedia entries. Disinformation and fake news are not new concepts. The concept of disinformation has been widely used since the 1950s. From the past to the present, leaders have tried many ways to influence the public. (Freelon & Wells, 2020). One of these ways is to communicate false information. Throughout history, many leaders have used misinformation as a weapon both to influence the public and to prevail over their enemies (Shu et al., 2020)

When individuals encounter information that is in line with their values and beliefs, they experience difficulties in detecting misinformation (Koçyiğit & Koçyiğit, 2023). Malicious actors take advantage of this situation and target users multiple times with the same content. This effective method becomes even more powerful when certain factors come into play. Shu et al., (2020), categorized the factors that cause the spread of misinformation as follows.

Source and publisher: While much of the mainstream media is politically and ideologically committed to a particular political view, traditional channels that have long served as sources of information are reluctant to deliberately publish false claims and disinformation. However, taking social media platforms into account, it has been observed that disinformation has increased recently. Through these channels, a large number of fake news and information with unknown sources are circulating, especially on social media (Koçyiğit, 2022). Users who lack knowledge about media literacy and social media use often believe these types of news. Social media, which enables information overload, is therefore turning into a disinformation environment (Aydın, 2020, p. 79). In this context, contents that are made available by unreliable and unofficial sources contribute to disinformation.

Emotional factors: When an individual approaches an object or event, they do not perceive it only with the signs, symbols, and certain impressions that are imprinted in their mind. In addition to these, the act of perception regarding the object and event that is the subject of perception is also realized under the influence of some impressions of an emotional nature such as like-dislike, good-bad, beautiful-ugly, etc. In other words, emotional attitudes and tendencies interfere with the process of perception (İnceoğlu, 2011, p. 100). The spread of fake news is also triggered by emotions such as emotional pressure, anxiety, frustration, anger, and uncontrollable situations. Moreover, individuals'

worldviews and beliefs influence their choice and acceptance of content. That's because individuals prefer information that confirms their prior beliefs (Shu et al., 2020, p. 7-10).

Bot accounts: Thanks to social media bots, shaping public opinion became simpler. Disinformation sources imitate mainstream media without following the journalistic rules (Shao et al., 2018, p. 2).

Trolls: Trolls refer to accounts that are deliberately used on social media platforms to attract users' attention, provoke them, or manipulate the issues being discussed. Although trolling (which is manipulation at its core) sometimes appears to be done for entertainment purposes, malicious users provoke society against each other with a hostile attitude. At the same time, by producing fake news to manipulate public opinion, these users can discredit individuals or organizations and damage their image and reputation.

Echo Chambers: The effect of echo chambers is enhanced by the interaction between users who are limited to their own interests through algorithms and filter bubbles. The speed at which fake news spreads among users who have the same thoughts, ideologies, and opinions is even greater. Consequently, the unquestioning acceptance and spread of this false content increases.

Fake news and disinformation have various effects on society and individuals. The main effects of disinformation are (Mridha et al., 2021):

Impact on Innocent People: Disinformation negatively affects innocent individuals who are not informed about events. These people can be harassed on social media. Additionally, they may face problems in real life. Individuals should therefore not judge others until they obtain real information.

Impact on Health: Impact on Health: Today, with the increasing availability of the internet, the number of people trying to access health-related information is on the rise. Fake health news can have a negative impact on people's lives. There has been a major increase in the spread of health misinformation during COVID-19.

Financial Impact: Fake news has become an insurmountable problem for the business world. Dishonest business people spread fake news to increase their profits. Fake news can ruin a business's reputation, profits, and goodwill.

Democratic Impact: The media discusses the phenomenon of fake news extensively because fake news plays a vital role in countries' elections. This is considered a major democratic problem.

As part of the fight against disinformation, the "Bill on Amendments to the Press Law and Certain Laws", also known as the "Anti-Disinformation" regulation, was enacted in October 2022. With this regulation, it is stated that the crime of "publicly disseminating misleading information", that is, those who publicly disseminate content that misinforms the public and contains disinformation, can be sentenced to imprisonment for up to 3 years. This law imposes prison sentences on those who deliberately spread posts that cause public anxiety, fear, or panic and threaten the internal and external security of the country. The law also requires social network platforms to comply with regulations on user rights.

In addition to bills and amendments to other laws, the Center for Countering Disinformation was established under the Presidency's Directorate of Communications

in August 2022 as part of the fight against disinformation. This department publishes weekly bulletins to combat disinformation, detects content related to disinformation, and ensures that accurate information is shared with the public. Weekly disinformation bulletins aim to effectively and persuasively present the difference between accurate information and misinformation to the public. It also aims to provide accurate information to the public and effectively combat disinformation by issuing these bulletins on a daily basis in emergency situations.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an ongoing historical war. This war flared up again on October 07, 2023. Tens of thousands of people have lost their lives as a result of the two sides engaging in a military conflict. Israel in particular has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians with its raids and bombs. In the face of this state of war, since the beginning of the conflict, there have been countless news reports about the conflict in the media, especially on social media. In such situations, unconfirmed information circulated without questioning its source, as well as direct and deliberately produced misinformation, cause great confusion(A. Koçyiğit, 2023, p. 68). The Republic of Türkiye has been making statements and providing information about the situation since the first day of the conflict. As part of the fight against disinformation, the Center for Countering Disinformation has published weekly Disinformation Bulletins specifically tailored to the Israeli-Palestinian war. These bulletins, which are also the subject of this study, were published in both Turkish and English and they focus on the verification of news in media following the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Method

This study focuses on the Republic of Türkiye's stance against disinformative content in the aftermath of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that began on October 7, 2023. Accordingly, the study aims to reveal the response of the Republic of Türkiye to the disinformative news in the media on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the context of public diplomacy. For this purpose, the disinformation bulletins of the Center for Countering Disinformation on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were analyzed using the content analysis method. A total of 110 pages of disinformation bulletins published by the Center for Countering Disinformation on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after October 7, including its 99th and 102nd issues in English, were analyzed using the Maxqda 2022 package program.

- The following questions were sought to be answered in the research;
- What is the response of the Republic of Türkiye to the circulating news and content about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
- What is the diplomatic stance of the Republic of Türkiye towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the context of public diplomacy?
- How did the Center for Countering Disinformation respond to disinformation about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
- What is the content of the Center for Countering Disinformation's disinformation bulletins on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
- What are the topics, word clouds, and agendas of the Center for Countering Disinformation's disinformation bulletins on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

Coding was carried out to evaluate each of the contents in the sample, to determine how they were used in the process of combating disinformation, and to conduct the analysis. The process of coding refers to the process of creating themes, categories, and codes. These processes are important in terms of performing a systematic content analysis

process (Creswell, 2017, p. 186). Coding is defined as the naming and interpretation of words, sentences, and paragraphs in the data by the researcher. The coding process requires these parts (words, sentences, paragraphs) to be correlated, compared, analyzed, and segmented. Meaningful structures, parts, and events in the obtained data are called concepts. Concepts construct a meaningful structure for content analysis, and the classification of these concepts in relation to each other is referred to as categorization. These categories are grouped under certain themes in line with the purpose of the study, and the relationships between the categories are determined (Creswell and Clark, 2014). The process of coding, and creating categories and themes refers to the process of collecting data and interpreting these data by processing them in a certain order. This sorting process consists of collecting the data, preparing the data for analysis, reading the data, exploring the data and noting down the ideas, coding the data, creating themes, categories, and codes, and reporting and interpreting the results (Creswell, 2017, p. 186). In light of the above, during the course of this study, the data obtained from the research sample were coded in accordance with the purpose of the study, and then themes and subcodes were created.

Content analysis technique was preferred in the study to make valid inferences and interpretations from the data obtained. Content analysis is important because it provides an analysis of the context and framing of communication, the level of communication, the structure and intention of communication, and the focus of the communicator group, and provides a systematic appropriate to the entire data set. The content analysis technique fulfills all these needs in terms of evaluating the bulletins that constitute the sample of the study in line with the purpose of the research, determining the context and level of the posts, and performing a systematic evaluation. In addition, the Maxqda 2022 package program was used to reduce the margin of error in the data analysis process and to analyze the data in more detail. It allows for transferring and analyzing data from interviews, web pages, images, audio, video, and social media. This program was preferred because it allows for organizing the data in groups, associating similar quotations with each other, coding, determining the frequency information of the data, as well as visualization, association, comparison, and description.

Findings

The information and findings regarding the Disinformation Bulletins of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications, Center for Countering Disinformation are given below. Within the scope of the research, 110 pages of data consisting of a total of 4 bulletins published by the disinformation center in English specifically for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including its 99th and 102nd issues, were analyzed. The data obtained were analyzed by content analysis method using the Maxqda 2022 package program. Within the scope of the analysis, the distribution of posts, interactive word tree, word cloud, and word combinations were included. In the study, the data obtained within the scope of content analysis were coded and five different subcodes were identified under the main theme of "Disinformation Bulletin". These codes were identified as "Misleading content, Parody content, Fabricated content, Fake content, and Manipulated content".
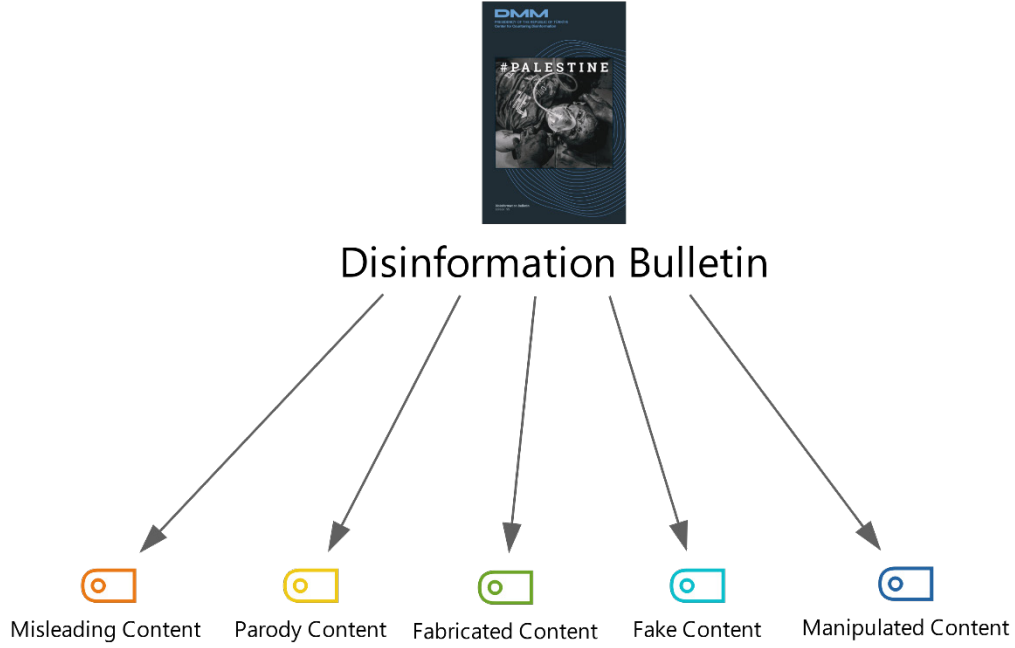
Figure 1. *Themes and SubCodes*

110 pages of data comprising the sample of the study, consisting of a total of 4 disinformation bulletins, were coded and main themes and subcodes were identified. As a result of this coding, a total of five subcodes were created under one main theme as shown in Figure 1 above. As a result of the allegations and news published in the aftermath of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Center for Countering Disinformation has debunked these reports in its bulletins. Subcodes were used to determine the features and types of this false news, i.e. disinformation.

According to First Draft, manipulated content is defined as the manipulation of accurate information or images for the purpose of deception, while misleading content is defined as the distortion of information to construct a story. False attribution refers to situations where a photo, video, or news headline that is associated with the claim that it shows or explains an event belongs to a different event. While fabricated content is defined as new content produced with the aim of deceiving and harming, impostor content refers to situations where the information is made to appear real by means of imitating a person or an institution. Another type, false context, occurs when the correct information is told in a different way by detaching it from the events, situations, or relationships in which it takes place. Parody, on the other hand, refers to texts written for entertainment and mockery, usually having a format similar to the news (Foça, 2019).
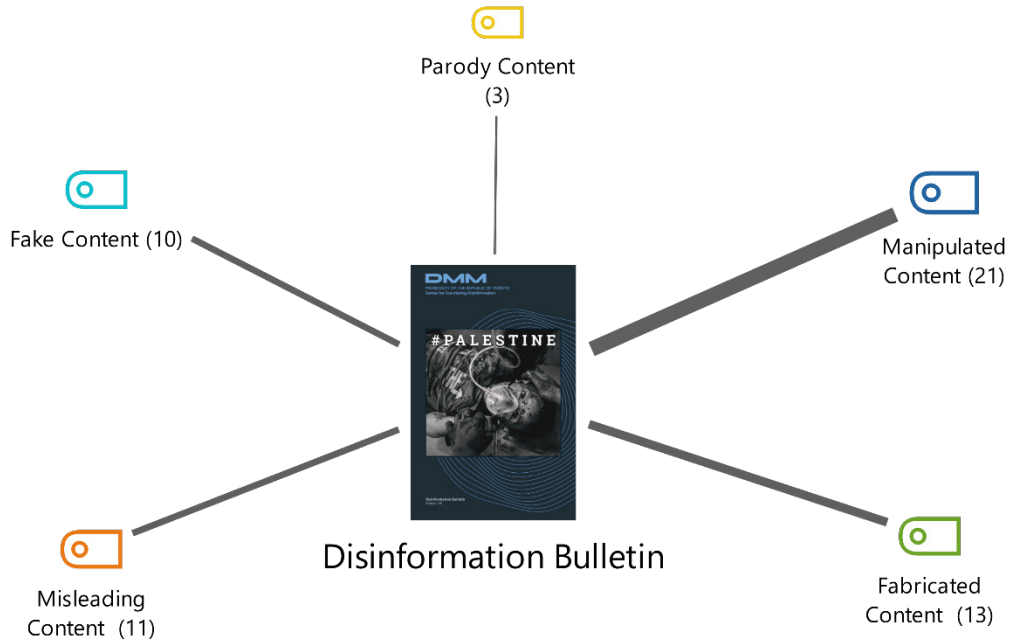
Figure 2. *Code Model for Data*

Considering the bulletins of the Center for Countering Disinformation, which constitutes the sample of this study, a code-subcode model analysis was conducted for its posts. The content of the bulletins of the Center for Countering Disinformation was analyzed. As seen in Figure 2, the frequency of shared content is shown in bold lines. Frequency information about the contents is also given. The thickest line indicates the most shared subcodes, while the lines of decreasing thickness indicate the subcodes that are mentioned less frequently. When Figure 2 is taken into consideration, the "Manipulated content" subcode, indicated by the thickest line, expresses the most frequently coded content with 21 items. The Center has responded most to manipulated content in the aftermath of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It has also made a concerted effort to verify information in order to confirm or disprove misinformation that has been shared. From the start of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Center has been posting content to confirm the news on this issue, and to make the necessary announcements and warnings about this issue. Therefore, when the data obtained are evaluated in the context of combating disinformation, it can be seen that the Center is trying to use bulletins effectively in the fight against disinformation. It also continues to publish weekly disinformation bulletins to mitigate the impact of disinformation.

Next, the "Fabricated content" subcode is the second most frequent subcode with 13 items. The Center for Countering Disinformation has been actively combating fabricated content about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After manipulation, it can be seen that data related to fabricated content is the second most frequent in bulletins. Accordingly, it was determined that the Center fights against fabricated content and creates content on this matter. "Misleading content", which forms another subcode, is the third most content-generated subcode. As part of the fight against disinformation, the Center has created content regarding misleading content. Considering the bulletins constituting the sample of the study, it is seen that the Center produced 11 content regarding misleading content. Misleading content is followed by the subcode "Fake content". It is a well-known fact that lots of fake news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are shared. Thus, the Center has also made a great effort to combat fake news. After fake news, parody content was also

found to be the subject of news bulletins. In particular, some posts may simultaneously fit into different subcodes. In such cases, the necessary parts of the content of the post were simultaneously coded into different subcodes. For this reason, the number of news items published in the bulletins and the code statistics in the subcodes may differ.

Table 1. *Triple Word Combination*

Word Combination	Frequency	%	Level
is not true	25	0,46	1
the claim that	22	0,40	2
social media accounts	19	0,35	3
it has been	16	0,29	4
determined that the	14	0,26	5
some social media	13	0,24	6
israeli propaganda accounts	11	0,20	7
israel s official	10	0,18	8
on some social	10	0,18	8
shared on some	10	0,18	8
truth it has	10	0,18	8
tunnels in gaza	10	0,18	8
with the caption	10	0,18	8
been determined that	9	0,17	14
has been determined	9	0,17	14

As a result of the data obtained from the Bulletins of the Center for Countering Disinformation, triple word combination analysis was conducted. Accordingly, Table 1 shows the top 15 triple word combinations in the posts. Word combination is important in terms of giving combinations of the most used words in posts. For this purpose, the most frequently used triple word groups in the posts were revealed using the word combination. In this respect, as seen in Table 1, the most commonly used triple word combination is "is not true" when the data obtained from the Center for Countering Disinformation bulletins are taken into consideration. This is followed by the combination "the claim that". After that, the most commonly used word combination is "social media accounts". Word combination is important as it reveals the strategy of the Center for Countering Disinformation to combat disinformation in its bulletins.

Figure 3. Word Cloud

In line with the word frequency data, a word cloud analysis was conducted on the Center for Countering Disinformation bulletins. In the word cloud analysis, the most frequently used words are shown in bold. As seen in Figure 3, it was identified that the most frequently used words in the shared content were "claim, hamas, Israeli".

Figure 4. Interactive Word Tree

Based on the interactive word tree for the posts of the Center for Countering Disinformation, it is seen that the posts usually start with "the claim, the images". As can be seen in the interactive word tree visual above, the vast majority of the posts are in this

format. This shows that the Center's posts are mostly aimed at refuting the allegations made in public opinion and presenting the truth of the allegations. Moreover, this reveals the organization's strategy to combat disinformation.

Conclusion

Combating disinformation has become a strategic area for states today. The Republic of Türkiye has recently placed more importance on this concept and has been increasing its efforts in this field. The Center for Countering Disinformation responds to disinformation in all emergency situations that arise. The Center for Countering Disinformation has been active in combating disinformation in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as in many other issues. The Center responded to disinformation about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through social media tools and disinformation bulletins. The Center for Countering Disinformation has actively worked against disinformation with its disinformation bulletins published specifically for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is also the subject of this study.

While the Center for Countering Disinformation usually fights against disinformation and incidents that occur within the country, this time, unlike others, it worked on an incident that occurred outside the country. In this context, this study differs from other studies and is important. In addition, the fight against an international issue is also important in the context of public diplomacy. Today, public diplomacy is no longer just about sharing information and making announcements, given the processes of public diplomacy. Public diplomacy has become a field that includes many components and different fields of activity. In this regard, the disinformation bulletins published by the Directorate of Communications, Center for Countering Disinformation are public diplomacy efforts.

The Directorate of Communications, Center for Countering Disinformation, which is the subject of this study, has carried out an effective strategy to combat disinformation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In addition, according to the results of this research, the organization has made a concerted effort to combat information pollution and disinformation in the aftermath of the conflict. The Center for Countering Disinformation has devoted most of its posts to fact-checking content in order to publicize false content and present it to the public in its correct form. Also, in order to manage this situation and to ensure effective communication, disinformation reports were issued on a weekly basis. It is seen that there is an overwhelming amount of content being shared related to the subcodes mentioned in the research results above. In addition, the organization has produced content through disinformation bulletins not only to prevent disinformation but also to manage this process.

Considering the disinformation bulletins analyzed within the scope of the research, it was found that the organization mostly fought against manipulation content and addressed this content. Another issue the organization fights against is fabricated content. Misleading, fake, and parody content are also among the most fought against. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian war, countless fake content is produced both on social media and traditional media. It is almost impossible to combat all of these contents. Therefore, the organization focused on the content that attracted the most attention and received the most media coverage.

The viral spread of false/inaccurate/fake information has serious implications for individuals and institutions, and ultimately can even seriously jeopardize democratic

processes. In fact, fake, false, misleading, or fabricated information on social media can have serious social, health, and financial consequences for users. Innocent people can be harassed, face insults and threats that can have real-life consequences because of false or fabricated information. Moreover, fake news is currently a major problem in interstate relations, industries, and the business world. Dishonest business people may spread fake news or reviews to increase their profits. Fake information can cause stock prices to fall or rise, and can even ruin a business's reputation. Therefore, limiting the negative impact of false/fake information through early detection and controlling its widespread dissemination is of utmost importance today. Moreover, fake news and content create problems in the relations between states.

Combating disinformation is a process that cannot be tackled by institutions alone. Individuals therefore have a major role to fulfill in the fight against disinformation. Individuals should rely on statements made by official sources, while questionable information that is not posted by official sources on social media should not be circulated without any verification. In addition, in order to reduce the impact of disinformation in social life and minimize its impact on society, the spread of the concepts of media literacy and verification in society should be prioritized.

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The Republic of Türkiye's Diplomatic Stance from the Perspective of Public Diplomacy and its Response to Disinformation: Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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Extended Abstract

This study focuses on the Republic of Türkiye's stance against disinformative content in the aftermath of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that began on October 7, 2023. Accordingly, the study aims to reveal the response of the Republic of Türkiye to the disinformative news in the media on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the context of public diplomacy. For this purpose, the disinformation bulletins of the Center for Countering Disinformation on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were analyzed using the content analysis method. A total of 110 pages of disinformation bulletins published by the Center for Countering Disinformation on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after October 7, including its 99th and 102nd issues in English, were analyzed using the MAXQDA 2022 package program.

The following questions were sought to be answered in the research;

- What is the response of the Republic of Türkiye to the circulating news and content about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
- What is the diplomatic stance of the Republic of Türkiye towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the context of public diplomacy?
- How has the Center for Countering Disinformation responded to disinformation about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
- What is the content of the Center for Countering Disinformation's disinformation bulletins on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
- What are the topics, word clouds, and agendas of the Center for Countering Disinformation's disinformation bulletins on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

Considering the studies in the literature on public diplomacy and disinformation; Ekşi (2022), in his study titled "Kamu Diplomasisinde Post-Truth: Bir Meydan Okuma Olarak Dezenformasyon" (Post-Truth in Public Diplomacy: Disinformation as a Challenge), revealed the transformation of public diplomacy, the challenges it faces and how it responds to them on the basis of the post-truth situation and the problematic of disinformation. On the other hand, Nisbet ve Kamenchuk (2019) explored the psychology of state-sponsored disinformation campaigns and their implications for public diplomacy. Fjällhed (2021), in their study on managing disinformation through public diplomacy, showed how public diplomats can understand and counter the new disinformation uncertainty in a polarized media environment. Finally, Cull (2021), lays out the ways of state financing in the fight against disinformation. Although the existing studies in the literature are similar to this study in terms of subject matter, they differ in scope and research area. This study differs from other studies in that it was centered on the Directorate of Communications, which is a public institution. In addition, this study is important in that it includes the studies published by the Directorate of Communications, Center for Countering Disinformation aimed directly at disinformation. Moreover, this study is important in that it links public diplomacy and the fight against disinformation.

Combating disinformation has become a strategic area for states today. The Republic of

Türkiye has recently placed more importance on this concept and has been increasing its efforts in this field. The Center for Countering Disinformation responds to disinformation in all emergency situations that arise. The Center for Countering Disinformation has been active in combating disinformation in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as in many other issues. The Center responded to disinformation about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through social media tools and disinformation bulletins. The Center for Countering Disinformation has actively fought against disinformation through its weekly disinformation bulletins dedicated to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which are the subject of this study.

While the Center for Countering Disinformation usually fights against disinformation and incidents that occur within the country, this time, unlike others, it worked on an incident that occurred outside the country. In this context, this study differs from other studies and is important. In addition, the fight against an international issue is also important in the context of public diplomacy. Today, public diplomacy is no longer just about sharing information and making announcements, given the processes of public diplomacy. Public diplomacy has become a field that includes many components and different fields of activity. In this regard, the disinformation bulletins published by the Directorate of Communications, Center for Countering Disinformation are public diplomacy efforts.

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Keywords: Public Diplomacy, Disinformation, Israel, Palestine, Diplomacy.